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- **House as a metaphor in Dibyendu Palit's *Alam's Own House*.**

“A metaphor is”, defines Collins English Dictionary, “an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way.” So, it is needless to say that the use of metaphor emphasizes on the connotative and denotative aspects of a certain language instead of its bare literal meaning. In literature, many a times, even, a word becomes highly connotative besides a long sentence or paragraph. Sometimes, a mere word or an object can be the crux of a certain literary piece. In the short story *Alam's Own House*, house is puri-significant from the very skeleton to the whole stature of the story. The multiple layers of connotations of the house have been implemented to build the plot of the story *Alam's Own House*. A detailed analysis is necessary to decipher the connotative meanings of the house in the present short story.

The present story *Alam's Own House*, set on the backdrop of the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh, took memory and nostalgia in its core as its theme. House stands as a character here to concretize memory and nostalgia. The story centers round the nostalgic reminiscence of the protagonist Alam through his erstwhile parental house in Kolkata. Though Alam was still there in Kolkata even after his family's departure at Dhaka, he also had to leave for Dhaka, leaving his job of lectureship after his father's death. He, once again, came back to Kolkata after three years to attend a seminar and came to Anantasekhar's house (erstwhile Alam's own house). But Alam felt himself to be homeless, in spite of coming to his own house. This incident hints at the fact that the house became mere a construction to him. It was no longer a home for Alam. This also represents the chink of mind among the people across borders after the partition of Bengal.

House, here, also symbolizes the protagonist's desire to get a free space for himself. That is why Alam did not stay with his friend Feroz in the accommodation provided by the organizing authority of the seminar. He had the illusion that his earlier house (Anantasekhar's house) would still be a comfortable shelter for him. But ultimately, the house became a place of uneasiness for Alam. Alam's uneasiness was just like the uneasiness felt by Mr. Biswas in *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V. S. Naipal. There, Mr.

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Biswas, spent his whole life travelling from one temporary family residence to another, fueling his desire for a house of his own but was unable to attain it metaphorically. Similarly, here, Alma felt homeless in such a home in which he would feel at ease earlier.

When Alam was coming towards the house of Anantasekhar from the airport by a taxi, his imagination was fluctuating in between present and past. Through his nostalgic reminiscence we come to know that the house in which Anantasekhar lived, was built by Alam's father. When Alam was there in that house even after his family's departure, nothing was changed except the name plate of the owner. But with the departure of Alam, Anantasekhar changed the interior design of the house drastically. This fact, literally, hints that the bond between the family of Anantasekhar and Alam was erased. Metaphorically, it indicates the cutting of umbilical bond in between the Hindu and Muslim community. So, the remodeling of the house by Anantasekhar was nothing but the reflection of uprooting of cultural root.

Even after his family's departure at Dhaka, when Alam was still there in Kolkata, he felt the presence of his father at the house through the terrace and corridors of the house. So, it is needless to say that it was an instrument of consolation to him.

The house also stands as an instrument of memory to Alam. Alam recapitulated various serious and also trifle incidents centered round the house, when he was coming towards the Anantasekhar's house (erstwhile of Alam's own). Though those incidents had no literal value, metaphorically the house was responsible for association of thoughts to Alam. When Alam, ultimately, was about to enter into the house of Anantasekhar after mounting down from taxi, in his utter dismay, he missed the presence of the *kantachapa* tree in the interior part of the main gate of the house. Thus, the absence of the *kantachapa* tree made Alam a stranger in a known place.

Since his entry into the house after three years, Alam encountered so many signs of uneasiness in the behavior of Anantasekhar and his wife Sneha. Earlier, Alam was very close to them or vice versa. But this time, Alam was treated almost like a stranger in his own house. Towards the end of the story, when Alam came to know that Raka, his

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beloved left the house in spite of getting the news of his (Alam) arrival, the last ray of hope of feeling at home was evaporated from the mind of Alam.

Anantasekhar and Sneha also felt themselves to be homeless in spite of having home. The homeless condition of Sneha is expressed in the following words uttered by her—

“Yet I don't know why we have this constant feeling of being homeless.”

Thus, it can be said that house is strong a metaphor symbolizing many untold stories behind the curtain, in this story. If, in *House for Mr. Biswas*, house is a metaphor for class status and financial standing, onerous project of independence, here in this story house stands as an instrument of memory, nostalgia and loss of identity and cultural root etc.

1. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-house-for-mr-biswas/symbols/houses>
2. *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed chapter* (Edited by Bashabi Fraser, Anthem Press)