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The Ebb and Flow of Memories: An Exploration of Nostalgic Sentiments in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Select Short Stories

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Abstract: Diaspora is an inevitable and essential aspect of modern civilisation that is greatly influenced by globalisation and accompanied by emotional and psychological supplanting. Famous diasporic writer Chitra Lekha Banerjee Divakaruni focuses on immigrants' issues in her distinguished ways, weaving intricate stories around them by giving us glimpses of migrants' lives from diverse perspectives. The paper delves into one of the most imperative essences of diasporic literature—Nostalgia. It attempts to highlight a range of concepts on nostalgia and the related theories and proposes three planes of nostalgia to comprehend and validate the author and characters' experiences. By elaborating on the selected short stories of Divakaruni, the paper brings forth the broad range of ways in which nostalgia affects her characters, thereby widening the psychological understanding of her characters.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Memories, Past, Reflection, Homeland, Migration, Diaspora

Physical displacement for individuals is accompanied by a strong desire to remain in touch with their origin and homeland. Migration creates a deep socio-cultural and psychological impact on individuals. The process of shifting from one culture to another is exhausting for the body and painstakingly challenging for the mind causing instabilities and insecurities. "All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way" (Mishra, 189). People are compelled to move from their native place due to various reasons, but their connect, fondness and attachment with their home remains unaffected. Homi Bhabha's theory of survival indicates that despite all hardships and cultural shocks, an immigrant focuses on his survival and continues to struggle for his living in an alien land. Existence in a new land is undoubtedly strenuous for immigrants, but their yearning and necessity for financial growth and better opportunities abroad leads them to move across the sphere. They are compelled to

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get accustomed to a new socio-cultural, financial, and ecological set up within a short period. This predicament also creates a desire to justify and rationalise one end, but it ends up generating a longing and craving for the other. This related adjustment is a herculean task which becomes even more tedious and wearisome as the immigrants are often frequented by their past, thereby making them dejected and disconsolate. These recurring forays into one's memories have a psychological impact on immigrants which makes them compare their simpler, secure, and known past to their complex, uneasy, and unfamiliar present. This complex emotion of yearning for home and origin is referred to as nostalgia.

Nostalgia is pervasive yet challenging to be defined. It is an amalgamation of various forms of emotions and occurs mostly because of a vacuity experienced by people residing away from their native land. The void reminds them of happy and joyous moments, which are absent in the new land. Although the memories are pleasant and soothing, the fact that they are not real leaves a bitter impact on their minds. The feeling not only reminds people of their homeland; it also reminds them of the time when they were close to their loved ones. The concept of nostalgia, along with arousing a range of emotion, also evokes passion and desire for a persistent struggle to make a victorious return to the native land. Carol Ann Duffy puts forth the feelings of immigrants in his poem *Nostalgia* as he states

What they got
was money, dull, crude coins
clenched
in the teeth; strange food, the wrong
taste,
stones in the belly; and the wrong
sounds,
the wrong smells, the wrong light,
every breath –
wrong. (Duffy, 1990)

Nostalgia is and has always been a part of a multitude of real-life experiences and has hence found its way in being presented in fiction by several authors. Interestingly, it has emerged as a focal point for authors, who have often delved deep into the psyche of immigrants and have highlighted remembrance, reminiscence, and nostalgia as the key aspects of diasporic literature. Eminent authors including Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Khalid Hosseini, Vikram Seth, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have reflected on their own immigrant experiences through their characters bringing out intricate emotions and sentiments. Divakaruni, the eminent South Asian Diasporic author has authored novels and short stories that revolve around the themes of transnational's, immigration, cross-culturalism, and search for identity, belongingness, and multiculturalism. She deracinates her characters from their native lands and plants them in a new world, braiding stories around the difficulties and tribulations they face in the new

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environment. In most of her works, her female characters are the protagonists, who initially become victims of the new socio-cultural and socio-environmental pressure but later emerge as independent and resilient characters proving them to be strong, courageous, and brave. Her stories, intertwined with the modern-day problems, give a realistic presentation of immigrant women who are displaced and relocated and are often seen reflecting on and remembering their happy and joyful past. Her characters compare their present uncomfortable situation with their blissful past, either using it as a coping mechanism to survive adversities and even derive inspiration or turn the pages of history for sheer cherishment. The personified remoteness from their motherland and their encounters with the novel ways of life bestow upon them a “double vision” enabling them to observe both candidly and nostalgically at their parent culture and the foreign ethos where they seek amalgamation (Divya,59).Divakaruni’s narrative style in novels like *Mistress of Spices*, *Sisters of My Heart*, *Oleander Girl*, and short-story collections like *Arranged Marriage*, is evidence of her multi-faceted splendour

As an emotion, nostalgia has been depicted since time immemorial in literary works of Romantics, Victorians, Modernists, and Post Modernists. It can be observed in fiction at three planes- author, character, and reader. “Memories of a wistfully longed for earlier time, exist not

only in novels, but also in the various autobiographical forms”(UKEssays, 2018). An author’s personal experience of nostalgia often becomes a part of the narration. Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” paints the impression of nostalgia experienced by the poet. The surrounding flora and fauna remind the poet of his last visit to the place with his sister Dorothy. In the second plane, the characters experiences’ and their reflection of their past glory shape the narratives of many diasporic novels. The characters are placed in alien lands where they miss their origins and suffer from melancholy, reminding them of the pleasant time that they have spent in their homeland. Kamla Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve* revolves around Rukmini who is forced by circumstances to abandon her native village and move to the city. The novel presents Rukmini and her husband Nathan’s nostalgic scream for purity and piety while they are trapped in an industrialised city's tartness. The third plane involves the nostalgic experience of the readers. Construing texts evokes nostalgia among readers. The suppressed memories get triggered after reading texts on homelands, leaving readers reminiscing their glorious past. Some readers who are quite empathetic about the characters experience fabricated nostalgia. Fabricated nostalgia is a term which signifies the creation of a deceptive illusion of past (Rivera). In this case, readers start feeling nostalgic about ‘a hypothetical past’ which never existed. R.K Narayan and his ‘Malgudi’ has never failed

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to drive his readers on a nostalgic trip to pre-globalised India. The great epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* portray a magnificent and mesmeric past. These works take readers on a ride to a fictionalized glorious past thus making them a victim of fabricated nostalgia.

Emotion is not a word, but it can only be spread abroad through words (Starobinski, 81). Starobinski, in his article 'The Idea of Nostalgia' stated that assigning a name to an emotion marks the origin of that emotion. The credit for the coinage of the term nostalgia goes to the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer. In the late seventeenth century, Hofer described nostalgia in medical terms as a state of mind that Swiss soldiers experienced while they were away from their homes. The physician explained the feeling as a disease accompanied by symptoms like incessant ruminations of home, heavy breathing, restlessness, vulnerability, angst, and despondency. He further classifies it as the sad feeling which originates from the yearning to return home. Nostalgia has been derived from the Greek term *nostos* which stands for "return home" and "algia" which stands for agony and yearning. Hofer identified it as a brain disease in which the nerve fibres storing the notions of one's homeland are in continual motion leading to persistent homesickness. According to him, nostalgia leads to a state where individuals dwell on the memories of home and give no importance to their present circumstances or even their future. G. Rosen (1975) described it as a

psychosomatic situation which affects individuals who are deracinated and displaced with fragmented contacts causing them to feel exasperated and isolated (Andersson, 9).

The perception of nostalgia as a disease stayed till the late nineteenth century after which it started getting referred to as a psychiatric ailment. The sociologist, Fred Davis regarded it as a sentimental longing for past (object, event, or place) rather than a poignant reaction to homesickness (Wilson, 21). Davis's concept helped change the universal belief about nostalgia from being a medicinal and psychiatric illness to a common psychosomatic function witnessed by population in general. Holland (1962) remarked that everyone experiences this feeling, but the nature of the experience varies from person to person. Batcho (2007) distinguished between nostalgia and plain memories and pointed out that the former can evoke emotions, but the latter cannot. Although the degree may vary based on individual temperament, sensitivity, and personality, all human beings experience nostalgia. "Nostalgia can be thought of as the emotional force that enables certain type of reminiscence to serve distinct psychological functions" (Batcho, 362). In his opinion, remembering is possible without being nostalgic, but nostalgia without memory is impractical.

Nostalgia usually gets evoked by cerebral considerations which include odour, although, Hirsch (1992) observed

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that nostalgia can also be conjured by stimuli which does not have a cognitive appraisal. According to him, nostalgia is not a reflection on true past; rather, it is a blend of assorted memories entwined in a single thread removing the rough and disturbing components. Jan Morris presented that longing for the homeland is the most luscious form of nostalgia (Wilson, 22). She supports her statement by putting forth that one can never return to the past, but one can always return home. Thus, the gratification of desire makes it delicious.

Svetlana Boym's (2001) concept of nostalgia stands in contradiction to that of Morris's. According to Boym, nostalgia is a summation of two emotions – one of loss and dislocation and the other of romance with one's own fantasy. For her, it is “not antimodern”, which means that it is not essentially inverse of modernity; rather they could exist simultaneously. She further stated that “at first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time- the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.” Nostalgia inculcates in humans a desire to revisit a time which has already passed, to try and defy its irreversibility, resulting in their despondent and melancholic situation. She put forth the concept of prospective nostalgia as the emotion has a tendency to create a great impact on the future of those experiencing it. She classified nostalgia into two main categories – restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia is centered on beliefs

and traditions and tries to revisit and reconstruct the idea of home, including a desire to give it permanence. It stands for truth and therefore, should be protected. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand revels in chaos. It embraces the confusion around time and space and is often light-hearted in nature. Migration causes estrangement, wistfulness, and rootlessness among the first-generation immigrants due to resolute adherence to the cultural values, rituals, and customs of the native land (Kousadikar, 113).

“Indo-nostalgia is a fictitious technique to project the image of India, not only to transmit with her own cultural identity but also to create an awareness of this identity in the minds of her own people and the rest of the world. (UKEssays, 2018)”The perception of this inner struggle of individuals differs at many levels. The portrayal of nostalgia in various characters in fiction has grasped the attention of critics across boundaries. The authors of diasporic and exile literature focus on its complexity and have deliberately incorporated it in their works, bringing their stories closer to reality. As a polyglot of diasporic living, Divakaruni's leading concern is the life of expats and their predicament of ‘acculturation’. Acculturation refers to the process that individuals undertake while responding to the anxiety engendering ‘new cultural contexts’ (Bhatia and Ram, 5). Being an immigrant writer, Divakaruni has used her personal nostalgic experiences as a crucial ingredient in her recipes. This paper attempts to bring out the element in one of

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her popular short story collections *Arranged Marriage*, which was published in the year 1994 and comprises of eleven stories revolving around women characters. The title of the book signifies one of the important traditions of India- Arrange marriage. The name itself symbolises the nostalgic aspect depicting the cardinal culture of the author’s native place- India. The protagonists of the short stories are mostly immigrant women who left their motherland after marriage only to become victims of various societal and marital pressures. While they struggle in their

present, their memories and remembrances are something they delve into, to soothe and calm them. Many times, these nostalgic moments give them a false idea of truth which they strive to protect but, eventually witness subdual and subjugation. The immigrant readers find their nostalgic triggers in Divakaruni’s depiction of homeland, culture and ethnicity. Thus, the proposed, three planes of nostalgia find validation in Divakaruni’s short stories (Fig 1). The paper focuses on select short stories from the collection to analyse the various facets of nostalgia.

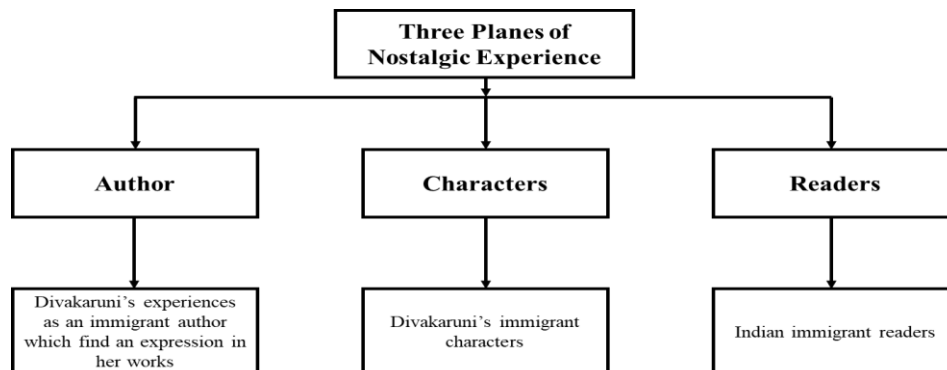


Fig 1. Three Planes of Nostalgia

The women characters in the short stories are dependent on their spouses and their longing for the reluctantly left-behind world increases as they find themselves alienated in the new world. They seek respite in reminiscence for ‘old world’ and its recollections help them get closer to the ‘home in their mind’ (Kongre, 4). The story *Clothes* narrates the story of Sumita and her experiences as an immigrant woman in the USA. Sumita, who is born in India, marries Somesh, a co-owner of a 7/11 shop and

moves to California. The author has remarkably used colours in the narrative to highlight the emotional and psychological transformation of a simple Indian girl from a bride-to-be to an immigrant woman and finally to a widow. The changing colour and the style of clothes stand as a symbol for the transforming life of Mita Moni. The story presents the notion of an American dream which Somesh chases but eventually collapses as he gets robbed and killed.

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While Sumita was travelling aboard in a flight to the USA, she was afraid of the new life that she was about to enter. She needed something to cling to – something from her memories and ended up pulling out one of her Kanjeeपुरam silks. Sumita’s memories gave her a potency and assistance to progress in life. Later, while she was trying on western dresses with Somesh, she could not help but refer to the nayantara flowers of her parent’s garden. *I’m wearing a pair of jeans now...I love the color, the same pale blue as the nayantara flowers that grow in my parents’ garden.* (Divakaruni, 25). Sumita constantly delved in her reminiscences and loved discovering some connection to the past in her present life.

Sumita never let go of her sarees which is symbolic of the Indian culture. She felt closer to her family when she used to touch and use them. For Sumita, her sarees were an agent of stimulating nostalgia. Her attachment to her saris is symbolic of her attachment to her Indian culture and tradition. To protect her past and make it permanent, she assumed the roles of a traditional Indian woman and held on to her responsibilities as a wife and a daughter-in-law. For Mita, the only truth that existed was her family, and all of it was shattered with the death of her husband Somesh. While she lies on the floor of her apartment in her white widow saree, she recalls the time when she used to swim towards the middle of the lake while bathing and used to forget everything, curling her body inward and deep in the lap of nature

(Divakaruni, 32). She is unable to attain that composure and serenity in her American apartment.

As Boym pointed out, nostalgia need not be antimodern. Rather, it can coexist with modernity. Similarly, despite losing her husband, the only support system she had in the foreign land, Sumita decides to stay in California and pursue her education. Her nostalgic connection to her past does not deprive her of the budding opportunity. It has been evident in many instances in the story that instead of collapsing and failing, Divakaruni’s Mita derives strength from her past to grow and develop. Boym’s concept of prospective nostalgia finds an illustration in Sumita who never wanted to be a “dove with cut-off wings”. Mita gathers up her saree close to herself and sees a mirrored image of her wearing a blouse and skirt. The courage to hold on to past and draw inspiration from her memories for carving a better future for herself was something which defined Divakaruni’s Mita Moni. We can observe a similar predicament of a married immigrant woman in *Meeting Mrinal*, where the protagonist Asha is forced to figure out how to survive after her husband abandons her.

Meeting Mrinal presents a cultural clash through her two women characters – Asha and Mrinal. Asha is an immigrant woman who moved to the United States after marriage. She led her life in the States as a traditional Indian woman. She assumed the role of a conventional Indian wife and mother only to find herself devastated and

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alone after her husband moved out with a younger woman, Jessica. The story highlights Asha's struggle to rebuild her life around her son and only companion, Dinesh. Asha and Dinesh remained indifferent towards each other and did not communicate a lot. Asha struggled to etch a life for herself in the unfamiliar space and often felt defeated and alone. Her situation worsened when she got a meeting invite from her childhood friend Mrinal who was quite successful in her career and life. An instant feeling of insecurity surrounded Asha and she feared meeting Mrinal.

In the entire story, Asha felt nostalgic about the times when her husband was with her. Even while cooking, she pondered over her *curries* which Mahesh and Dinesh used to revere. She recalled her honeymoon period in Kashmir and ended up upsetting herself. Asha realized that she could not have Mahesh back in her life and all she had were the memories she made with him. The recollections of her husband having a happy time with her appear to the readers as a fabricated nostalgia. The character created for herself a deceptive illusion of past to reduce suffering. Asha imagined herself to be a part of a happy past which was never a reality. As Asha was conscious and skeptical about her friends' opinions and wonderings, she deliberately severed connection with all of them after Mahesh left.

Mrinalini was her childhood friend and hearing her name in Mrinal's voice was a tranquil experience for Asha. All the

childhood memories bubbled into her mind, and she entered a flashback of the days when her life was more comfortable and revolved around her companion Mrinal. Asha's meeting with Mrinal was quite disheartening. To avoid scepticism and hide the truth, Asha continued her lie of having a perfect life with a loving husband and an obedient son, which emotionally drained her. The ultimate revelation for her was the fact that Mrinal was not happy in her life. The person whom Asha had always believed to be a winner was not pleased with all the success she had achieved. Mrinal had a void in her life – a space which could only be filled by a companion and lover. The concept of an ideal life for Asha was the accomplished and unbeaten life of Mrinal, but all her suppositions were vague and unreal. The shock was so intense that Asha locked herself in the garage without turning off the engine. Soon Asha realised that suicide is not a solution to her conundrums and shared her anxieties and weaknesses with Dinesh.

Just like it did for Mita Moni, all the memories of Asha's childhood and of her husband induced currents of nostalgia in her mind. Her memories were quite complex and haphazard. Some of them aroused the feeling of loss and some of the displacement. Asha kept turning the pages of her past, but she knew that she could not stay there forever. She did not strive to protect her memories. Asha experienced reflective nostalgia, which is not bounded by any time and space. These random moments conjured feelings of sadness but

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did not stay long to create a considerable impact. In contrast to the fabricated nostalgia that Asha experienced, the nameless character in *The Word Love* experiences a firm grasp of her past, which validates Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia as the protagonist in the story decides to return to her native place and rebuild her relationship with her mother.

The Word Love is about an Indian immigrant girl who moved to the U.S and falls in "love" with an American boy named Rex. The girl strived hard to confess about her love and live-in relationship to her traditional Indian mother but could not muster the courage needed to do so. She felt quite content and exultant with her beloved Rex. She agreed to marry him when he proposed but always remained indeterminate of her mother's reaction. The narration brings out the parallels between her relationship with Rex and her mother in a peculiar manner. Despite all the exhilaration that she relished with Rex, there was something upsetting and disconcerting. Her memories with her mother, who had been a single parent kept revisiting her. She remained displeased with whatever she had gleaned in the new land. As Hrisch affirmed that some nostalgic experiences do not require a cognitive appraisal so, even in the hustle-bustle of the new land, she could hear the nostalgic voices of the *momphaliwala*. Things get complicated when eventually her mother mistakenly gets to know about her relationship with the American boy on

the phone. The protagonist is caught in the dilemma of choosing an unfettered life for herself with Rex and cut-off all her linkages from the past or to choose her mother and break-up with her "love".

The memories of her mother acted as a nostalgic stimulant for the protagonist. Her past life had revolved around one single person- her mother, and to let go of her meant losing all the connections she had with her native-land, and also with her past. She cogitated her mother as a metaphor for the homeland, tradition, and original culture, just like Sumita did for her sarees. For the protagonist, her mother was a universal truth, and she wanted to safeguard her relationship with her mother at all costs. Her attempts to restore the ties gave her deeper wounds and impeded her relationship with Rex. The incessant flow of all the bitter-sweet memories of her childhood affected her to a great extent. She waited for months for a reply from her mother only to get rejection and refusal. She was so depressed that she even contemplated committing suicide. Hofer understands of nostalgia as a medical disorder and the symptoms that he observed in his patients were quite applicable to what the character was witnessing. Nostalgia occasionally indicates something more enduring than a temperament, but still less than an ailment: something more akin to a lifestyle choice (UKEssays, 2018). It took a while for her to realise that true love was not the one which she felt for her partner; instead, it was the one which she had for her mother. The protagonist shared a secure

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attachment with her mother and identified her caregiver as receptive, accessible, and competent in providing ample protection and chose its permanence over supposed better future prospects. *The Ultrasound* correspondingly represents the importance of childhood relations in life by narrating the intense and intriguing story of two childhood friends- Arundhati (Runu) and Anjali (Anju), who grew up together in Calcutta.

Anju and Runu shared a very deep relationship which went beyond friendship. The pals were separated after their marriage as Anju moved to California and Runu stayed in India. In the story, Anju narrated the episode when both were expecting mothers. The story moves in a non-linear direction and so do the nostalgic experiences. There is an instance of Meta nostalgia where Anjali sentimentally recalled the time when she visited Runu after their marriage and both recollected pleasing memories of their childhood days. While in California, Anju anticipated talking to Runu over a phone call mentioning the voice of Runu as “familiar” which signified her internal desire of hearkening to Runu every so often. She later mentioned that her husband Sunil might be jealous of her friend as they “go so far back together” which signify that Anju’s reminiscences of Runu strengthen the bond they share.

As their pregnancy progressed, Anju wondered how Arundhati looked and was upset at not having a recent photograph of

her deary. Anju kept referring to her past and narrated a few incidents which validated her nostalgic inclination towards Runu. Anjali was devastated knowing that Runu was being forced by her in-laws to abort her girl child. Runu shared an anxious resistant attachment with her caregiver as she suspected their perseverance in being available and delivering necessary support and hence tried approaching more reliable Anju for support (Baldwin, 4). Constantly haunted by the repercussions of the advice that she gave Runu, Anju remained sleepless and went on a nostalgic ride to her first ultrasound. This trip to her memories made Anju realise that Runu had always been a part of her past remembrances and future aspirations and so, she determined to call her dearest to California to start a new life.

The Ultrasound has diverse nostalgic elements. It is very evident in the story that the protagonist Anjali is not nostalgic about her homeland rather, she longed for her best friend and the memories she had with her. She did not want to lose her friend and friendship, thereby tries making Runu a constant in her life. As Boym states, nostalgia does not necessarily have to be a longing for the homeland; it is primarily an urge to relive a moment in the past. For Anjali, her memories with Runu were the ones which defined her childhood, and those memories gave her a sense of belongingness.

Another story from Divakaruni’s collection, *Silver Pavements, Golden*

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Roofs depicts the shattering of the American dream. The scars of elapsed memories make immigrants cognizant that they quietly persist (Kousadikar, 114). The illusion of a picture-perfect life in foreign land gets ruined once the immigrant characters. Although they share a bond of pain and suffering, Jayanti day-to-day survival concerns different from Mita, Moni and Asha. This story revolves around the two women characters Jayanti and her aunt Pratima, who lived in America with her husband, Bikram. Before visiting her aunt in America, Jayanti had high hopes about Chicago's living standards, but the mirage of silver pavements and golden roofs did not stay with her for long. Even before she had reached America, Jayanti was hit with a gust of nostalgia when she boarded the flight and felt a change in the air. *The air inside the plane smells different from the air I've known all my life in Calcutta* (Divakaruni, 36).

The most prominent feature of nostalgia is the realisation of loss and dislocation. Jayanti's migration from her hometown Kolkata to Chicago for higher studies and then her witnessing of the sub-standard living conditions of Pratima and Bikram gave her a shock. She instantly realised that her lifestyle was quite superior in Kolkata. Jayanti missed the hustle-bustle and noises of the vendors and hawkers, which were an identity of Kolkata streets.

Bikram, Jayanti's uncle, had come to Chicago to become a millionaire but ended up becoming a garage mechanic. The

scar on his face said a lot about the struggle and discrimination he faced in this alien land. Jayanti and Pratima also became victims of racism when some street boys threw slush at them and addressed them as "niggers". Jayanti was quite traumatized with this lewd and discriminatory behaviour. She got nostalgic about when she was respected and honoured on the streets as the daughter of Bhavanipur Gangulis. Later in the apartment when Bikram came to know about the incident, he cried-sobbed like a little child – holding Pratima close to himself. In his fragmented words, Bikram said that the natives had scorched down his shop. Jayanti was dumbstruck. She had a lot to comprehend and understand. Her childhood dream of marrying a prince from far-off magical land had splintered. All that she wanted was to go "home". As Boym stated that irreversibility of time becomes the pain point for the victims of nostalgia, so Jayanti's desire of returning to her childhood days induced grief and helplessness.

Jayanti soon realised that pleasure and pain are two sides of the same coin. One cannot relish the splashes of rain without getting drenched. Nostalgia is also a juxtaposition of these two emotions and remains an important essence of immigrant experiences across boundaries. Jayanti's desire to go back in time and place alludes to Morris' concept of homesickness. Jayanti wanted to go back to the place where things were a lot simpler but is bounded by the opportunities of growth and advancement.

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For a girl who grew up in hullabaloo of Calcutta, the streets of Chicago were “neat and quiet”.

With the passage of time, as humans advance, so do their experiences and feelings, making them even more complicated and convoluted. This statement finds a true reflection in the characters of Divakaruni. The feelings of her characters are quite intense and ever-changing. Ralph Harper highlights the inherently paradoxical nature of the term nostalgia as he states that it is a blend of “bitterness and sweetness, the lost and the found, the far and the near, the new and the familiar, absence and presence”. The characters of the discussed short stories find themselves in ambiguous situations struggling between the choices of past and present. It is visibly perceptible that all the “nostalgees” of Divakaruni pass through Salmose’s three phases of nostalgic reaction-motivation, nostalgia, and reflection. According to Salmose, in motivation phase, a character in his present is transported to a memory-evoking nostalgia which is the second phase where the individual reminisces the cherished moments of his life. This phase is followed by the third phase i.e., reflection, where the individual experiences the sadness and dejection at the loss of their precious past (Salmose, 94). In the select stories of Divakaruni, discussed above, all the major characters experienced nostalgia although their degree and range varied based on their individual personalities. Sumita and Jayanti were bold enough to draw power from their nostalgic past and

try to build a new future for themselves. Asha did not get severely affected by her husband's memories as she tried to accept her present and move on with her life. Nostalgia had an immense and more profound impact on the protagonists of *The Word Love* and *The Ultrasound*. They decided to restore their past at the cost of their individual happiness. It is evident that all the characters of Divakaruni experienced what Baker and Kennedy refer to as real nostalgia. They defined real nostalgia as an experience observed only if the individual has been a part of all the occurrences that he is reflecting on. Divakaruni, in her short stories, has vividly presented nostalgia as an inevitable and dynamic phenomenon with her characters not only longing for a place, but also yearning for past experiences and involvements. She carefully constructs a plot where she makes her characters long for their past glory and weaves circumstances around them, eventually promoting and motivating them to work in their present towards achieving something equally worthwhile and comparable.

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