



A Postcolonial Appraisal of V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*

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Received: 06-08-2014

Accepted: 12-10-2014

Published: 01-03-2015

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.2p.104

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.2p.104>

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate traces of Homi K Bhabha's postcolonial key notions in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). Postcolonialism as a postmodern approach seeks to illustrate the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. One of these postcolonial critic is Homi Bhabha who through employing some terms like *Hybirdity, Mimicry, Ambivalence...* depicts this relationship. In the writings of Bhabha, depicted best in *The Location of Culture* (1994), he concentrates on the interaction of cultures and looks at the ways that two cultures merge into each other. In considering Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a postcolonial text, by the help of Postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha it is argued that the mentioned novel sums up Naipaul's approach to how individuals relate to places.

Keywords: Creolization, Identity, Ambivalence, Unhomeliness, Clash of Cultures

1. Introduction

The present study attempts to apply the postcolonial approach on V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). It has been tried to trace Bhabha's post-colonial notions such as Mimicry, Unhomeliness, Ambivalence, Creolization in this famous novel by the help of Homi K. Bhabha's theories in specific. Homi K. Bhabha, (1949) one of the famous contemporary voices in Postcolonial studies, was born in Mumbai, India. Bhabha received his undergraduate degree from Elphinstone College, Bombay University in 1970. A Master of Philosophy in 1974 and MA in 1977 was followed by a PhD in 1990 from Oxford University. Bhabha under the influence of a wide range of theorists from political to literary ones such as Lacan, Freud, Bakhtin, Derrida, ... as an important post-colonial theorist argues that in the encounter of the colonizer and the colonized both cultures are affected, neither culture is pure. In the writings of Bhabha, depicted best in *The Location of Culture* (1994), He concentrates on the interaction of cultures and looks at the ways two more cultures merge into each other. In this study the researcher is going to apply some of his theories such as Stereotyping, Mimicry and Hybridity in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*. (1961). Characters of *A House for Mr. Biswas* are away from their homes and have to accept the rules and customs of the governing culture in which they find themselves unhomed and then they are as Bhabha says, psychological refugees since they do not know to which culture they belong, to their Indian culture or to British one. They do not know which culture should be of value to them as a result of which their characters and personalities become ambivalent. Their identities are floating, hovering between the dominant culture and their own cultures

A House for Mr. Biswas became Naipaul's fourth published work and brought him international attention. Reviewers in the United States and England admired Naipaul's writing, both for its sense of humor and for its portrayal of people who felt separated from the culture in which they lived. After the success of *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, who was also a historian, asked the novelist to consider writing a nonfiction work about the Caribbean. Naipaul felt uncertain about his ability to write nonfiction but decided to accept a scholarship to travel the islands. This assignment was the beginning of his expanded career as a journalist, and he became known as a writer who looked beneath the surface of a culture to examine its social and cultural underpinnings.

Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a tragicomic novel set in Trinidad in 1950s, and was published in 1961. It deals with an East Indian's struggle for a place to settle his identity. "The novel takes its subject matter from the excluded peoples who have been alienated from societies to which they apparently belong, and who are in search of an identity"(Recep Tas, p. 2, 2011). In his book "Naipaul tries to bring forward the life of an ordinary double exiled and marginalized man, Mr. Biswas and his struggles to find a place of his own in the Caribbean country of Trinidad" (Benoit, p.89, 2007).

Pit Recept Tas in the essay, "Alienation, Naipaul and Mr. Biswas", considers the most important contribution of *A House for Mr. Biswas* as "legitimization of the spoken language of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indies" (p. 32). He believes that this book is strong in the use of vernacular and this makes Naipaul a pioneer in the use of the authentic language of the people in his early fiction and underscores his life long search for honesty, integrity and authenticity as a writer. Madhu Benoit, from Université Stendhal Grenoble, in his essay "Cultural Representations: Strange or Stranger? Displaced Identities in V.S. Naipaul" notes that the problem of a displaced and non-replaced cultural identity is poignantly depicted in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Yet what is distinctive in this study is the application of Homi Bhabha's theories to *A House for Mr.* to confirm the novel as Postcolonial text.

2. Post-colonial Criticism

Bhabha's complicated and abstract style has made him a leading character in the world of post-colonial criticism. Post-colonialism is a term for the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that is specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. Postcolonial studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America. Therefore, postcolonial criticism seeks to understand politically, socially, culturally and psychologically the operations of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies. "It analyses the ideological forces that pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values, on the one hand, and promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, on the other hand". (Tyson, p. 418, 2006)

In fact postcolonial studies primarily inaugurated by Fanon's dissertations and two highly influential texts, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and Said's *Orientalism* (1978) that he was a founding figure of colonialism. The main thinkers of postcolonial studies include Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Homi k. Bhabha, the critic who the researcher used and applied his theories and ideas in this research is another influential and important figures of postcolonial studies. The gist of Bhabha's theoretical framework is epitomized in his book *Location of Culture* in which he discusses the concepts such as Mimicry, Ambivalence, Hybridity, and Identity.... In his works and theories, Bhabha is under the influence of a wide range of theorists from political to literary ones such as Lacan, Freud, Bakhtin, Derrida,... Bhabha believes that in the encounter of the colonizer and the colonized both cultures are affected, neither culture is pure. Colonizer thinks that through suppression and giving specific way of behavior, they can dominate the colonized, deterring uprising. However, the colonizer is also affected in this interaction and the colonized as well inject some of their conventions and manners to them. Bhabha by the help of some terms such as mimicry, stereotype, ambivalence, unhomeliness ... argues that the identity of both colonizer and the colonized is changed during their encounter.

cultural diversity or multiculturalism is a key term in postcolonial study, In common usage, these terms both refer interchangeably to the variety of cultures and the need to acknowledge this variety to avoid universal prescriptive cultural definitions. However, Homi Bhabha, in the essay "The commitment to theory" (1988), employs the terms as "oppositions to draw a distinction between two ways of representing culture"(qut in Ashcroft, p. 60, 2000).

As it inferred from the word itself include a variety of cultures and according to Bhabha is a range of separate and distinct groups of behavior, attitudes and values. By cultural difference Bhabha also suggests that cultural authority is not merely a series of fixed to be defined, but is what brings in to discriminate between the various "statements of culture or *on* culture' and which gives right to the creation of the fields of references by which we order them". (p. 20) Instead of 'cross- referencing', Bhabha extends, there is "an effective, productive cross-cutting across sites of social significance that erase the dialectical, disciplinary sense of cultural reference and relevance". (p.128)

Bhabha's main focus is on what happens on the borderlines of cultures and also in-between cultures through what he calls *liminal*, 'meaning that which is on the border or the threshold' and emphasizes on what is in between fixed cultural forms or identities like self and other that is central to the creation of new cultural meaning. In fact, Bhabha's work is studying of how language transforms its actual meaning through its confrontation of colonizer and colonized.

"Creolization is the process of intermixing and cultural change that produces a creole society" (Ashcroft, p. 51. 2000). Creolization is mostly used to refer to those "post-colonial societies whose present ethnically or racially mixed populations are a product of European colonization" (p. 51). Creolization is actually defined based on the response each individual has toward the creole society they are living in. These responses can be religious, educational, and psychological. ... As Brathwaite in his *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* explains: creolization "is a cultural process - "material, psychological and spiritual - based upon the response" each person has to their new environment and to each other. Whereas the quality of this response and the interaction they have are to a large extent dependent and are defined by the dominant culture, they produce a totally "new construct" (p. 11). In this interaction the individual has with the dominant culture and the other cultures living in the *Creole* society, "they might tend to accept the norms of the society and absorb it through which their culture might undergo a drastic change or they might look at the new culture with which they can cooperate to enrich their own culture as a reciprocal activity" (p. 13).

Other important key in Bhabha's theory is the term Diaspora. It generally means dispersing, moving from one place (one's homeland) to another place or region, as Joanathan Ingleby (2007) defines diaspora includes a dispersion from one place or "centre" from which all the dispersed take their identity, though there can be a variety of foreign destinations. The facts that they are always remain stranger and always look as minority in eyes of their host and differ from majority. They're (immigrants or diasporan people) permanently in connection with their homeland. According to

Ingleby, "diaspora communities are both needy and open"(p. 2). Diaspora from postcolonial perspective and from the perspective and from which the researcher's attempt is on clarifying, as Huddart argues, available space between two places that reinforce the sense of belonging to two cultures and beliefs in which the diasporan people feels some gap.

Mimicry another rife term used in his studies in. Bhabha defines mimicry as an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners and ideas. By exaggeration he means repetition with difference; repeating and copying colonizing culture, language, behavior, manners and values by the colonized (or the immigrant in this research) that, as Bhabha understands," includes both mimicry and 'menace' so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (p. 86), therefore it is not representation of the servitude of the colonized rather it can be considered as an attempt to change its identity that occur by mimicry and copying the other culture that sometimes cause mockery and this menace self-identity and culture of both colonizer and colonized which originates nowhere. Bhabha says "mimicry repeats rather that re-presents"(p. 85); beside Bhabha's statements, mimicry represents an ironic compromise between two ideas mimesis and mimicry" (p. 86). Following Bhabha's idea "the excess or slippage' produced by the ambivalence" of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not completely torn the discourse but transfer into an ambiguity or uncertainty makes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence, 'partial' here means "incomplete and virtual"(p. 86), in short: In order to be effective: mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.

One of the most significant concepts in the postcolonial studies is the discourse of stereotypes. As said beforehand, in the process of identity creation the colonizer considers themselves as superior and the native people as inferior, giving them the identity that they are just "indolent, thoughtless, sexually, immoral, unreliable and demented" (Bressler, p. 140, 2007). On the contrary, their own culture, " the colonizer's, is civilized, sophisticated, or as postcolonial critics put it, *metropolitan*" (Tyson, p. 419, 2006). Therefore, native peoples are defined as savage, backward and undeveloped, because as colonizer's technology is highly developed, their culture is highly developed too and thereby they ignore the customs and codes of behavior of the indigenous inhabitants of the colonized.

Ambivalence as a colonial and postcolonial aspect is the most central attention of Bhabha .It stems from colonial discourse in communicating with the colonizer or the host ('colonizer' in this research refers in fact to the 'host' and is not in its public negative authoritative sense) by mimicry that sometimes causes to mockery and therefore results in disorders in usual colonial relationships that as Bhabha says, doesn't related to rebellion and resistance of the colonized ('colonized' in this research refers to the 'immigrant'). There is a controversial statement in which Bhabha says that "ambivalence represents the existing fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery". (p. 87); however it is worth of mentioned that ambivalence is an undesirable aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer. The relationship between colonizer and colonized which is the complex mix of 'attraction and repulsion' is called ambivalent in Bhabha's viewpoint. Considering colonizer who moves to the host's culture and society, colonial relationship then refers to relationship between these two groups.

The concept of hybridity formulated in the work of Homi K. Bhabha in the 1980s that is original mixedness of something like mixedness of language and culture of some different people of different races." Hybridity is a new cultural and a privileged third space, the hybrid can be considered as something that is 'neither the one nor the other" (Bhabha, p. 10, 994).Bhabha believes that hybridity is camouflage, in fact camouflage of self-identity and mimic other culture that the immigrant (colonized) creates through polarization between self and other. Also in this research it should be mentioned that Other refers to the colonizer or (as told before) the host, because as someone moves to the other land or society feels a sense of strange identity that doesn't belong to the new place and to the new home, therefore tries to adapt him/herself to new situation by mimicking native people, it sometimes lead them to hybridize their own culture and language with the new situation culture and language and then lost the way and create an identity that belongs to nowhere, this as Bhabha says" is just like a heresy" (p. 226, 2007) . He notes "how newness enters the world" (p. 227) and it is depended on a "process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences". (p. 252)

As said before, in the interaction between the two cultures both the colonizer's culture and the colonized one are affected. The colonized want to be accepted by the culture of the colonizer; however, they are ashamed of their own culture as inferior. Postcolonial thinkers often describes the colonized as having a double consciousness, in other words, "a consciousness or a way of perceiving the world that is divided between two antagonistic cultures: that of the colonizer and that of the indigenous community" (Tyson, p. 421. 2006). (It is interesting to note that the concept of double consciousness was first articulated in 1903 by African American writer W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*). In this interaction the colonized perceive two view of the world; one of the colonizer and that of themselves. They ask themselves to what culture do they belong? It seems that neither culture feels like home for them. They feel that they are unhomed. This feeling of being unhomed is quite different from the feeling of being homeless since they have home but their home is not quiet theirs.

As Tyson says, " to be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak" (p. 421). Bhabha calls this feeling of being caught between two cultures *unhomeness*__ the concept that is often referred to as *double consciousness*. This feeling of confusion and abandonment by both the colonizer's and the colonized's cultures often makes the colonized a psychological refugees since their cultures have been blended and they cannot strongly say to which culture they do belong. Double consciousness or unhomeness often produces an unstable sense of self because your identity has undergone a change because of being exposed to the imposed culture.

3. Different Changes in three Generations of Creole Society of Trinidad

A House for Mr. Biswas is a story and history of three generations of Indian people living in the Creole society of Trinidad. The three generations in the novel are viewed through the eyes of Mr. Biswas who is the protagonist and the focus of the novel. During this encounter, as the generations are passing before our eyes, we, as readers of the novel, become aware of the cultural changes in the rituals of the Indian people of the novel as a result of which their identity and beliefs undergo drastic changes. As Rosmary Pitt argues "the main changes which are recorded are the decline of the Hindu culture and rituals as they undergo the process of creolization and the accompanying changes in attitude" (p.8, 2001). These cultural changes, which form their identity during their encounter with the colonizer and the other people of their race, are psychological, spiritual, religious and educational. What is of great importance in the novel is that these changes occur along with the changes in the Creole society in which different cultures are clashing with one another and they all are to adopt themselves to the norms and values assigned to them by the dominant culture.

3.1 Change of Language in Creole Society

One of the significant issues that the colonized may face in the Creole society of Trinidad is the matter of language among the Indian people, immigrating there. As the story goes on and we are confronted with changing generation of India, we see how the native language of the people changes and is supplanted by the language of the colonizer. However, the interesting thing even among the characters occupying the space of the novel is that they use Indian or English language in different situation and according to their needs. Language marks one's identity and losing the original language means losing one's origin. This is what happens in these three generations in the novel.

The culture Mr. Biswas was born to speak Hindi but as the time goes on because they are living in a Creole society of mixed cultures, they begin to use English instead of Hindi in public. Tara, Mr. Biswas's aunt, speaks in English with the photographer in his father's funeral as English is becoming the prevalent English in Trinidad: "Leave them, the photographer said in English. Is a nice little touch. Flowers on the ground" ... Five people all together," the photographer said to Tara. Hard to know just how to arrange them. It look to me that it would have to be two one side and three the other side. You sure you want all five?" (*A House for Mr. Biswas*. P. 13, 1995). It shows how the dominant culture is influential in shaping one's identity and culture that they begin to use the colonizer's language in public. Another instance that shows how English has become their public language is when the widows use Hindi as a secret language while visiting Mrs. Tulsi's house: "the women ... heedless of stares, they stared; and made comments in Hindi, unusually loud, unusually ribald, because in the city Hindi was a secret language, and they were in holiday mood" (*HB*, p. 172). Hindi has become a secret language, which is their native language. As we will see, as their language changes their identity will also change in the generations to come.

Mr. Biswas himself uses English at Hanuman House as an act of rebellion against the other members in the house "even when they spoke to him Hindi". He uses "English as a gesture of rebellion and independence" (Pitt, p. 10, 2001). As said before, native language is used in different situation implying various meanings for the characters. For example, when they feel comfortable with each other they use Hindi language. "Ghany could follow their conversation. He disliked the way Indian women had of using Hindi as a secret language in public places, and asked impatiently, "Date of both?" (*HB*. P. 18). Here as they are speaking to Ghany on how to get certificate for Mr. Biswas they speak Hindi. Both Bipti and Tara use Hindi as they do not feel comfortable using English in front of a foreigner and prefer to use Hindi instead of English language, which makes Ghany angry. As Ludic Caribbean argues: "in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the use of Hindi is a sign of intimacy and tenderness, whereas the use of English shows distance and rejection" (p. 125, 2006). Here, Hindi language is used a sign of friendship and relation.

When Mr. Biswas after a period of absence from the family and Hanuman House, comes back and talks to Mrs. Tulsi, he spontaneously talks to him in a friendly Hindi language as he now feels at ease with her and calls her Mai meaning mother: "Mr. Biswas didn't want to talk to Mrs. Tulsi in Hindi, but the Hindi words came out. "How are you, Mai? I couldn't come to see you last night because it was too late and I didn't want to disturb you" (*HB*, p. 94). In another occasion, when Mr. Biswas has thrown a letter to Shama to express his love to her_ the letter instead of Shama falls into the hand of her mother, Mrs. Tulsi. Seth, who while not being related to the family, is working for the family and is a part of it, tells Mr. Biswas that Mrs. Tulsi wants to see him. Seth speaks in English instead of Hindi, which makes Mr. Biswas distraught as he knows that speaking in English here is not a sign of good news for him: "The old lady want to see you before you go". "Mr. Biswas resented the tone, and was disturbed that Seth had spoken to him in English" (*HB*, p. 38). The same Seth speaks in Hindi when he wants to show his dissatisfaction about Mr. Biswas behavior as he feels that in this way he could make himself understood better: "Eh?" For the first time there was impatience in Seth's voice, and, to show his displeasure, he began talking Hindi. "This is gratitude. You come here, penniless, a stranger. We take you in, we give you one of our daughters, we feed you, and we give you a place to sleep in. You refuse to help in the store, you refuse to help on the estate. All right. But then to turn around and insult us!" (*HB*, p. 49). Seth is very upset with Biswas's behavior as Biswas is not working and is instead eating the readymade food at Hanuman House and is insulting the members of Tusli's family. Even when Mr. Biswas wants Tara's opinion about Shama since Tara has seen her and talks to her mother, he speaks in English, as he sees that Hindi is not smooth enough for the situation you are not at ease with: "He paid no attention to Ajodha and asked Tara in English, "You like she?" Hindi was too intimate and tender" (*HB*, p. 46). The striking thing is that he even talks with his wife, Shama, in English as he sees no friendship between them: "But there was yet little friendliness between them. They spoke in English" (*HB*, p. 47).

In the novel some characters uses English as it seems classy for them to speak in English and they might attract attention. For example, Shivlochan the new leader of Aryans speaks Hindi mixed with English to attract the attention of

people listening to him: “He spoke pompous Hindi and little English, and continually allowed himself to be bullied by Misir” (*HB*, p. 55). He uses English to show that he has kept his native language as a pure Indian and also he is an educated man. When Owad has come back from England and their sisters are in the kitchen talking, they speak English in a way to show off themselves to each other: “They spoke no Hindi, used the grossest English dialect and the coarsest expressions and vied with one another in doing menial jobs and getting themselves dirty” (p. 261). However, as we see, as the generation shifts, their language also shifts. In the first generation, the time of Rahgu and Bipti they speak Pure Hindi. As the time passes and during the second generation, we have both English and Hindi languages whereby the people communicates but in the third generation and the time of Anand and Savi, Hindi language is gradually disappearing. They cannot properly communicate with Bipti, their grandmother: “Though the children understood Hindi they could no longer speak it, and this limited communication between them and Bipti” (p. 204). They just understand Hindi but cannot speak it and it shows that along with the changes that happen in language during the generations, the identity of each generation also differs from the previous ones. Many times, when Mr. Biswas visits Hanuman House, he sees old men that talk about going back to India. These old men never bother themselves to learn English, unlike the next generations, which speak English as their first language. Language articulates a man’s identity. Losing one’s original language entails the loss of one’s original culture and indigenous identity. As the language differs, identity differs as well and they lose their original identity to which the older generation sticks so ardently. As we see at the end of the novel, in the third generation, “it is Trinidadian creole language that holds sway” (Pitt, p. 10. 2001)

3.2 Cultural changes in Creole Society

Another important thing, which happens during the generation’s change, is the culture affecting the identity of people living in the Creole society. The cultural change can be observed in Tara’s speech as she says: “Tara said, “Fashions are changing all the time these days. I am just old fashioned, that is all.” She stroked her gold nose-flower. “It is expensive to be old fashioned” (*HB*. P. 15, 995). She is the representative of the first generation and talks about the changes that is occurring in fashion. The first generation of Indianan is strictly following the rules and customs of their culture but as we gradually come to the following generations, they change.

The culture and customs are dealt with, differently from the first generation born in India and the next ones that were born in Trinidad. The first generation of these migrants with representatives such as Mrs. Tulsi, Seth, Mr. Biswas’s aunt- Tara- and her husband- Ajodha- strictly follow the rules and customs, never allowing diversion. Rules that inhibit mixing with other races, or even with Indians from an improper caste. As a case in point, when Ajodha’s brother, Bhandat who has a mistress of another race is deprived of his helps and banished to loneliness as Tara has sworn not to mention his name again: “Bhandat had left his sons and gone to live with his mistress in Port of Spain. The boys were taken in by Tara, who added Bhandat’s name to those never mentioned by her again” (*HB*, p. 34, 995). It shows how the first generation is strict on following the customs that getting wife of another race is a disgrace to their family. Even when Mr. Biswas’s sister has escaped with Tara’s worker, Tara swears not to mention her name forever since she has caused disgrace for the family, escaping with a yard boy and when Mr. Biswas is expected to get angry, “he felt no anger or shame.” His sister, Dehuti that runs with a yard boy, disgraces Tara since “the yard boy is the lowest of the low” (p. 25). It shows that how the first generation is scrupulous about their customs and their caste while the second and third generations, Biswas and Dehuti are indifferent to the custom. Unlike their parents, the second generation does not believe in these rules anymore, as it happens for Ajodha’s nephews and Mr. Biswas’s sister that neglect them. Shekhar or to put her name in M. Biswas words, the big idol is against the traditional way of choosing him his wife and does not accept the old rules:

Efforts were being made to find him a wife from among the handful of eligible families. He expressed his disapproval by random angry outbursts, tears and threats of suicide. This was construed as a conventional shyness and, as such, was a source of amusement to sisters and brothers-in-law. But the children were frightened when he talked of leaving the house and buying rope and soft candle; they were not sure what he wanted the soft candle for; and they stayed out of his way. (*HB*, p. 100)

As we see he threatens to commit suicide if they force him to marry as he is against their conventional way of choosing him wife. The second generation is against the conventional way of selecting them their wives according to the traditional way. And even when Shekhar marries, he goes to live in his bride’s house, instead of bringing his wife to the Hanuman House which was a long held belief and custom to the family: “The elder god, contrary to Hindu custom and the traditions of his family, did not bring his bride home, but left Hanuman House for good, no longer talking of suicide, to look after the lorries, cinema, land and filling station of his wife’s family” (*HB*. P. 109). From the beginning, his wife sets the rule for the family and Shekhar’s sister. She boasts about her education and wears clothes, which are in sharp contrast with Tulsi’s tradition.

Relations between the sisters and Shekhar’s wife had never been easy. Despite the untraditional organization of Hanuman House, where married daughters lived with their mother, the sisters were alert to certain of the conventions of Hindu family relationships: mothers-in-law, for example, were expected to be hard on daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law were to be despised. But Shekhar’s wife had from the first met Tulsi patronage with arrogant Presbyterian modernity. She flaunted her education. She called herself Dorothy, without shame or apology ... Added to all this she sometimes sold the tickets at her cinema; which was disgraceful, besides being immoral ... Dorothy’s daughters were of exceptional beauty and the sisters could complain only that the Hindi names Dorothy had chosen—Mira, Leela, Lena—were meant to pass as Western ones. (*HB*, p. 175)

Even as we see, she (Shekhar's wife) refuses to put Indian names for her children and instead she puts western names on them as an act of resistance against family's rules. Shekhar's wife as the representative of the second generation does not follow the custom and traditional culture of her ancestors and turns against all of them. In the old generation, it was an honor for a wife to be beaten by the husband. Even they talk about the way they have been beaten proudly: "most of the women he knew were like Sushila, the widowed Tulsi daughter. She talked proudly of the beatings she had received from her short-lived husband. She regarded them as a necessary part of her training and often attributed the decay of Hindu society in Trinidad to the rise of the timorous, weak, non-beating class of husband" (*HB*, p.69). This is the traditional way of thinking of Hindu people in which being beaten by the husband is necessary and they are proud of it. However, as we see and as the time passes in the later generations we have a woman, Miss Logie, who is the head of the department of Community Welfare Officer.

3.3 Educational Changes

Along with the cultural changes that happen in the island, we see drastic changes in the education of the people in the three generations of the Indian people living in Trinidad. We see how this change in the encounter each generation has with education makes people's identity change too. During the course of the novel, we see how from the first generation to the third, their views towards the education change. As mentioned, the first generation believes more on superstitions and even when Biswas goes to school, he does not believe in the lessons he should learn. He thinks they are useless. At school, he learns both English and Hindi but in the next generation, it is the English language that is dominant and they forget even how to speak Hindi as the native language of their ancestors. However, the system of education is a progressive force in educating people as in the case of Mr. Biswas who is a literate person in contrast to his older brothers, which makes him question some unreasonable rules and traditions of his clan. It is also, as mentioned, "responsible for the decay of Hindu tradition" (Pitt, p. 10, 2001). The system of education according to the colonizer's topics is remote from the Hindu's tradition. Mr. Biswas is taught about oases and igloos on his entry to the new world at school in Pagotes, topics as removed from his experience which makes him ignore them and do not pay attention to them:

At Lai's [his teacher's] dictation he made copious notes, which he never seriously believed, about geysers, rift valleys, watersheds, currents, the Gulf Stream, and a number of deserts. He learned about oases, which Lai taught him to pronounce "osis", and ever afterwards an oasis meant for him nothing more than four or five date trees around a narrow pool of fresh water, surrounded for unending miles by white sand and hot sun. He learned about igloos. The history Lai taught he regarded as simply a school subject, a discipline, as unreal as the geography. (*HB*, p.20. 995)

"In this extract, we also find that there is a huge gap between what was taught in school and the students' reality" (Bolfarine, p. 2, 200) and what happens in their real life in Trinidad.

The same occurs when he is asked to write some essays as an assignment on the seasons in England of which he has no experience. However, as it seems, by the generation moving forward, they dissolve the problem and the third generation has no problem with this issue and they easily relate to the new topic. When he goes to Ramchan's house and meets his daughter studying new lessons, he says: "I didn't know that at his age," or as it is said "Mr. Biswas didn't know anything about arithmetic either" (*HB*, p. 148). As we see, Mr. Biswas as the second generation has problems with these topics but his sister's child has no problem with it.

In another occasion when Mrs. Tulsi has decided to send Owad abroad to study medicine, some of her friends turn their back on her as she is ignoring their caste and custom by sending her son abroad. Here we see the difference in view of different generations to education. "Forgetting that they were in Trinidad, that they had crossed the black water from India and had thereby lost all caste, they said they could have nothing more to do with a woman who was proposing to send her son across the black water" (*HB*, p. 167). Even though Mr. Biswas is from the second generation and his view is somehow traditional he lets his children, Anand and Savi, go abroad on scholarship, since he is afraid of their future. He does not want them to become a person as himself, a wanderer; therefore, he sends them on scholarship to go to England: As Pitt elucidates "Mr. Biswas fears for his son's future if the boy does not get some kind of education, but his fears are transformed into hope and optimism when his son goes abroad on a scholarship. This education system is viewed in an ambivalent way" (p. 9). We see how three generations treat education differently and how education changes their culture and identity during the time.

3.4 Changing in Religious Perspective

Hindu people living in Trinidad are very religious people sticking hard to their religious views. Similar to the other cultural changes that take place in the various generations, we face, during the course of the novel that religious view also changes as the generation changes. The first generation being Mrs. Tulsi, Bipti, and Tara hold strong outlooks toward religion and follow the customs and rules of their caste. As an example, the daily puja is done at Hanuman House as a tribute to the gods and everything, even the name of the house is a reminiscence of old India. However, this religious view fades as each generation emerges with their new mode of thought regarding religion. The view of each generation becomes more modernized and therefore we see the difference between the traditional Indian and the modern ones, declaring reformation of religion in their beliefs. As Imraan Coovadia asserts: "The novel sketches divisions between traditionalists and adherents of Reform Hinduism". In *Biswas*, each of the religious generation has become "more modern and more internally divided" (p. 110, 2009).

Mr. Biswas as being from a high caste is treated respectfully at the beginning of the novel whenever he goes to Tara's house. It shows how caste is important in their custom. "He became a different person ... In Tara's house he was respected as a Brahmin and pampered; yet as soon as the ceremony was over, he became once more only a laborer's child" (HB, p. 21, 1995). Even one of the reasons that Mrs. Tulsi agrees with Mr. Biswas's marriage to her daughter, Shama, is the fact that he is from a respected Brahman caste. As a child when he is a student, Tara does not want him to pursue education; therefore, she sends him to become a pundit, which he does not like very much. As a child, he is expected to become a pundit but he feels no compassion towards the religion and leaves, disgracing the holly tree. Later on, when he is married to the Tulsi family, he resents their idol worship and mocks them while they pray to the monkey god. To find a new way of teasing the family and also in search of a new community with which he would be able to construct a relationship, he turns to Aryanism, which was against caste, pundits, animistic ritual, parentally arranged and child marriage, and for the education of girls:

He was speaking of the protestant Hindu missionaries who had come from India were preaching that caste was unimportant, that Hinduism should accept converts, that idols should be abolished, that women should be educated, preaching against all the doctrines the orthodox Tulsis held dear ... after thousands of years of religion idols were an insult to the human intelligence and to God; birth was unimportant; a man's caste should be determined only by his actions. (HB, p. 52-3, 1995)

He is the first one to rebel against the long held religious views of Tulsis. We see how in the creole society of Trinidad even the staunch perspectives will be supplanted by new ideas. However, we should not forget that Mr. Biswas is not against all their customs. As he does not sell pig's oil, Lard: "Mr. Biswas's Hindu instincts didn't permit him to stock lard" (HB, p. 80). Similarly, Anand comes to see the sacred thread ceremony merely as an excuse for absenting himself from school, for he and his father know that he could not go to school with a shaved head, inviting ridicule from the other children and his teachers. Mr. Biswas encourages him to spend his retreat learning school notes, and his performance of the puja at Shorthills is a mockery. The only thing Anand can do is sticking flower stem under god's chin, and cannot treat the rituals seriously. Anand as the third generation does not believe in the religious rituals and he takes the rituals just for fun and cannot accept to go to school with his head shaved. He does not take the ceremony serious in the developing society of Trinidad. The view toward their cast is changing. As Samuel Selvon argues: "Hindu society has traditionally been divided into groups called castes, based on heredity, which determine a person's occupation and status. However, the influence of caste has been weakening, and discrimination based on caste is now frowned upon in democratic India" (p. 12). Even Anand turns to reading Bible and its verses, which makes Mrs. Tulsi loses her temper: "At home one day Anand began singing, "Jesus loves me, yes I know." Mrs. Tulsi was offended. "How do you know that Jesus loves you?" (HB, p. 163). This changing in view is more obvious when Shekhar, called by Mr. Biswas the big god, is wearing stuff related to Christian and drinking wine as a mark of religious view of Christianity. This is when Mr. Biswas turns against him and Mrs. Tusli, saying that this is against Hindu religion:

The elder god did wear a crucifix. It was regarded in the house as an exotic and desirable charm. The elder god wore many charms and it was thought fitting that someone so valuable should be well protected. On the Sunday before examination week he was bathed by Mrs. Tulsi in water consecrated by Hari; the soles of his feet were soaked in lavender water; he was made to drink a glass of Guinness stout; and he left Hanuman House, a figure of awe, laden with crucifix, sacred thread and beads, a mysterious sachet, a number of curious armlets, consecrated coins, and a lime in each trouser pocket. "You call yourself Hindus?" Mr. Biswas said. (HB, p.57)

We see how Shekhar as the third generation is changing his religion to Christianity mixing his Hindu customs with that of Christianity.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, in the clash between the cultures of colonizer and the colonized, both cultures are affected through which the identity of both sides is formed and changed. Concerning *A House for Mr. Biswas* by the help of the concept of creolization, it is illustrated that how the immigrant Indian people, as a result of leaving their own country and coming to the colonial and creole society of Trinidad, change their identity and customs to fit the norms and rules of the dominant culture. As told before, the novel depicts three generations of Indian people living in the creole society of Trinidad, which is under the dominance of England. We see how each generation treats the encounter with the cultural process of creolization. As each generation passes, they lose their cultural, educational, religious beliefs in their own customs. Language means identity and losing one's language means losing one's origin and identity and this event happens in this novel when the third generations of people cannot speak Hindi and instead English language has become prevalent in this society.

Biswas, as the protagonist of the story, is searching for a house of his own throughout his life. He represents displaced people having no identity in Trinidad since they are unhomed from their own land and in this new environment, they feel unstable. As a result of being unhomed and having no identity they have to create a new identity of their own. The first step is to imitate the colonizer's way of behavior and absorb its norms through which the characters in this novel gradually lose their language, culture, custom and their belief in Hindi religion and their religion becomes a mixture of Christian and Hindi. Moreover, they become confused as to which culture they should stick to and thereby find an ambivalent personality.

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Notes

Note 1. *HB* Stands for *A House for Mr. Biswas*.