

An Exploration of “Home” in Postcolonial Context: A Close Study of V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*



Inspiring Excellence

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Abstract

Home has always been a persisting topic in literature from the Early Victorian time to the present postmodern time. In literature 'home' has always occupied a central position be it as setting, symbol or metaphor, or to denote politics surrounding home or to establish community and gender relationships. The word 'home' remains same but the connotations and representation of home changes in these literatures. In addition, the present situation of 'homelessness' or "unhomely" feeling among the refugees, immigrants, ethnic and minority groups, North Korean defectors etc. have made it more important than ever to look at the idea of home and its changing process from a fresh perspective. Perhaps postcolonial literature is still the most powerful space to ask questions about the idea of home. A great change in the idea of 'home' is witnessed in the postcolonial context. Hence, this thesis is an enquiry of 'home' in two well-established postcolonial novels titled *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie to interpret the idea of 'home'. Hence, my major concern will be to scrutinize the reasons and the triggering factors behind the process of changing 'home' and how it creates a desire for owning a house" in one novels and becomes an 'unhomely' space in another novels in postcolonial context. Also, I will slightly reflect upon the female experience of this changed 'home' in both the novels. Apart from these two novels as primary resources, I will use scholarly journals, articles and other relevance books as secondary resources.

Epigraph

“No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
You only run for the border
When you see the whole city
running as well”- Home by Warren Shire

Introduction

Like the way our eyes adjust in the darkness after a while making us capable to see things normally and clearly in dark, we have accustomed to seeing, hearing or reading the news and photos of thousands of ill-fated undocumented immigrants, refugees, expatriates, and homeless people suffering and yelling ‘where is my home?’. It brings the question of “what is home?” as our idea of “home” clashes with what we have learnt from our parents, teachers and in educational institutions. The present scenario of this homelessness compels us to wonder over how people can be an “outsider” within their own home or homeland whereas we are taught that our country is our ‘home’, and sing the national anthem with due respect praising our country and countrymen. “Home” is a serene space, close to our heart promising to give shelter, security, food, individuality, and most importantly the sense of belonging. However, the postcolonial ‘home’ seems to be the opposite, and conveying rather a picture of ‘homelessness’, ‘unhomely’, and a place that has to be escaped. In postcolonial context, “homelessness” can take place due to Diaspora, migration, or any other forms of forced migration such as the Syrian refugees or the North Korean defectors. The most alarming of all these is being “unhomely” or “homeless” within our own territory or homeland. Recently, the Langadu attack in Rangamati on June 2, 2017 forced the ethnic residents of Bangladesh to flee out with the clothes on their backs.¹ This is merely one of the thousands recent examples of forced homelessness happening around the world including in our own country.

Despite being the citizens of Bangladesh, these ethnic and minor religious groups are threatened by the local Bengalis, being attacked and killed, their houses along with their holy places are being burned and destroyed based on some baseless accusations or for being just the

¹ Dhar, Bijoy. “Langadu attack: Half-day blockade in Rangamati.” *Dhaka Tribune* June 5, 2017. Web. Retrieved from: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2017/06/05/langadu-attack-half-day-blockade-rangamati/>

minority group. Unfortunately, a vast majority of people in the world are facing the crisis of “homelessness” or “unhomely” due to displacement or internal exile. Their voices are unheard, deaths are unseen, and perspectives of ‘home’ are unnoticed which can be perceived only through literary works giving us the complete understanding of reasons behind this with an acknowledgement of changing situation. To people who have lost their home, ‘home’ is nothing but an illusion. These people are outsiders within their own home or homeland due to myriad of reasons such as internal clash, political conflicts, war, intrusion, migration, oppression, and exploitation etc. Being “unhomely” or excluded within their own spaces due to these probable reasons creates an urge for the sense of belonging by escaping their own home totally shakes the established notion of ‘home’ as static, stable, and secured space. Ironically, ‘home’ becomes a threatening ground that they seek for an escape from it. These people find themselves in an ambiguous, vulnerable and ‘unhomely’ state despite being the rightful citizen by birth or law. They are treated as outsiders, and obviously as ‘others’ within their home or adopted home. Recently, in a press conference, while sympathizing with the distorted fate of the Japanese-American undocumented immigrants in Texas, the Texas lawmaker Gene Wu says the “Japanese-Americans were obviously different. They looked different. They sounded different. And they were obviously alien even though they were Americans” (Gene Wu, Washington Post). This heartfelt statement sarcastically suggests the ‘othering’ process of immigrants even in the so-called liberal states like the USA.

Given importance to the contemporary situation of ‘homelessness’, it is perhaps important more than ever to look at the idea of home and its changing process from a fresh perspective. Perhaps postcolonial literature is still the most powerful space to ask questions about the idea of home. . In literature ‘home’ has always occupied a central position be it as setting,

symbol or metaphor, or to denote politics surrounding home or to establish community and gender relationships. A great change in the idea of 'home' is witnessed in the postcolonial context. Hence, this thesis is an enquiry in two well-established postcolonial novels titled *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie to interpret the idea of 'home'. Hence, my major concern will be to scrutinize the reasons and the triggering factors behind the process of changing 'home', and how it creates a desire for owning a house" in one novels and becomes an 'unhomely' space in another novels in postcolonial context. Also, I will slightly reflect upon the female experience of this changed 'home' and how it differs from that of the male experience of 'home'.

i) Home and its Representation in Earlier Literary Genres:

The word 'home' has carried its significance from the origin of human history mainly through its physical presence by providing shelter, security, comfort and the assurance of existence. It evokes a kind of feeling and emotions in individual by giving the scope to assert one's identity, providing a space for making a family, creating memories, and an immense sense of belonging to that particular space. In this sense, 'home' suggests a private space from where an individual begins his teleological journey. It also refers to a wider space to which an individual belongs to such as a circle, a group of family and friends, a village, a city, or a country. The widely accepted connotations of 'home' are shelter, safety, privacy, self-identity, individuality, peace, protection, and most importantly, a space of their own. Also, it is a sacred space where people come together, and be loved as family, where one can be all by himself, and get a peace of mind and certainty with the acknowledgement of one's existence and recognition of actions.

Our literary imagination of home is largely shaped up by the Western representation of home in various genres. Starting from fairytales or nursery printing to different literary writing, the portrayal of 'home' is evidenced as setting, image, metaphor, or symbol. If we want to concentrate on any particular era of English literature, Victorian literature gives us a very clear idea of the Western notion of home, and gradually we see how this notion has transferred into colonial experiences. To talk about 'home' in Victorian writings, it has mostly represented as a concealed space around which mystery and secrecy prevails. Thus, it has equally used as setting, prevailing symbol, image or metaphor and often to present Victorian domesticity through which the female characters become significant. Monica F. Cohen suggests Victorian writers also talked about 'home' to invoke a range of contested ideas and complex affects about the material and imagined space where self and society meets. This illustrates that in the late 18th and 19th century literary works; 'home' has been used as a marking point to separate the private space from the public focusing the domesticity and women.

One of most popular late 18th century novels *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, depicts 'home' as a symbol of social status, and carries a spiritual significance. Bennet's small-scale home represents a respectable middle-class family whereas larger manors like Bingley's at Netherfield Park, Lady Catherine's estate of Rosings, or Darcy's palatial home of Pemberley showcase their owner's enormous wealth, and also symbolize their social status. In addition, houses and estates also express the outward signs of their owner's inward character. For example, Rosings may be grand but it does not have the tasteful elegance like Pemberley. Also, Elizabeth's elevation from Longbourn to Pemberley marks the rise of her social position and the advancement of her moral growth. It is important to note that in the 18th century literatures, the architecture of home and its physical existence are more of a matter of concern rather than its

psychological or emotional value. In addition, home is also more of related to women of that time mostly as it represents the domesticity, and it used to express the limitation of women confined within the four walls but could not exercise their domination even in the personal space.

Again, Emily Bronte's only novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847), 'home' is equally significant as setting, image, and symbol as 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Thruscross Grange' constitute the principal setting of events and actions taking place in the novel. It also foreshadows the fate of the characters and carries the past memories inside it by making a strong physical impression on the readers. In another masterpiece by Charles Dickens titled *Great Expectation* (1861), home has been used both as a setting and symbol to show the comparison of life in city like London and small town like Kent as well as to show the teleological journey of Pip. We see the protagonist Pip exploring through his physical presence in different location, and finally coming back to his root. 'The Satis House' in the novel signifies the frustrated expectations of the residents as well as Pip as it houses nothing but shattered dreams and bitter disappointments. Nevertheless, it is again a home preserving past memories of the residents and links the fate of the characters.

Further, the exploration of 'home' is not only bound within the novels but also expanded in the area of short stories, plays, dramas etc. in the late 18th century. Keeping up with its connotation of personal space, home has been used as 'confined space' portraying the imbalance of power and authority. Especially, to denote the inferior position of women in the society or domination of 'patriarchy' over women, the writers both male and female bring 'home' in their write-ups. Henry Ibsen's one of the popular plays *A Doll's House* (1879) conveys 'home' as a suffocating space affecting only the female character. The seemingly joyful, comfortable, and shelter providing home entangled with the idea of happy family turns out to be a mere façade "a

doll's house" where Helmers is in power, and Nora is merely a male dominated prisoner within Helmers's home. Similarly, the feminist writers also broadly use 'home' to show the inferiority of women, and how even within their personal space they cannot escape patriarchy. Kate Chopin's short story "The Story of an Hour" ((1894), 'home' is a domestic space where Mrs. Mallard is merely the wife of her husband rather than any individual as her emotions, desire and feelings are subverted to nothing. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Mallard seems to find a new beginning of life and feels "monstrous joy" (Chopin 2) thinking about the upcoming long-cherished freedom within the enclosed walls of her own room.

Noticeably, it is pronounced in the late 18th century writings or feminist writing that 'home' is a gendered space. It propagates gender stratification by reducing women's access in public space by confining them within the four walls of home. The feminist writers often show how 'home' has been used time to time to hinder the progress of women by barring them from acquiring knowledge, or taking participation in public affairs. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's feminist utopian novella *Sultana's Dreams* shows how men are at home behind 'purdah'² doing household chores, and women are in the power, being educated and developing their creativity as well as ruling and protecting country. Though it shows the opposite of reality, it is actually indicative of how women's potentiality and creativity are being locked up at home with the excuse of honor and dignity. Spain argues "Women's position within society, whether measured as power, prestige, economic position or social rank, is related to spatial segregation insofar as existing physical arrangements facilitate or inhibit the exchange of knowledge between those with greater and those with less" (Spain 137). This explains that "home' plays the role of ultimate gendered space that limits women access in various other spaces such as in public space,

² Oxford Dictionary defines "purdah" as the practice in certain Muslim and Hindu societies of screening women from men or strangers, especially by means of a curtain.

educational space or economic space etc. which can strengthen them. However, gendered space might exist on both the architectural and the geographical scale. Gendered space on architectural space suggests distinctions within dwelling or architectural segregation. Spain brings Bourdieu's example of Algerian Berber house identifies the lower, dark as female whereas the upper, light side as male (140). On the other hand, gendered space on 'geographic scale' suggests geographical segregation meaning when men and women are distanced from each other by occupying different buildings. For example, in Kate Chopin's novella *The Awakening* the protagonist Edna Ponteliar decides to leave her husband's house first and buy her own little house by her own money when she decides to free herself from the forced marriage out of social pressure. Edna's shifting to her own little house is geographical segregation but in positive sense for escaping her husband's authority. Thus, 'home' has been vastly used as 'gendered space' in defining women's status in society in literary works. However, it is not only 'home' which is a gendered space but it is a central point from where the segregation starts.

However, a gradual change is noticed in the depiction of 'home' and its usage in the 20th century literary works. Due to the First and Second World Wars, industrialization, and modernization of society, the usage of 'home' comes to suggest the decadence of humanity, destruction, and despair along with an image of fading memories. It also denotes human alienation, absurdity and existential crisis which are the result of the World Wars and bureaucratic modern society. Epoch-making modernist writer Ernest Hemingway in his writing portrait a changing 'home' where the war thriven human soul is trapped in alienation and 'homecoming' is no more a joyful thing. In his short story "Soldier's Home" (1952), the protagonist Krebs one of the soldiers returns home after the war but his homecoming is not celebratory or joyful as he returns much later after his comrades. Being thundered by the

profundity and horror of the war, Krebs becomes unable to return to his old life. He wants everything simple but it seems his home and outside home is way more complex where he cannot be himself and avoid talking about war. It makes his home an uncomfortable space from where he desires to escape and alienates himself from the rest of the world. In William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1930), 'home' is no more that comforting, eye-soothing or desired space carrying the memories of the past as we see how "The Gierson Family House" becomes the "eyesore". It also symbolizes an ugly fading past on the outside, the inside is pure ghastliness, and also becomes a nightmare as literal tomb of Homer Barron remains inside of it. Moreover, the 'home' is a mysterious and fearful sight for the town people which definitely deny the classical connotations of home.

Shortly, the vagueness, absurdity and uncertainty of human life are also evidenced through 'home' in the 20th century literature. For example, in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), 'home' becomes an uncertain fearful space for the protagonist when he turns into an insect as his life was threatened by the family member within his own beloved home. Again, Beckett's shows no certain 'home' or setting in his play such as in *Endgame* (1957) he uses trash bin as dwelling place conveying absurdity of 'home' merely standing as socially constructed idea. In Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1957), we come across a 'home' where the human relationship is absurd and complicated, and 'home' becomes a threatening space where the simple birthday party turns into a nightmare, and the chastity of woman is not safe. However, in the mean time, we see 'home' turning into colonial experiences in the writings of the postcolonial critics, and novelist. This is the time when 'home' becomes way more complicated than before, and becomes an ultimate gendered space both for male and female based on the 'self

and other” point of view. A branch of Continental Philosophy known as “Phenomenology”³ invented the concept of the “self and the other.” Philosopher G.F.W Hegel explains the other as an integral part of the self. In the *Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel describes that “the Other Self is the only adequate mirror of my own self-conscious self; the subject can only see itself when it sees is another self-consciousness” (Berson 77). This suggests the female experience of ‘home’ depends largely on its male-counterpart’s experiences or states. With the complex colonial history, domination, exploitation, migration, displacement and dislocation, the issues like identity, nationality, nationalism etc. come into contact with the idea of ‘home’. Hence, ‘home’ starts losing its classical connotations, and a change is noticed in the presentation of it. For example, in the postcolonial contrapuntal novella *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, we see how Antoinette being a white Creole struggles to achieve the sense of belonging, and find her own home a menacing from her very childhood. In this way, ‘home’ turns into an “unhomely” complex space by deviating from a very personal close to heart space through the gradual changes time to time and colonialism triggers the process which is evidenced in different postcolonial writing.

ii) Postcolonial ‘Home’ and Postcolonialism:

Nevertheless, “home” is a very a significant word in postcolonial context as one comes across the term like “Postcolonial Home”, Diaspora, “Homelessness”, “Nation”, “Nationalism” or “Nationality” etc. It is because ‘postcolonial home’ is intertwined with one’s self or national identity. Maloney reviews Rosemary Marangoly George and says ‘home’ is defined as George concludes “is “self”, “home” is defined and described through those individual, communal and national qualifiers that outline one’s identity” (Maloney 188). It

³ “Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first person point of view.” Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

suggests that “home” is created through physical locations like the geographical space, racial, background, and cultural history shape individual identity. Apart from that in literary or political realms within certain school of thoughts, mainly the ones related to postcolonial theory or Diaspora or multiculturalism, ‘home’ is certainly does not convey the classical connotations but it is a much more complex notion beyond just one place, symbol or image.

Postcolonial ‘home’ is a space, which is also no longer a private space of individual but an ‘expanded space’ that meets with the public space. Hence, ‘home’ becomes a series of locations referring to a broader concept infusing a psychological sense of belonging to an imaginative ground, homeland or the nation or the home itself. According to George, it is imagining one’s (domestic) ideology in an expanded space (George 4). This often lets an individual consider home solely as something emotional and personal which can only be imagined from memory, which is a tendency observed in Diasporic or postcolonial authors. For example, Rushdie himself wrote *Midnight’s Children* taking inspiration from “an old photograph in a cheap frame” (Rushdie 9), to be exact from his memory and imagination. It is not only Rushdie but also all the Diasporic authors or migrated people who despite of being physically exiled from their homeland, cherish their home in memories.

In “The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction”, Rosemary Marangoly George explores the notion of home in colonial and postcolonial literatures written in English in the 20th century. According to George, the concept of home becomes a social construct based on the relation of inclusion and exclusions (George 2). To explain George’s opinion, during colonization, the colonizers take over everything of the colonized, from their home to country including their minds, which excludes the colonized people from their own territory not necessarily physically but psychologically through oppression, exploitation, religion

education, and ideologies etc. It makes them an “outsider” within their own territory as the colonized people are left nothing to be called of their own. Mato quotes George’s review of Bidday Martin and Chandra Mohanty’s essay “Feminist Politics: What’s Home Got to do with it?” and opines “Being home” refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; “not being home” is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences within oneself” (George qtd. in Mato 26). The latter indicates toward colonization and postcolonial condition when the colonized individuals find home as merely a space devoid of its psychological aspects such as the sense of belonging.

Following George’s quote, ‘home’ is induced with specific histories that also decides how ‘home’ would be to an individual. Thus, ‘home’ sometimes appears as a promising site of resistance against the colonizers, and sometimes it becomes an unfamiliar and ‘unhomely’ site in postcolonial context when excluded from the mainstream. In Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist Okonkwo finds his very home as a resisting site for saving his clan, and religion as well as his village from the colonizers and Christian missionaries, but left alone with the ‘unhomely’ sense as the majority betray him taking the side of the colonizers. Hence, it is evident that ‘home’ deviates from its traditional connotations of being a very familiar and domestic space to a distant, fearful, threatening and unfamiliar ground within the familiar boundaries. As the public domain merges with the private space, home no more holds any secrecy, and the emotional and psychological aspects seem to be fading away due to the outside influences. For example, in Ken Bugul’s *Le Baobab Fou* the immigrant Adah develops a psychological understanding of home as she finds belonging in books, among fictional characters, rather than asserting any emotional attachment with any physical space since it is

invaded by her abuser. To Adah, 'home' is "a psychological construction that is almost divorced from space, she requires a space in which to live with her children, but this space is far from secure or homely" (Edwards 95). Hence, in postcolonial context, 'home' moves away from its three prominent "s" definition that are shelter, support, and security, and comes to receive more negative connotations like threat, fear, exclusions and intervention.

Now the question might be raised that 'why does 'home' changes in postcolonial context?' The answer requires an understanding of "Postcolonialism" and the culture of 'postcolonial literature' as it explains the nature of the colonized space, experiences and writings of the colonized people and aftermath effects of imperialism. Postcolonial is the time when the struggle and resistance of the colonizers and the colonized exists. Hence, postcolonialism or postcolonial theory is a critical approach dealing with literature produced in the former colonized countries, and the theory is based on the concept of otherness and resistance. Edward K. Said in "Resistance, Opposition and Representation" remarks "For the first time the Westerners have been required to confront themselves not simply as the Raj but as representative of a culture and even of races accused of crimes-crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience" (Said 95). He further asserts-

"The post-imperial writers of the Third-World therefore bear their past within them-as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a post-colonial future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonist" (96).

This suggests that in postcolonial time there was a tendency of resistance and opposing of the former rulers among the colonized in order to assure themselves free. Basil Davidson talks about

“Primary resistance” referring to the literal fighting against outside intrusion, and “secondary resistance” is that of ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a “shattered community” to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system” (Davidson 155). Hence, the postcolonial literary works represent acts of resistance with a representation of historical past, as well as often write backs to the ‘canonical texts’ as a form of resistance.

However, postcolonialism is a theoretical approach of various disciplines analyzing, explaining, and responding to the cultural legacy of the lasting impact of imperialism in former colonized spaces of the world. The term ‘post-colonial’ is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates, and, as the extracts in this Reader demonstrate, it addresses all aspects of colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1). The ambiguity and complexity are in the sense that even after being independent from the former colonizers, the colonized people become unable to decolonize their mind. Also, the development of internal divisions, emergences of new power structure, disparities of class and economic status, and vice versa still hold the colonial reflection which proving that post-colonialism is a constant process of resistance and reconstruction.

Further, post-colonial theory and literary texts discuss about various kinds of experiences such as migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place etc. and also responses to the influential imperial discourses of the West such as Philosophy, history and linguistics. By taking the Western discourses into consideration, the post-colonial writers represent and criticize the continuing process of imperial suppression and exchanges in different colonized spaces. Thus, the post-colonial literatures describe and address the horror of imperialism, human problems and consequences due to the internal and external control and

exploitation of the colonized people. Chinua Achebe in his postcolonial novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) portrays the changing of familiar spaces and heartbreaking descriptions of pre-and post-colonial life through the exclusion, resistance and death of the protagonist Okonkwo. Finding his own home “unhomely” and his own people betraying and boycotting him, Okonkwo hangs himself but before that he remarks about the intrusion of the White Man saying, “He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (Achebe 62). Okonkwo’s remarks suggest how the intrusion makes colonial space both physically and psychologically scattered. It is because of this changing space, the word ‘home’ loses its classical connotations, and results in identity crisis or confusion and existential crisis, largely evident in post-colonial literatures.

Another postcolonial novelist Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* perfectly brings this confusion of home and identity crisis through the character of grandmother who despite of being a Bangladesh, was forced to come to Calcutta during the partition of 1947 as she was Hindu. Though her passport country was India, she could not be certain as she still thinks Bangladesh as her ‘home’. Ironically, on reaching Bangladesh she becomes unable to recognize her very own Dhaka adorned with childhood memories, and she remarks “Where’s Dhaka? I can’t see Dhaka” (Ghosh 193). Thus, the exploration of ‘home’, identity crisis, rootlessness, disorientation, unhomeliness, existential crisis, exile and alienation etc. are commonly seen in postcolonial literatures. Postcolonial literatures also show the intensity of colonial influence upon the colonized, and in effect, how at one point, the colonized starts playing the role of their “colonizers” and creates boundaries among them. Also, the distorted histories of slavery, oppression and migration create the same affects as of the embracing colonizers as attaining a ‘home’ of their own seems impossible in post-colonial world. Be it within homeland or in

adopted home, the colonized people find it impossible in most cases to assert themselves with the space, culture and so on, as the sense of belonging seems to be lost.

However, to explore 'home' in postcolonial ground, I have selected two novels titled *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V. S. Naipaul published in 1961 and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie published in 1981. Both the novels are popular well-established postcolonial novels as well as *Bildungsroman* which presents as a complete process of changing home through the protagonists' life journey from birth till death. In addition, both Naipaul and Rushdie write these two novels while away from their motherland sitting in their adopted country. Hence, the portrayal of 'home' is a pervading image in the novel framing the authors' own personal thoughts, feelings, emotions and experiences regarding home. The authors with crucial history in the past along with fading memories of 'home', being physically alienated from their "homeland" experience the uncertainty and changing 'home' intensely. Rushdie in "Imaginary Homeland" comments "It may be writers in my position, exiles, or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into the pillars of salt" (Rushdie 10). Hence, the absence of sense of belonging and ambiguity of 'home' with the fading past has expressed through Mr. Biswas and Saleem Sinai in these two novels. Noticeably, these two novels give us two different perspectives of 'home' as in one novel suggests the impossibility to achieve own home in an adopted colonized space, whereas the other novel shows how 'home' become 'unhomely' within own space. Additionally, these two novels also give us a gendered experience of postcolonial home where both male and female experiences and responses of changing 'home' are evidenced.

To maintain the chronology, in the sub-section of my "Introduction", I will first explore 'home' and how it has been represented in the earlier literary genres. In the next sub-section, I

will talk about “postcolonial home and postcolonialism” as the exploration of ‘home’ will be in postcolonial context. As both of my selected novels are quite intense in reading and length, both the novels require equal attention. Hence, I have divided these two novels in two chapters for exploring the idea of ‘home’. In my first chapter, I will discuss why ‘home’ creates an urgency of having own house in Mr. Biwas in V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Secondly, I will explore ‘unhomely’ home in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* which leaves Saleem in an ‘unhomely’ state within his own motherland. I will also slightly incorporate the discussion of gendered experience of ‘home’. Lastly, I will conclude my thesis summarizing the overall discussion.

Chapter One: “A House” in V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas*

V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* is an epoch-making postcolonial novel set in Eastern Trinidad in 1950s portraying the life of marginalized East Indian Community. The title of the novel itself signifies the importance of ‘a house’ throughout the novel acknowledging the protagonist’s desperate desire of having his own house. Through the life-long journey of Mr. Mohun Biswas, the postcolonial ‘home’ has been explored in the novel. Mr. Mohun Biswas is one of the Indo-Caribbean descendents of the countless ill-fated ancestors of Indian origin. They were forcefully brought as indentured labors from the poverty stricken places of India to replace the freed Negroes by the British and European colonizers during the Negro Emancipation. Kenneth Ramchand in his review of “The World of “A House for Mr. Biswas” comments “After Negro Emancipation, India became the main overseas source of cheap labour for the British sugar islands; between 1839 and 1917 no fewer than 416000 indentured Indians were imported as substitutes for the freed Negroes” (Ramchand 95). This clarifies the position of Mr. Biswas and other Indo-Caribbean characters, and communities in Trinidad who historically stand as “outsiders” in an adopted land. Hence, Mr. Biswas is a “Third Culture Kid”, and the whole community is a mash-up of different cultures and beliefs as who are “outsiders” trying to be at home in Trinidad. Noticeably, V.S. Naipaul himself is an Indo-Caribbean author who could never get over the idea of “immigrant” both in Trinidad and London. In an interview, Naipaul says, “When I speak about being an exile or refugee, I am not just using a metaphor, I am speaking literally” (Evans 62). It explains that Naipaul is in “psychological limbo” (TAŞ 116) being physically and psychologically alienated from his ‘home’ and culture. Mohit K. Ray articulates that Naipaul is “an Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in England, and a nomadic intellectual in a postcolonial world” (Ray 208). Consequently, Naipaul’s own cultural

confusion and failure of having a sense of 'home' makes him alienated and exiled which has been reflected through Mr. Mohun Biswas in the novel.

Mohun Biswas being a "Third Culture Kid" grows up in a society where the insecurity and uncertainty of future have always triggered him down. Gene Bell-Villada and Ruth Hill Useem define "Third Culture Kid" when a child "raised in a country other than passport country. Their culture is considered "Third" because it combines elements of both the host and nation(s) and his/her own nation of citizenship, without necessarily belonging to either of them" (Villa and Useem 412). Mr. Biswas's passport country is India but he is directly the part of the troubled past which put him into a location which is not his own. Despite that he is born and brought up in that alien adopted land knowing it as his 'home'. In addition, his upbringing was not according to the tradition of the place but as the Indian tradition and beliefs to where his ancestors belong. Ironically, this does not affect in creation of his identity, but the later changing of space and culture due to the influence of the Western education, culture and religion, Biswas finds himself in a contradictory position making him alienated and exiled within his own 'home'. This creates a sense of psychological displacement which is called "unhomeliness", a term coined by Homi Bhabha. It suggests a cultural confusion or "in-between" state where an individual feels the absence of the sense of belonging to a certain culture or space resulting psychological disorder, displacement and alienation. Being "unhomed" does not mean literal homelessness but as Lois Tyson states in *Critical Theory Today*, "is to feel not at home even in one's own home because you are not at home in yourself: that is, your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee" (Tyson 421). This is indeed one of the significant reasons triggering the desire of owning "a house" in Mr. Biswas.

Hence, in the novel “A House” is the object of outwardly desire for a physical space for attaining the psychological or aesthetic aspects of ‘home’ such as the sense of belonging which is absent in the colonized space. Mr. Mohun Biswas’s desire of having his own house resembles the desires of the trapped East Indians descendents in West Indies. The East Indians are the displaced people alienated from their roots in India, were forced to migrate as indentured labor, and “their movement to new lands where they made themselves masters over others or became subjects of the masters of their new home” (Leela 36). To the displaced colonial male, nothing is left in the new adopted ‘home’ or ‘place’ to call something of his own other than owning ‘a house’ of his own. To establish a connection between a mature autonomous ‘self’ and a ‘home’ of one’s own becomes the key point that Mr. Biswas strives to achieve as he sees “manhood” entwined with the ownership of a ‘house’ or ‘home’. Being unable to own a ‘house’ he sees himself not as a man, and one morning he says to his dog, “you are an animal and think that because I have a head and hands and looks as I did yesterday I am a man am deceiving you. I am not whole” (Naipaul 268). This suggests owning a ‘house’ for Mr. Biswas was establishing his ‘manhood’ and ‘individuality’ to fight the subversion and alienation in the colonized space. Kumar Parag underlies “a house is not just a matter of getting a shelter from heat, cold or rain. In fact, it is both an imposition of order and a carving-out of authentic selfhood within the heterogeneous and fragmented society of Trinidad” (Parag 139). Hence, “a house” is such meaningful to Mr. Biswas as it gives me to achieve authentic selfhood in the ‘unhomely’ space where his individuality is threatened. Biswas being a descendents of migrated ancestors, is defined by a “separation from origins and essences”, a sense of “un-home-lines”, occupying an indeterminate zone or “place of hybridity”, leading to a necessary “creolisation” of identity (Bhabha 120). Bhabha further asserts in that the idea of an authentic and irreducible identity is

intimately tied up with the possibility of achieving one's full potential in the "landscapes hymned by one's ancestors" (Bhabha 32). For Mr. Biswas achieving his own 'home' is the only gateway to acquire the authentic selfhood that will bring him individuality and recognition in the colonized space.

At the very outset, Mr. Biswas along with his community has been put into a marginalized position through the history of forced migration of his ancestors during the Negro Emancipation. From the novel, "Fate had brought him from India to the sugar-estate, aged him quickly and left him to die in a crumbling mud hut in the swamplands; yet he spoke of Fate often and affectionately, as though, merely by surviving, he had been particularly favored" (Naipaul 11). These indicate the history of migration and the ill-fate that brought them to Trinidad. Being an East Indian descendent in West Indies, Mr. Biswas is physically in one space and culturally in another, and thus is a marginalized and alienated individual constantly searching for his own space in the limited world of Trinidad. Gareth Griffith writes about the Caribbean colonized subject that "Colonial exploitation deprived him of the possession of Islands in a spiritual sense. This lost sense of place and identity has been something against which generations of West Indies have struggled" (Griffith 110). Based on Griffith's statement, the Indo-Caribbean people are double exiled as first of all they are displaced from their motherland, and then they are exiled in their adopted land. Interestingly, Naipaul has depicted a protagonist with established identity but his marginalization occurs in the transitional society of colonized space due to the changing of 'home' where he could not assert himself. His marginalization starts from his alienation just after his birth, and the reasons are explained in the first section "Pastorals".

The section “Pastorals” describes the birth, and early childhood of Mr. Biswas in his ancestral ‘home’ which can be considered his root in the novel. Also, the Hindu way of life with its customs, tradition, rituals, and philosophy receive full expression in the artificially created small Indian world of the indentured Indian laborers in colonial society of Trinidad. Ironically, the word “Pastorals” is not mentioned anywhere else, but gives us Mr. Biswas’s perspective of ‘home’. In the sense that Mr. Biswas is hardly seen anywhere in the novel to reminisce about his ‘pastoral home’ which suggests Mr. Biswas had no such ‘home’ where he was emotionally attached. It is because Mr. Biswas was alienated from his family and friends along with his root from the very beginning of his life. Due to the superstitious beliefs, faith and reliance on pundits, the separation process of Mr. Biswas from his family starts with his birth as he was “Six-fingered, and born in the wrong way” (Naipaul 11) in an inauspicious hour of midnight as assumed by Bissoondaye and the midwife. The midwife declares that “Whatever you do, this boy will eat up his mother and father” (12). The declaration of the midwife further gets strengthened with the prediction of Pundit Sitaram who also adds that “The boy will be a lecher and a spendthrift. Possibly a liar as well” (12) with an unlucky sneeze. Hence, he warns his father not to see his face until twenty-one days of his birth, and suggests him to keep the boy away from any natural form of water. This declaration in his horoscope plays a decisive role in his life, and makes him an alien even in his own family.

Additionally, this superstition of Pundit Sitaram or the prediction of the midwife makes him an ‘outsider’ in his own East Indian community where the horoscope is the utmost priority to decide the fate of an individual. He grows up in a sense of alienation both inside and outside of his home as everybody used to be afraid of his unlucky sneeze. When he was only a boy, his two elder brothers Pratap and Prasad used to enjoy their childhood by roaming around the village,

swimming in the ponds and rivers but he was compelled to stay at home and play with his sister Dehuti. Often he wanted to explore the outside world and roam freely like his brothers, but for him, “life was unpleasant only because the Pundit had forbidden him to go near the ponds and rivers” (18). In this way, he was alienated from his family but unfortunately the alienation was further aggravated with the death of his father who dies by drowning while searching for Mr. Biswas. This makes the prediction come true, and his life becomes more miserable as his mother stops talking to him, his siblings start scorning him, and the neighbors start avoiding him. “As the baby of the family Mr. Biswas was treated by the mourners with honor and sympathy, though this was touched with a little dread” (29). Certainly, it embarrasses little Mr. Biswas and he searches for a lone time to escape the strange feeling. Later, in his life, he was often reminded and teased of the prediction and how he killed his father which increased the bitterness pervading in his heart. It also intensifies his sense of loneliness, and desire of escaping the place in order to find a better place where none will be aware of the prediction, and will embrace him. This suggests that Mr. Biswas could develop any emotional attachment neither with his family, pastoral home nor with his community. He has always thought to escape that place or home, and thus the picture of ‘home’ in his mind is certainly not any of the physical ‘home’ but a space where he can assert himself the sense of belonging.

Further, the absence of a masculine authoritative figure makes their home a fearful ground as Dehuti and her young children become helpless in front of their neighbor Dhari’s intrusion every night for digging and forking in their yard. Bipti also remarks saying, “Your father always warned me about the people of the village” (35). Bipti’s helplessness without his husband reminds Antoinette’s mother Annette’s miserable condition in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. After her husband’s death Annette becomes miserable with her children and

servants in Spanish Town, and for being white skinned woman becomes the victim of racial tension and called “white cockroach” within her own community. Later, to escape oppression of the black people, Annette remarries to Mr. Mason, but Bipti had nowhere to go except her sister Tara’s bounty. Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) states “the only way woman can rise in the world,-by marriage” (Wollstonecraft 142).⁴ Hence, we see marrying a rich Englishman Mr. Mason, Annette achieves momentarily peace and respect in the community whereas Bipti becomes merely a helping-hand with no rights over her children in her sister’s house. Also, Bipti sold the hut and the land to Dhari before leaving, and Mr. Biswas moved to Pagotes. In effect, Mr. Biswas was bound to leave the “only house to which he had some right. For the next thirty-five years he was to be a wanderer with no place he could call his own, with no family except that which he was attempt to create out of the engulfing world of the Tulsis” (Naipaul 38).⁵ He literally becomes all alone as his mother’s parents died, his father died, his brothers on the estate at Felicity, Dehuti as servant in Tara’s house, and himself rapidly distancing away from his pastoral community. Hence, the ‘unhomely’ sense engulfs him making him think useless and unfathomable with a fading childhood and his only identity “Mr. Biswas” in a total alien land with no place to call his ‘home’.

Further, ‘home’ to Mr. Biswas had no appealing in form of its physical existence but it was more of a psychological in his mind. The lack of attachment toward his ‘ancestral home’, Mr. Biswas cannot even recall “where his father’s hut had stood or where Dhari and others had dug” (39). This certainly suggests an ‘unhomely’ nature of ‘home’ which does not allow Mr. Biswas to establish any attachment or emotional connection with his father’s ‘home’ or community as it threatens his individuality. It is evident in “Before the Tulsis” that Mr. Biswas

⁴ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. p. 142.

⁵ Naipaul, V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. p. 38.

did look for his birth place while he was working on a feature article for the magazine section of the *Sunday Sentinel*. Reaching there he sees nothing but “oil derricks and grimy pumps, sea-sawing, endlessly, surrounded by red No Smoking notices” (39). His grandparents’ house that is his supposed root has also disappeared leaving no trace of it. The place has gone through drastic changes that “His naval-string, buried on that inauspicious night, and his sixth finger, buried long after, had turned to dust” (39). The changing world “carried no witness to Mr. Biswas’s birth and early years” (39). This change suggests a deviated ‘home’ that preserves no memories or gives no reason to Mr. Biswas to come back. Unconsciously, this create an yearning for a ‘home’ of his own in Mr. Biswas that will preserve his memory asserting him the sense of existence.

Further, we see Mr. Biswas could not inherit the social identity of laborers like his father and brothers, as he was kept inside aloof from exploring and experiencing social life outside home. It does not only make him a useless man with no practical experience but also an unwanted in the hard life of Trinidad. Naipaul portrays the complexity between a man and his origins, and his incapability to escape from the knot that he was tied down with his birth. Despite having a certain identity “Mr. Biswas”, he was alienated from his own family, and community, and hence, his identity becomes meaningless to him. He retorts to his son once that “I am just somebody. Nobody at all” (279). This statement shows the contradiction of Mr. Biswas who has a certain identity, but still he could not settle himself anywhere or achieve the sense of belonging. Even in school, Mr. Biswas was regularly flogged by his teacher Mr. Lal who once “ordered him to write I AM AN ASS on the blackboard” (46). Mr. Lal’s humiliating punishment reminds us the humiliating experiences in Colonial schools of Kenya in 1952 that Ngugi Wa Thiong’o describes in “The Language of African Literature”. “The culprit was given corporal punishment-three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks-or was made to carry a metal plate

around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY...” (Thiong’o 265). These types of corporal punishments were enough for young children to be alienated from the rest which continued for six years in case of Mr. Biswas. Also, the colonial education system in Trinidad and the trend of physical and mental abuses at school are suggestive of a colonial split environment that creates “colonial alienation” seen Mr. Biswas. Hence, Mr. Biswas gradually developed an animosity towards people and grew up in isolation. Also, he had no friend except for Alec but even they had maintained a distanced friendship so that no one can ever spoke about their parents or home.

Noticeably, Mr. Biswas with no ‘home’ should have cherished his place after getting at least a shelter but he was embarrassed of the ‘home’ where he lived, “in one room of a mud hut in the back trace” (Naipaul 46). The shelter could not make him happy, and even after five years he considered it as a “temporary arrangement”. Most people in the hut remained strangers, and his relation with his mother was unsatisfying as Bipti was “shy of showing him affection in a house of strangers” (47). Unfortunately, that small hut could not even provide him the sense of belonging he wished for from the very childhood. Shortly, Mr. Biswas being displaced from Mr. Lal’s school went to Pundit Jairam to become a pundit. Unfortunately, even here he was flogged and ill-treated by Pundit Jairam that hurt his growing sense of self-respect. His sentiments were triggered while Pundit Jairam expelling him from his house reminded him of the prediction in harsh and cruel manner saying, “You killed your father. I do not want you to do that to me” (55). These words might be mere utterances out of rage for Jairam, but this is a serious accuse of murdering his own father to Mr. Biswas which makes him stand as a criminal in the community. It makes the whole community and place against him where he is literally viewed as an “outsider”. Soon he leaves Tara’s place to escape his miserable and cursed life and takes up sign-

painting for his livelihood but his life takes the biggest turn by his chance marriage with Shama while sign-painting at the Tulsi store. Mr. Biswas ends up becoming the mimic colonial world of “Hanuman House” through the marriage with one of the Tulsi daughters and becomes the mere part of Tulsidom.

“Hanuman House” is metaphorically a miniature world symbolizing the colonial world where Mrs. Tulsi and Seth are in the role of colonizers, and the rest of the members are colonial slave working for the progress of Tulsidom. Professor Gordon Rohlehr remarks, “Hanuman House reveals itself not as a coherent reconstruction of the clan, but as a slave society, erected by Mrs. Tulsi and Seth who need workers to rebuild their tottering empire. They therefore exploit the homelessness and poverty of their fellow Hindus and reconstruct a mockery of the clan” (Rohlehr 87). Here what he tries to explain that both Mrs. Tulsi and Seth take advantage of the lower status and homelessness of the son-in-laws to whom the Tulsi daughters are married. However, perhaps it is done to equalize both the daughters and their husbands but it suggests that the daughters are doubly-oppressed. However, “Hanuman House” is one of the significant phases of Mr. Biswas’s life where the urgency of having his own “house” is enormously triggered. It is because life in “Hanuman House” gives him two options, either to create his own identity out of nothingness or to express conformity towards Mrs. Tulsi and Seth. Mr. Biswas chooses the later which creates the urgency of having his own house. Also, “Hanuman House” stands for the ambiguity that prevails in the “hybrid” culture of Caribbean Island because the house suggests both a traditional Indian culture outwardly as well as the transitional society influenced by the colonizer. It is a large mansion where the Tulsis, a typical joint Hindu family inhabits outwardly expressing their influence of being conservative and a carrier of Hindu culture and tradition. “The Tulsis had some reputation among Hindus as pious, conservative landowning family” (81).

In addition, the house was named after one of the Hindu god named “Hanuman” as “The balustrade which hedged the flat roof was crowned with a concrete salute of the benevolent Monkey God Hanuman” (81). The idea of ‘home’ through “Hanuman House” is that of a fading past where the house was more like a colony of the colonizer rather than a “home”. In that sense, Mrs. Tulsi whom Mr. Biswas calls the old queen represents the colonizer asserting the height of British Colonialism under Queen Victoria, and Mr. Biswas along with the other daughters and son-in-laws are the colonized. Being one of the son-in-laws, Mr. Biswas was expected to merge his personal identity and become a mere part of “the Tulsis” by accepting the rules and regulations in exchange to food, shelter and security with a certain livelihood. Hence, Mr. Biswas’s personal battle starts with the stronghold of Tulsi as he denies accepting the superiority of “the Tulsis” by sacrificing his individuality and existential freedom.

Unlike the other son-in-laws, Mr. Biswas becomes alienated and an eyesore to the Tulsis as he starts rebelling to establish his own personality among them. Singh underlines, “Mr. Biswas is the unaccommodated man representing the outcast’s symbolic quest for a place in the hostile universe” (Singh 126). This suggests Mr. Biswas’s denial to become the mere labourer like the other son-in-laws working for the Tulsi business, and remain as non-existent in the Tulsi family. In addition, his marital relationship with Shama also could not be developed as “following his policy of caution, he had not attempted to establish any relationship with her” (Naipaul 92). This makes Mr. Biswas distance from his own wife as well, and he becomes completely lonely even among so many people under one roof. For his ruthless and obstinate attitude of going against the Tulsis, he was repeatedly accused of not being grateful to the Tulsis, as Mrs. Tulsi scorns, “Coming to us with no more clothes you could hang up on a nail” (99). However, nothing could stop Mr. Biswas’s rebellion and sarcastic attitude, and he continues to

do things as per his wish to establish his own individuality in Hanuman House. He at one point takes up comical tasks like spitting in Bhandat's rum, or giving names to the Tulsis such as "the old queen", "the old hen", "the old cow", for Mrs. Tulsi "the big boss", for Seth "the constipated holy man", for Hari, "holy ghost", and for Mrs. Tulsis's two sons, "the two Gods". Shortly, to affirm his individuality and acknowledgement, Mr. Biswas consciously goes against Tulsi's religious ideology by enjoining with the Aryans, a group of 'protestant' Hindu missionaries from India starts advocating the acceptance of conversion, women's education, the abolition of the caste system, child marriage and idol worshipping. Thus, his rebellious and sarcastic attitude, and taunting words make him alienated where "he was treated with indifference rather than hostility" (188).

Initially, Mr. Biswas's rebellion seems to be meaningless and unfair but all Mr. Biswas wanted a sense of belonging along with the establishment of individuality and recognition. Hence, we see him despite the hostile environment, he tries to be homely" and hence he "held his tongue and tried to win his favor" (188). He never wanted to be dictated or lose his freedom and independence like the other son-in-laws or daughters. 'Home' is supposed to be a place where one can be all by himself and receive his recognition but 'Hanuman House' have never provided him that personal space or recognition where he can be identified as "Mr. Biswas" instead of one of the Tulsis. Mr. Biswas was also deprived from the right of his father when his daughter was born as Seth and Hari chose the name "Savi" for her daughter. The rejection of being acknowledged both as an "individual" as well as a "father" clearly brings a picture of marginalization of colonial male in the private space. This makes him more obstinate as a form of "defense mechanism" to protect his own individuality and independence. Thus, in response to Govind's suggestion of leaving sign-painting he says, "Give up sign-painting? And my

independence? No, boy. My motto is paddle your own canoe?" (107). But his mantra ultimately makes him alienated and exiled among the Tulsis in Hanuman House which produces in him the urge for having his own house. In this case Mr. Biswas's rebellious attitude resulting in his alienation can be explained through "normlessness". Melvin Seeman in *On the Meaning of Alienation* classifies "alienation" in five categories one of which is "normlessness". According to Seeman, "Normlessness" is "a situation lacking effective norms or in which individuals assume that unacceptable behaviors are required for success" (Seeman 787). Here, the Hindu folk of Hanuman House represent the uncivilized structure in which Biswas considers his attitude appropriate to achieve his 'individuality', and in the face of the encounter with the familiar or societal norms, the desire for owning his own house is triggered in him.

With the desire of having his own 'house', Mr. Biswas leaves the Hanuman House, and goes to "The Chase" as shopkeeper, as a supervisor of labourers at "Green Vale" and finally as a journalist and a community welfare in Port of Spain. Though he was away from the Tulsis physically, in literal sense he was not as the places he goes all belong to the Tulsi estate. Being beaten up by Govind, and humiliated by Seth at Hanuman House, Mr. Biswas realizes his impossibility of being at 'home' and thus moves to 'The Chase'. From the beginning, a sense of premonition occupies his mind, and he ultimately finds himself in a vulnerable position among the aggressive competitive people and adverse environment. To Mr. Biswas life in "Chase was a pause, a preparation" (Naipaul 147) and he continues to live there despite knowing that "The Chase was only temporary" (193). The monotonous life and isolation of the Chase changes Mr. Biswas's perception of Hanuman House and he discovers that "the House was the world, more real than the Chase, and less exposed; everything beyond the gates was foreign and unimportant" (195). Hence, being failed to establish his authentic selfhood and his own home, he closes his

shop at the Chase and cycles toward Arwacas. He also comes across a group of people who “could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness” (201). It resolves Mr. Biswas’s hesitance of coming back to Hanuman House as he realizes he could never escape the house as it is the only familiar temporary space where he can return despite being ‘unhomely’.

Shortly, Mr. Biswas moves to Green Vale leaving Shama, and his children at the Hanuman house to look after the Tulsi estate. Ironically, the experience of Green Vale was more distressing than the Chase. It was a kind of exile for Mr. Biswas but life at Green Vale makes him more desperate and one step forward to establish his own home where he will have the sense of belonging and security. The congested single room of the barrack, the wild, damp and monotonous environment, and the unknown laborers all make him feel suffocated, lonely and fearful as he finds himself in an insecure unfamiliar space. Being insecure both physically and mentally, he steps up to build his own house that he has always longed for, with the desperate desire for recognition both from the Tulsis and in Green Vale. “He wanted, in the first place, a real house, made with real materials” (219). However, the attempted house was a failure, and meets the same disastrous result the furnished beautiful doll’s house he gave to her daughter Savi. Instead of bringing a change mind and mood, his dreams were washed away. Additionally, the wild, gloomy and hostile environment triggers his intensity of alienation and displacement, and he loses his mental stability. Every night he becomes terrified and dreadful of his own home, and he suffers from intense depression and disillusionment. “And every day the rain fell, the sun blazed, the house became greyer, the sawdust, once fresh and aromatic, became part of the earth,

the asphalt snakes hanging from the roof grew longer, and many more died, and Mr. Biswas worked more and more elaborate messages of comfort for his walls with a steady, unthinking hand, and a mind in turmoil” (276). Hence, the environmental threat makes Mr. Biswas fearful of his own house passing sleepless nights as “he was so afraid that he almost cried out” (277). His mental insanity also instigates the thought of killing his wife and children, and a sense of hatred and dreadfulness grow in him against Shama and the children as well. Finally, his horrific home at Green Vale gets flooded as “the rain and wind swept through the room with unnecessary strength and forced open the door to the drawing room, wall-less, floorless, of the house Mr. Biswas had built” (304). Hence, Mr. Biswas again ends up coming back to Hanuman House for the last time.

On returning from Green Vale in disillusioned state, Mr. Biswas for the first time “welcomed the warmth and reassurance of the room” (308) at Hanuman House. Though for temporary, Hanuman House seems like a comforting ‘home’ to Mr. Biswas. “The darkness, the silence, the absence of the world enveloped and comforted him” (312) in the Blue Room. However, soon he was forced to leave the Blue Room and Hanuman House for good as Mrs. Tulsi, and Owad were coming back. The noticeable point is here when the supposed colonizer Mrs. Tulsi is out of ‘Hanuman House’, Mr. Biswas temporarily feels the house ‘homely’. Again, Mr. Biswas’s “unhomely” due to alienation in presence of Mrs. Tulsi can be explained through Hegel’s concept of “alienation as separation”. Having been alienated in the form of “normlessness”, the colonial male comes to a condition of existential standpoint. Hegel’s concept of “alienation as separation” suggests “through self analysis and contemplation, the human moves from an immature sense of universality to a powerful sense of his/her own individuality” (Williamson and Cullingford 25). It differs from Hegel’s concept of “alienation as surrender”

suggests being positively peaceful and free from worry due to the fact that “it involves a conscious relinquishment or surrender with the intention of securing a desired end: namely, unity with the social substance” (Schacht 36) or any other entities like the state of religion. This explains how the presence of Mrs. Tulsi intimidates Mr. Biswas and he feels the strong sense of individuality for what he struggles and becomes alienated in Hanuman House. On the other hand, the other son-in-laws and daughter to maintain a peaceful relation and continue to be benefitted from Mrs. Tulsi or Hanuman House surrender themselves to Mrs. Tulsi for what they do not go through the kind of alienation or “unhomeliness” like Mr. Biswas.

However, finally, Mr. Biswas moves out from the Hanuman House for good with a renewal of his hope and desire. Naipaul describes, “He was going out into the world [...] Real life, and its especial sweetness, awaited; he was still beginning” (Naipaul 318). Thus, he comes to Port of Spain, the city that opens up new avenues for Mr. Biswas. He establishes himself professionally by taking up the job of reporter in Trinidad *Sentinal* with a salary of fifteen dollars a month. Interestingly, it is his creativity of sign-writing that makes him a self-made man as “Sign-writing had taken him to Hanuman House and the Tulsis. Sign-writing found him a place on the *Sentinal*” (340). The job brings a drastic change in his life as he is no more a “troublemaker” or “nonentity” in the family, and it also empowers the silent Shama who can now proudly voice that “children are afraid of him” (340). Noticeably, Shama’s experience of ‘home’ is passive as it depends on his husband’s financial capability and social status. In the Hanuman House, Shama is merely a silent observer under the rule of Mrs. Tulsi obeying every rule and regulation in fear of being displaced but her change has been noticed in “The Chase” when she comes to the Chase with her husband. Mr. Biswas was astonished seeing the change in Shama as “she behaved as though she moved into a derelict house every day” (150). She prepared meal for

both of them, cleaned the home and made it habitable banishing “silence and loneliness” and acted like an expert housewife. This suggests how Shama makes her husband’s “home” as her own and acts active whereas she is merely a silent “puppet” in Hanuman House suggesting her financial and emotional dependency on Mrs. Tulsi and Mr. Biswas. On the other hand, it is Seth and the inherited property from her husband, Mrs. Tulsi remains a strong woman ruling in the Hanuman House, but as soon as the Tulsi-Seth bondage breaks, the whole Tulsidom gets scattered. Thus, the whole Tulsi family shifts to Shorthills along with Mr. Biswas as he loses his job as reporter. Ironically, even in Shorthills Mr. Biswas’s attempt to build house remains unsuccessful and he along with family moves in to the rental house of Mrs. Tulsi in Port of Spain.

The rental house of Port of Spain was merely a roof and wall for Mr. Biswas. Though his fortune remains un-flourished for a long time, he nurtures the dream of literature, and takes up writing. Hence, he becomes an expert creative writer for what he gains popularity after regaining his job in journalism. Meanwhile, Mr. Biswas also nourishes his desire of having his own house, and he along with Shama starts acquiring things little by little that gives them a momentarily satisfaction of owning something of their own. Additionally, the acquisition tentatively invokes the sense in Mr. Biswas that they are no longer poor, and also incorporates a sense of confidence and self-worth among him. The desired individuality grows in him, and he achieves the importance in his son Anand’s life which he has always wished for. Hence, Anand seeing his father helpless when he was forced to leave his study room on arrival of Owad from England, Anand could not but answers back out of rage. Consequently, Owad slaps Anand that humiliates Anand, and he urges his father to move from the rental house adding that he cannot “bear to leave here another day” (551). Mr. Biswas was deeply moved by Anand’s appeal remembering

his humiliation innumerable times from his childhood till the present. Hence, this time for Mr. Biswas, owning a house is no more a desire but a necessity triggered by the humiliation inflicted upon his son and Mr. Biswas's inability to protect his family. According to Gordon Rohlehr, Naipaul presents Mr. Biswas as a hero to his son who is "in all his littleness, and still preserves a sense of man's inner dignity" (Rohlehr 90). Hence, the desired house for both Mr. Biswas and his family will be no more a roof and wall on a piece of land but it will be their "homely" space where they can live with self-respect and dignity.

Finally, Mr. Biswas manages to get a loan from Ajodha and buys a house of his own at the Sikkim Road in Port of Spain. Acquiring a house of their own gives Shama a sense of individuality and voice, and she takes a stand beside her family imitating the overpowering personality of her mother, Mrs. Tulsi. The constant humiliation towards her husband and son also enrages her sense of responsibility and self-respect as a wife and mother. However, though Shama finally achieves a sense of belonging with a certainty, Mr. Biswas could not feel 'homely'. He achieves a physical existence of home but the psychological satisfaction was still out of his league as the house was mortgaged. Also, he discovers many flaws and he feels betrayed by the clerk. He spent those years in that house in tension of debt and repairing the flaws of the house. Nevertheless, it was not long before his death when he finally realizes that his 'unhomely' home is actually very beautiful, comfortable and secured. He felt the long searched sense of belonging and stability that he had never felt as 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 house at Shorthills, in the clumsy concrete house in Port of Spain. And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his half-lot of land, his own portion of the earth" (Naipaul 2). Hence, Mr. Biswas's relentless attempts of

acquiring a “house” of his own come to an end with his death from heart failure at the age of forty-six. To conclude, Mr. Biswas’s “a house” of his own was not just a desire of getting shelter but it was the result of the changing home which is ‘unhomely’ in nature. The desire of owning a house was a way of establishing authentic selfhood, and acquiring the sense of belonging within the disintegrated culture, and heterogeneous and fragmented society of Trinidad.

Chapter Two: Unhomely “Home” in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*

In Homi Bhabha’s words, the changes of space or home involves individual in “the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha 11). By this statement what Bhabha is trying to put forth that the domestic space and the political space of home becomes assimilated which results the “unhomeliness” in both the physical and psychological aspects of home. Bhabha explains, “The borders between home and world become confused, and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon as a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (9). That is, the process of “unhomeliness” starts with the intermingling of home and the outside of home, which results in the separation of the individual with the actual “home”. This is what we observe in Salman Rushdie’s one of the most popular postcolonial novels *Midnight’s Children* where the characters intermingles their private domain and political spheres while responding the postcolonial situation around them that often causes conflict with the expectation and reality.

In the novel, home as the “unhomely” best appears in the Methwold Estate where the physical aspects of “home” changes due to “imperial domesticity” and “politicizing of home”. As earlier discussed, the assimilation of home and the outside triggers the process of “unhomeliness” as the effects of colonial or postcolonial situation. According to Saleem’s words, his parents Ahmed Sinai and Amina get lured into William Methwold’s “peculiar game: FOR SALE” (Rushdie 94) and decide to settle down in the Methwold Estate. Thus, they get engaged in Bhabha’s term “mimicry” of the colonizer. To Saleem, the “signs bearing two words” (94) enchanted his parents, and in the course of time, they will be engaged in the curious whims of Mr. Methwold. With the promise of getting a “home” with “nice people” and “nice neighbours”,

Ahmed Sinai convinces her wife to settle there, but they failed to realize the “unhomely” nature of their “home”.

Methwold Estate was sold on two conditions that “the house be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15th” (95). These two conditions that Methwold put forth were based on his mantra “Lock, stock and barrel” (95), and he was quite conscious to stick to this ideal. The underlying purpose behind this mantra was to keep the British essence and their power haunting the entire nation, and make the Indians accustomed to British norms and customs that would represent the British imperialism in India. Methwold successfully involves the Sinai family by saying “We don’t have much left to do, we British except to play our games” (95). Hence, Methwold resolves to play his game within his dominion that he named majestically after the places of Europe such as Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa, and Sans Souci. William Methwold was quite aware of the fact that his game was not fair, but he appeases everyone around him with the Indian saying “Sabkuch ticktock hai” (99) that mean “all is well”.

While Methwold is eager to transfer his power luring them into his game, everyone in the Methwold Estate initially does not like the idea keeping everything untouched and living like the English. Now they have to get used to living among ceiling fans, walls covered with the pictures of old Englishwomen, water closets, mini-bars and musical instruments etc which all evoke the sense of being in a foreign land. Their dislike to “the curious whims of the Englishman” (98) is clearly stated in the following words:

“...There are thirty days to go to the transfer of power and Lila Sabarmati is on the telephone, ‘How can you stand it, Nussie? In every room here there are talking budgies,

and in the almirahs I find moth-eaten dresses and used brassieres!...And Nussie is telling Amina, “Goldfish, Allah, I can’t stand the creatures, but Methwold sahib comes himself to feed... and there are half-empty pots of Bovril he says I can’t throw...it’s mad, Amina sister, what are we doing like this?” (98).

The quote clearly illustrates that the ‘home’ is unknown to them, and everyone has problem with the conditions of Mr. Methwold, and they find it ridiculous that even after being unable to stand moth-eaten dresses or used brassieres or the goldfish, they cannot throw away anything including a spoon, or the lampshade or a comb. Hence, they start living with this making them adapted to the situation. For example, Ibrahim does not use the ceiling fan fearing that at night it might fell upon his head. However, with the passing of time, “things are settling down, the sharp edges of things are getting blurred, so they have all failed to notice what is happening: the Estate, Methwold’s Estate, is changing them” (99). Now Ahmed Sinai tastes the Scotch whisky, and Dr. Narlikar has no problem with the pictures hanging on the wall. In fact, “Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls;” (99) and when they realize that they are being supervised they shift to an Anglo-Indian posture imitating his Oxford accent. Thus, every evening Methwold witnesses their transformation due to his allegorical –project of turning them from Indian to English.

The process of “unhomeliness” starts with their transformation as they are left with nothing of their own but all borrowed from the colonizers. Methwold Estates becomes more of a site for British colonial power, rather than their “home”. The objects such as the wardrobes filled with clothes, the lampshade, the spoons, the pictures, the ceiling fans, gas cookers etc represent the British rule in India. Methwold Estate starts serving the colonial power correlating to the idea

of domination and power. Alison Blunt regarding “imperial domesticity” suggests “Both through the domestication of imperial subjects and through the rise of imperial consumption, British homes were clearly influenced by imperial politics” (Blunt 25). Thus, through Methwold Estate, William Methwold has exercised imperial domination and forced the members of the Estate to contribute to the colonial power. The principles of imperial domesticity compel the members to abide by their rules and accept their superiority. Hence, their domestic practice serves for the “public” colonial interest that gives the Estate home a political dimension in the light of colonial or postcolonial context.

Moreover, postcolonial home is “a construct fulfilling a political role in the reinforcement of colonial values and yet, because of the nature of that political role, presented- paradoxically-as an idealized and apolitical location” (Upstone 115). This is exactly what Methwold Estate does, interrogates colonial values by adapting the inhabitants through the illusion of ideal place. While accepting the terms of Mr. Methwold, Ahmed Sinai feels relieved thinking that Methwold will not stay with them forever and he says, “...And afterwards I can do what I like with the house...? “Yes, afterwards, naturally, he’ll be gone...” (Rushdie 97). Ironically, Ahmed Sinai is wrong because Methwold will always be present and felt in and around the house and their minds just like the British Raj in India. Therefore, it is not possible for the inhabitants of the Estate to come out from the “unhomely” state because they have been unknowingly stripped away from their identities as Indians by observing certain kinds of Englishness. They fall in the trap of “colonial mimicry” that is to create “a reformed, recognizable *Other*, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86) and become “mimic-men”. Consequently, the residents being involved in the process of civilizing themselves like the English make themselves “outsider” within their own home or space. They feel “unhomely”

living a life of exile between two clashing cultures and never arriving at home or setting a home in the colonial situation.

The novel also presents the “politicizing of home” that turns “home” as the “unhomely”. “Home” is subverted in many forms through the very notion of “home” and “domesticity”. In the colonial situation, home represents its political dimension through domestic practice and becomes a ground for act of resistance. This resistance is evidenced in Reverend Mother’s imperial traits who try hard to keep her house in great order being indifferent to what is happening outside. Reverend Mother “lived within an invisible fortress of her own making, an ironclad citadel of traditions and certainties” (Rushdie 40). It seems she was well aware that one had to maintain home successfully, if he was to maintain a successful nation. “The domestic rules she established were a system of self-defence” (41), and the rules are to fight against the chaos of public in her way. In this way, Reverend Mother established her kingdom within the domestic space of her home sticking to the traditions of India, fought against the challenges of the colonial values that were ready to grab the whole nation. The power of Reverend Mother within the private arena is evidenced at the dining table that Saleem describes-

“...And at the dinner-table, imperiously, she continued to rule. No food was set upon the table, no plates were laid. Curry and crockery were marshalled upon a low side-table by her right hand, and Aziz and the children ate what she dished out. It is a sign of the power of this custom that, even when her husband was afflicted by constipation, she never once permitted him to choose his food, and listened to no requests or words of advice. A fortress may not move. Not even when its dependants’ movements become irregular” (41).

Thus, the politics of Reverend Mother is limited within her own home boundary, and she uses her home as a space to exercise her power for anti-colonial resistance. She carefully shuts the door when the chaos of the public knocks at her door. Reverend Mother makes the kitchen as her private space to control emerging as an emperor against her husband as well as the colonial rule. Upstone in her article “Domesticity in Magical Realist Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*” discusses the politicization of the home, and she argues that the power centered on the home gives women an important status, as for the colonial wife, the successful home was to be seen as a contribution to empire, so maintaining the home successfully against the colonial infiltration could be an act of anti-colonial resistance (267). Therefore, she allows keeping Mian Abdullah’s comrade Nadir Khan in her home. However, when Major Zulfikar invades her home with a force of fifteen men to expose Nadir, the public merges with the her domestic arena that makes her to feel “unhomely” with the fear of losing her control as well as reputation.

Contrary to Reverend Mother, “home” is a site of power contestation for Amina as her urge for achieving power and control becomes overarching than the emotional attachments or relationships. Amina is equally blessed with such empowering talents of home-making like her mother. Regarding her home-making skills Saleem narrates-

“Nobody ever took pains the way Amina did. Dark of skin, glowing of eye, my mother was by nature the most meticulous person on earth. Assiduously, she arranged flowers in the corridors and rooms of the Old Delhi house; carpets were selected with infinite care. She could spend twenty-five minutes worrying at the positioning of a chair. By the time she’d finished with her home-making, adding tiny touches here, making fractional

alterations there, Ahmed Sinai found his orphan's dwelling transformed into something gentle and loving" (Rushdie 67).

Despite her such home-making skills, she would fail in positioning herself at her own house, in the Methwold Estate, in presence of Reverend Mother. By overpowering her, "Reverend Mother sat at the head of the dining-table, doling out food" (139) and she "doled out the curries and meatballs of intransigence, dishes imbued with the personality of their creator; Amina ate the fish salans of stubbornness and the birianis of determination" (139). Thus, she enraged Amina and triggered her will to take control that she expressed by saying, "I'm fed up. If nobody in this house is going to put things right, then it's just going to be up to me" (139). Amina with this anger and rage transcends the boundaries of her home as well as of her "self" on this very day. George explains Amina's rage by saying for her home serves "as sites of both potential subversion and containment" (George 19). The overpowering attitude of Reverend Mother makes her feel that she is gradually losing control and authoritative position at her own home. As a result, she goes for seeking power in public spheres as Saleem says,

"Remembered glimpses of Mahalaxmi Racecourse cantered in her head as she pushed aside saris and petticoats. The fever of a reckless scheme flushed her cheeks as she opened the lid of an old tin trunk...filling her purse with the coins and rupee notes of grateful patients and wedding-guests, my mother went to the races" (Rushdie 139).

This illustrates the point that being failed to exercise power and skills at home; she tries her luck in "public" space and her skills in patriarchal domain. According to Saleem's narration:

"She stood in line at the Tote window, putting money on three-horse accumulators and long-odds outsiders. Ignorant of the first thing about horses, she backed mares known not to be stayers to win long races; she put her money on jockeys because she liked their

smiles. Clutching a purse full of the dowry which had lain untouched in its trunk since her own mother had packed it away, she took wild flutters on stallions who looked fit for the Schapsteker Institute...and won, and won, and won” (139-140).

The desperation of getting back the control literally strips her away from her role of “angel in the house” as she exercises the power negatively and puts it into a wrong interpretation through an extra marital affair. In response to the questions of being decent or legal, she justifies herself by saying that “What can’t be cured must be endured. I am doing what must be done” (140). It seems being “freed from the exigencies of running her home” (139) and “filled with a kind of rage” (139), Amina is pushed forward to rediscover “the adventurous streak” within her.

Further, we see Amina urging for a new identity other than the wife of Ahmed Sinai the daughter of Reverend Mother or the mother of two children, she goes out to win, to have her own identity, to reunite with her ex-lover, as home is no longer her own place to reign. The clash between the mother and daughter as well as the fear of losing control over domestic space allows Amina to seek for her own identity which she does not find at home. J. Douglas Porteous in his article “Home, The Territorial Core” talks about home as physical space which can be personalized and he states, “The personalization of space is an assertion of identity and a means of ensuring stimulation. The defense of space is the means by which stimulation is achieved and security assured” (Porteous 383). This explains Amina’s attempt to personalize the home according to her interest to manifest her power as well as her crossing of the boundary of her home. The failure of attaining that power leads her to feel the home as the “unhomely”.

Now the changing psychological aspects of “home” are mainly witnessed through Saleem Sinai who is the outlet of Rushdie’s feeling towards his homeland, India. It is important to acknowledge Rushdie’s sense of “unhomely” to understand Saleem’s feelings. Rushdie in

Imaginary Homelands acknowledges the fact that an Indian writer writing from outside is “obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost” (Rushdie 11). Now this is a feeling of “uncomfortable” or “unhomely” on the author’s part towards his homeland which essence has been incorporated into the character of Saleem Sinai. It seems Saleem was in the state of “unhomeliness” from the very beginning of his childhood due to the spatial politics and question of nationality. Due to the turmoil of both public and private, Saleem feels himself secure and safe in the washing-chest made of slatted wood of the bathroom at Buckingham Villa. He considers that little space as his private space where he can fully concentrate on himself and indulge himself in fairy tales. He thinks that people outside the washing-chest are “seemed to possess a devastatingly clear sense of purpose” (Rushdie 152) which compels him to escape the chaos of home and outside through his fairy tales. Saleem states,

“I became Aladdin, voyaging in a fabulous cave; watching servants dusting vases with a dedication as majestic as it was obscure, I imagined Ali Baba’s forty thieves hiding in the dusted urns; in the garden, staring at Purushottam the sadhu being eroded by water, I turned into the genie of the lamp, and thus avoided, for the most part, the terrible notion that I, alone in the universe, had no idea what I should be, or how I should behave” (153).

The words retorted by Saleem clearly justify his “unhomely” feeling in his own “home”. “Home” is supposed to be a place where an individual feels comfortable, and can do whatever he or she wants, he or she does not to think or rethink. Ironically, Saleem is seeking shelter and security in the little washing-chest inside his own home and thinking about what he should or he should not, despite of having a large roof over his head.

Saleem's attempt to find a secure "place" within his own "home" suggests Saleem's "unhomely" feeling due to the tension between the private and the public, the home and postcolonial nation. In the washing-chest, Saleem feels himself away from the fears, anxieties and expectations that are injected to his head by his father at a very early age. He says, "Great things! My son: what is not in store for you? Great deeds, a great life!"(152), and further, he would suggest "Just pull up your socks, whatsitname, and you'll be better than anyone in the whole wide world!" (152). This kind of load of expectations affects negatively on young mind that often keep them in fear and anxiety, which is seen in Saleem's case. He himself says, "I became afraid that everyone was wrong that my much-trumpeted existence might turn out to be utterly useless, void, and without the shred of purpose" (152). For this very reason, despite having the physical "home", Saleem's psychological aspects of "home" remains as the "unhomely".

Further, Saleem literally becomes homeless due to the spatial politics such as political turmoil, and postcolonial migration. Consequently, the displaced Saleem suffers from identity crisis and finds both his homeland as well as the migrated land "unhomely". His imagination and expectations conflict with the harsh reality, when Saleem moves out the geographical border of India. Saleem remains in a constant search for a secure "place" or "space" that he can consider his own home. In Upstone's words "the power of such a secure space is not simply to remove personal anxiety buy also public danger: the tumult of society that is, under transition from empire to freedom" (Upstone 278). This suggests the general postcolonial migrated people who constantly search for their own space and identity being displaced from the long-considered home or personal space due to the tension between home and outside. In Saleem's case his attempts to achieve meaning in relation to Indian history intertwines him emotionally with his

motherland, India. To Saleem, home is not only the Buckingham Villa or Bombay, but the noble mansion of free India. He regards himself as someone who has the fate of the nation in his hands, and thus, he interprets the historical events of India in relation to his own family history and his fate. Saleem says, "I had been mysteriously hand-cuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (Rushdie 9).

Additionally, Nehru's speech assures Saleem's sense of being equal to the state who says, "You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own" (167). This strengthens Saleem's attachment to his motherland, and he discovers his telepathic power to be connected with all the midnight's children from all over the India.

However, after the Indo-China war, Saleem along with his family had to move to Pakistan, where he ultimately confronts the idea of "unhomely" and become alienated in a foreign land that was supposed to be his own. Pakistan seems ultimate hostile toward him as he loses his memories, family, and he is also mistreated for being Indian, trigger his unhomely feelings intensely. He loses his family, his memories as well as his telepathic power to remain connected with his home. Saleem being displaced in his exile in Pakistan longs for coming back to his country, his home, India. Ironically, his homecomings or his return to Bombay is not that welcoming as his expectation, and he literally becomes homeless. On his coming back to home or Bombay, Saleem understands the rejection by his nation. His upbringing with the thought of being interrelated with the fate of the nation seems fading away, and Saleem, "No longer connected to history, drained above-and-below, had I made my way back to the capital, conscious that an age, which had begun on that long-ago midnight, had come to a sort of end"

(442). He himself questions about the linkage of him with the nation that does not make any sense to him anymore.

Additionally, Saleem acknowledges his true position in the long-cherished idea of his home and his connection to history in his words “actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically and passively-literally, I was inextricably entwined with my world” (330). He understands that his history and Indian histories are knotted to each other only in his own imaginary world, not necessary it is true for the nation as well. Hefferman explains that Saleem encounters certain problems of “containment, boundaries, centrality, and marginality” (Hefferman 473) due to the emergence of a modern nation in postcolonial context. Consequently, he feels quite at a loss, as his story of “imagined community” as well as his dreams of saving the country all seems meaningless. It is because he never comes back home, and he never feels at home in the place that he has considered his home. Now, the personalization of space in terms of Saleem can be explained by Rushdie’s own statement who says, “my India was just that: ‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (Rushdie 10). Certainly, Saleem feels unhomely within his long-cherished home India because he has never thought about the other versions of India, but was incredibly attached to his own version of India. Therefore, it is not the India that is true, but his love and expectations for India which is conflicted to harsh reality resulting in Saleem’s “unhomely” state.

“Home” as the “unhomely” in Saleem’s case can be explained in Sigmund Freud’s the “Uncanny”. The “uncanny” is that of “the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (Freud 219). The German words *unheimlich* and *heimlich* are related to the “uncanny”. *Unheimlich* is opposite of *heimlich*. The meaning of *heimlich* is “familiar”, “native”, “belonging to the home” while *unheimlich* suggests “unhomely”. Therefore, the

“uncanny” suggests something “unhomely” and “fearful” within the familiar boundary. The uncanny arises with the recurrence of something repressed and fearful in our psychic life. It is the confirmation or return of surmounted primitive beliefs of the human species. In Saleem’s case, the feeling of “unhomely” within his very familiar realm India occurs due to the return of his repressed fear that is the fear of “absurdity”. Saleem himself states at the very beginning of the novel that “I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning- yes, meaning- something. I admit it: above all things. I fear absurdity” (Rushdie 9). Similarly, In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Mr. Biswas’s mental disorientation and disillusionment while staying at “Green Vale” can be explained through the “Uncanny” where every night Mr. Biswas finds his own familiar ‘home’ dreadful and horrific due to the repressed childhood memories of being invaded by his neighbour Dhari at his “pastoral home”.

Saleem creates his own world of fantasy where he is telepathically connected to all the midnight’s children, and he considers himself very significant as his fate and India’s fate are entwined with each other. Saleem has always tried to give meaning to his life by being a hero and saving the nation from the chaos of the public. Certainly, the reality contradicts his imagination, and the fear of the absurdity comes back resulting his home as the “unhomely. Unfortunately, within his home he feels “homely’ only in washing-chest because he fears the “absurdity” might come back by proving his existence “utterly useless, void, and without the shred of a purpose” (152). Therefore, the subject of uncanny in Saleem’s case is the “absurdity” of life which with time becomes repressed and for Mr. Biswas’s case it is the returning of his repressed childhood memories. Unfortunately, after migrating to Pakistan, the fear comes into reality. The loss of his memory, the loss of his telepathic power, and the loss of his parents make his life absurd and vague. Even when he regains his memory and comes back to India, he finds

himself as an utterly homeless and useless person. Due to the spatial politics, his India undergoes a huge transformation. As a result, though he finds the shelter, the psychological aspect of home is blurred as he cannot make something meaningful out of the changing India. The failure of making his life meaningful in relation to the history of India, the repressed fear of “absurdity” returns that make Saleem feeling “unhomely” or “uncanny” within his familiar realm of India.

Conclusion:

To conclude, 'home' is a pervading image as well as theme in both V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* where both the authors explore home in postcolonial context where 'home' loses its classical connotations attached to it. The physical and psychological aspects of home change due to the imperial domination, superstitious culture of marginalized society, politics of space, and ambivalence of the nation that makes home as the 'unhomely' in *Midnight's Children* and creates desire of having an own house in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. In both the novels, the transitional space of Trinidad and India causes the 'home' deviated from its classical connotations, and make the protagonist feel 'unhomely' and displaced with no sense of belonging. The protagonists become "outsiders" within their own familiar space that causes 'identity crisis' for Saleem Sinai whereas it creates the desperate desire of having his own home in Mr. Biswas. Also, it is evident in both the novel that how the Hanuman House and Methwold Estate gradually lose the psychological aspects of 'home' in postcolonial context by involving the characters in the colonial mimicry and separates them from their root. Noticeably, both Mr. Biswas and Saleem were born at the hour of "midnight" that makes one an "omen" in his family and another one a special "midnight's children" with magical power who is "indissolubly chained" with Indian history.

In addition, we see how the unity of Mrs. Tulsi and Seth gives her a power to dominate the Hanuman House, and other male and female characters, but the clash with Seth results in the demotion of power in part of Mrs. Tulsi and she becomes 'unhomely'. On the other hand, we see the strengthening of individuality in part of Shama after coming out from the Tulsidom where she is a dominated inferior member only and embraces her own home in Sikim Street. Similarly, in *Midnight's Children* Reverend Mother and Amina, home becomes "unhomely" due to the

marginalization of the public and private spatial politics. Reverend Mother views her home as the “unhomely” as her power is subverted by the invading of the public chaos. On the other hand, Amina feels “unhomely” because she fails to establish her power within her personal domain. Finally, the psychological aspect of home is gone in Mr. Biswas and Saleem Sinai because of the spatial politics as well as the ambivalence of the nation. For Mr. Biswas, the attempts of creating a meaning of life and sense of belonging was only possible through acquiring a house of his own, which was finally successful but the sense of ‘homeliness’ came much later as the house was mortgaged. Likewise, Saleem’s attempts of making his life meaningful in relation to Indian history as well as his attempts to escape absurdity turn out to be unsuccessful that causes his feeling of “unhomely” within his own long-cherished home, India.

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