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Immigrants' Dislocation in Divakaruni's *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mrs. Hema Laxmi Panta has prepared this thesis entitled “Immigrants' Dislocation in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from January 2015 to May 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Immigrants’ Dislocation In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mrs. Hema Laxmi Panta, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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Hema Laxmi Panta

Abstract

In most of stories in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni examines the South Asian immigrants, their experiences and dislocation in the United States of America. America is a highly urbanized mechanical society which seeks to dominate other cultures by imposing its own codes of morals and principles. Consequently, characters in Divakaruni's narratives are immersed in it and not separated from. The young generations like Mira, Tarun and Shyamoli operate through the codes of beauty, romance and fashion to maintain their personal existence in the New Land. Eventually, Mira fails to secure boyfriend, job and apartment. On the one hand, she recalls her homeland, mother and childhood age to get the meaning and value of life. On the other hand, the old generations like Mrs. Dutta and Khuku's mother reach in America to live with their families. When they are outraged by their own children, they lament over changing moral standards and dramatization of kinship. They feel the decline of their position and manifest their restlessness in a foreign land. After their migration to America, most of individuals from India remain somewhere between the old and the new, the Indian and the American, past and present, to investigate critically conditions in Divakaruni's narratives, the researcher applies the diaspora perspectives.

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Introduction: South Asian Immigrants Conflict in the USA

This research work explores Asian immigrants' lives and worldviews in the United States in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's stories in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001). Central characters in Divakaruni's narratives embody sufferings of immigrants in the New Land. Precisely, I propose to study the stories from the perspective of diaspora. Since the characters like Mrs. Dutta, Mira, Radhika and Khuku's mother are emigrated from India to different zones of America, they combat issues of cultural contradiction, identity crisis, disruption and family strives. Unlike them, Tarun, Mrs. Dutta's son and her family are totally assimilated in the American society, whereas the characters such as Mrs. Dutta, Didi and Mira recurrently remember their original house and early childhood days with friends. It is because they are fragmented and frustrated in America. In this collection, the researcher has selected five stories, including "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," "The Intelligence of Wild Things," "The Blooming Season for Cacti," "The Names of Stars in Bengali," and "The Unknown Errors of Our Lives."

In "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," Mrs. Dutta is Sagar's mother. She is a widowed woman. Her son, Sagar and daughter-in-law with grandchildren live in America. Mrs. Dutta decides to live with son to have love, care and support at her old age. In the East, most of the parents often intend to live with their children and grandchildren. She has lately reached California in the pursuit of happiness, but it does not turn into a reality. However, she cannot enjoy herself while living with her progenies in the United States. Mrs. Dutta is a traditional Hindu woman. She wakes up early in the morning, takes bath and worships the holy gods. She feels pleasure on reciting the holy names of gods in the early morning. But some of these rustic behaviors displease the son's family. At one point, Sagar suggests her not to observe

some of those Hindu rituals: “mother, please, do not get up so early in the morning. All the noise in the bathroom, it wakes us up, and Moli has such a long day at work . . .” (Divakaruni 4). At points, Moli scolds his mother with her remarks that food cooked by mother-in-law is a way of damaging health; “cholesterol, all putting on weight, she’s spoiling you,” “she isn’t taken over the entire kitchen, cooking whatever she likes. I feel like this is not my house anymore” (Divakaruni 30). Her activities does not make daughter-in-law happy. For Moli, Mrs. Dutta is nothing of her, no any relatives.

Mother is always caring. Her degree of love and care to the children can never be measured. Mrs. Dutta cares her children thoroughly. She easily knows whether her son is in trouble. She does not want his face down. To make the family happy, she tries for cooking spicy foods. She wants to deserve the source of happiness of her children. In contrast, nobody cares her, even in her severe sickness. Sagar worries if his wife fades. He hugs her, kisses her and gives a massage to reduce tiredness. No person is a true human if he ignores his mother and origin. As the same way, Mrs. Dutta’s sickness does not matter her son. He has no time to say even a hello to his mother. Likewise, Shyamoli hates mother-in-law’s attempts to prepare dishes.

When Mrs. Dutta first reaches her son’s residence in the United States, she wants to go round the neighborhood but Shyamoli opposes the idea, “Americans do not like neighbors to”- she used the English phrase- “invade their privacy” (Divakaruni 22). Moreover, Mrs. Dutta in his son’s family fails to comfort herself. The grandchildren too do not love her. They do not like to share their bathroom with grandmother. Parents are always idols for their children. They are innocent and imitate what their seniors, including siblings and parents do. Similarly, these grandchildren are impressed by their parents. If mother does not love and respect the

senior one, how can it be done by the children? Mrs. Dutta's failures embody troubles and debacles with immigrants in the United States.

Mrs. Dutta dreams of living with her son comfortably, but everything turns opposite. It illustrates a sharp contrast between her dream and reality. She cannot live in the family in the new world, and she experiences awkward with the immigrants' lifestyles:

It has something to do with love, I still think that, but in a different way than I believed earlier, a way I don't have the words to explain.

Perhaps we can figure it out together, two old women drinking cha in your downstairs flat (for I do hope you will rent it to me on my return).

(Divakaruni 33)

Mrs. Dutta has an old friend in India named Roma. Roma writes letter to her many times. Though Mrs. Dutta initially hides her true feelings with the son and his family in America, she eventually reveals it out through her body and gestures. Tears roll down upon the old widow's cheek. She responds her friend asking for rent in her house after her arrival in India. At last, despite numerous hardships and sufferings, she intends to express her inner feelings with her friend in India. It evidently pleases her, and living in her indigenous community gives her happiness.

Similarly, in "The Intelligence of Wild Things," Didi visits her brother in one of the American states, Vermont to give a message of their mother's serious condition of sickness in India. In this story, she feels guilty of living in the same country; she fails to keep her brother with her and leaves him alone: "I hated this change in myself, this shrinking of responsibility, this failure of intelligence" (Divakaruni 43). Her husband, Sandeep is a self guided man who does not like any disturbance in his private life. He does not want to keep Tarun with them. When she said, "Tarun is a

shy boy and only one family he is here,” he replied that “we’re just getting to know each other. Let’s give ourselves- and Tarun- a little more alone, shall we?”

(Divakaruni 45-46). It reflects about his self-centeredness. He does not care others; even the wife’s interest. Tarun is only one brother and relative of his wife in America. A decent and immature boy, Tarun becomes helpless without his sister, her care and affection. In order to get rid from loneliness, Tarun makes an American girlfriend. He is disappointed in the New Land. Didi desires to keep her brother within but her husband rejects this proposal. It disturbs them while engaging in various activities in a different society. He only wants to distance himself from his wife’s relatives. He needs his wife for his pleasure but forgets her satisfaction and hates her brother.

Tarun’s sister laments over her self-absorbed, alienated and mechanical life in America. She recurrently reminds her mother, childhood days with siblings. She shares her pleasant childhood days with her brother. She finds actual happiness in returning home where she was reared up; “you did your best, and now you’re going home. Home” (Divakaruni 50-51). Tarun is a teenager boy. It is common to influence with the external environment in this age. He temporarily forgets his mother. He does not call her. He does not write even a letter to his mother after reaches in America. Though Tarun was allured with changing life of America, an emotional attachment to his home and relatives is always there. It is suppressed and hidden in the new environment provisionally. While returning home, he becomes so cheerful on seeing the flying birds: “Didi, doesn’t it look like a Sharash? . . . “Look Didi! As the birds fly up . . .” (Divakaruni 50-52). For him, the flying birds embody freedom and happiness at home in the indigenous world. People evoke their hidden feelings truly only at the moment of freedom. Didi and Tarun both are harassed in America. They realize that the western individualistic society hinders them to experience the real

world. It is not acceptable any more. There is still an immense love between brother and sister and is reflected on the way to meet their mother. Mother and motherland are the source of love and inspiration. She teaches her children to live in a perfect harmony and cooperation. In the same way, these siblings remember their mother, childhood days and automatically unite to each other.

In “The Blooming Season for Cacti,” Mira faces perennial adversaries in America. Divakaruni’s protagonist moves to America from India in pursuit of dreams of a better life and career opportunities. However, she cannot secure a suitable job. In that situation, she starts to work at an Indian restaurant. Eventually, she makes a boyfriend. Her love affair with her friend leads her to physical relationship, which is against a taboo practiced in India. It reflects her deviation from the original culture. But eventually she feels guilt what she had done; “My aim is shaky, sex had been disappointment” (Divakaruni 202). With a guilt and frustration of losing job in America, she remembers her mother: “comparisons are futile, I know that... but my feet hurt, the backpack straps bite into my shoulders, and the frf-frf of pigeons flying home is the rustle of my mother’s sari” (Divakaruni 170-171). She realizes that there is nothing to compare between homeland and foreign land. Immigrants would never feel like connected to the foreign land despite their desires to pursue happiness. It reflects her desire of home and mother.

Radhika in this narrative suffers from her husband’s deception. Malik marries her in India before bringing her to the United States. Upon her arrival to the US, she comes to know that Malik already had his wife with two children. Though Malik provides her luxurious apartment and a limousine, she is not happy. Rather she is thwarted that leads her to commit suicide.

Likewise, in “The Names of Stars in Bengali,” there is an emotional dislocation between mother and daughter resulted from “a time machine called immigration” (Divakaruni 261). Khuku and her mother involve in bitter disputes on very trivial matters. At one point, they debate over a cauliflower curry, what is better for hair, shampoo-and-conditioner including the events from years back. She blames her parents of not giving fun in her childhood age (Divakaruni 259). For Khuku, her mother’s fashion is old and disgusting. In her disappointment, her mother asks Khuku to send her home back. After some years when Khuku visits India with her two sons, she listens the stories of her mother about her childhood age, only after this, she realizes that the lost things and emotions in America: “she wanted desperately to believe . . . that through them she was learning back her past, what to pass on her children. What America has leached away from her” (Divakaruni 255). She becomes conscious of her life only after listening to the story of her childhood days. She also remembers her adult age, nagging of naughty boys and childhood and gets more pleasure.

In “The Unknown Errors of Our Lives,” Ruchira is a female protagonist born and grown up in America. She has a strong feeling of her forefather’s land and tradition. She is greatly inspired by her grandmother’s holy stories about Ramayana, Hanumanji, Kalpa tree and Shivaji. She has a fiance named Biren. One day, a woman with a hefty bag in one hand and a little boy in the other resists her. At her home, they introduce each other, that woman is Arlene. Ruchira comes to know that Biren impregnates Arlene and later gives her money for abortion but Arlene denies it. She demands that he is responsible for the newborn baby boy. When Ruchira gets this news she breaks her heart in shock. When she falls in such dejectedness, she remembers her past grandmother: “Ruchira recalls a prayer her grandmother used to

chant in a morning prayer; forgive us, O Lord Shiva, all our errors, both the known and the unknown” (Divakaruni 231). This implies that Ruchira is intimated to Indian culture, her original comfort zone. She gets mental relief only in Hindu gods. In this way, almost all the characters here struggle with the changing environment in America and where they suffer from various problems like frustration, dislocation, cultural dissimilation, misunderstanding, illusion and familial conflicts. More or less they have the Diasporas feelings about their homeland, childhood and mother where they find their ultimate happiness.

In this context, the current research work addresses some of the pertinent questions around immigrants’ experiences in the United States. In the diaspora narrative, characters in their efforts to change their lifestyles remain somewhere between their original root culture and the imbibed new culture. All the activities they are involved in replicate their emotions which exhibit a split between the new and the old, original and adopted, and their birthplace and the workplace. Such a divided identity of characters in Divakaruni’s narratives results in a breakdown of relationships between characters and their parents.

This study is a library based secondary research. The text will be analyzed on the basis of theoretical from the Diasporas critic like Homi K Bhabha, William Paul, Salman Rushdie and Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan. It will specifically use William Paul’s idea of “despite being geographically dispersed, the people of a diaspora maintain a strong, shared collective identity centered on the point of origin to which they can trace the history of their ancestors” (115). The memory of this point of origin establishes it as a homeland, a place of belonging, to which return will be possible in the future” (Divakaruni 115). Besides, different views of critics, this research work

can be important here because this researcher has mainly focused on female Diasporas. All the protagonists in Divakaruni's narratives are female characters.

This research work can be a useful resource for further researchers in the future to explore immigrants' experiences in the New Land. Though the immigrants early in their days in the United States, in efforts to adjust themselves in new settings, indulge in different complex and hazardous works, they do not feel comfortable. They can earn money even with low paid jobs and get materials necessary for them. Money, materials and facilities do not really please them. However, they momentarily feel pleased with their memories of their original home, motherland, and indigenous culture. It, therefore, reflects immigrants' connections to the past and original cultural heritage in the diaspora.

This research work explores an Asian-American experience of dislocation after their move from India to the United States. This study makes a significant contribution mainly in three areas of concern. First, this study takes out the immigrants' experience to adopt in the new land. Secondly, it investigates into the diaspora of homeland, the real or the imagined. Thirdly, it explores the social and cultural agents of the diaspora.

Though this research uses some of the concepts of noted histories, it does not examine debates on the diaspora. The research will be purely textual, and thus, excluding the field in the diaspora experience. The Diaspora histories and theories from Homi K. Bhaba, Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, Paul Gilroy and Salman Rushdie build up methodological frame to examine immigrants' experience of dislocation and hybridity. The researcher specifically investigates the representative lead characters in two different worlds, the first and the third, the rich and the poor, primitive and modern, respectively. In these selected stories like "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," "The

Intelligence of Wild Things,” “The Blooming Season for Cacti,” “The Unknown Errors of Our Lives” and “The Names of Stars in Bengali,” the female characters are migrated from India to America where they undergo with many hardships and sufferings and at the same time they have the nostalgia of their homeland. They remember their past incidents and moments though it was not pleasurable because they have fragmented individuality in America.

In this research, the researcher has presented her thesis, analyzing the text with the theoretical frame of Diasporas studies. The emerging consciousness among the female protagonists and the Indian immigrants’ innate impulse to return to India are also described vividly.

The Unknown Errors of our Lives as a Diasporas Text

This collection of short stories, *The Unknown Errors of our Lives* has been examined from various perspectives since its publication in 2001 A.D. The following section reviews them, some of those critic receptions found a logical proposition of the Diasporas experience in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*.

Anand Singh, in *Indian Diaspora: The 21st Century- Migration Change and Adaption*, juxtaposes middle class Bengalis women and other Bengalis in the new world (14). In “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter,” Mrs. Dutta is a middle class Bengali woman whose husband is already dead. She decides to be with her son in her old age. Then, she goes to America in a pursuit of happiness by having a complete family. When she reached in America, she becomes glad to have a son, his wife and grandchildren. She begins to be familiar with the daily activities of house as in India but there her son tells “we want here to be in comfortable, to rest” (Divakaruni 3). Actually, Mrs. Dutta wants to share her feelings with the family. She does not want to confine herself in a single room all the day long. So she prepares traditional dishes

like fried curry with full of spices, which her daughter-in-law does not like. Moreover, her every activity later becomes a nonsense and foolish to her daughter-in-law. Her son's family, including wife and children invariably insults her which she cannot tolerate. Then, Mrs. Dutta decides to return home in India in order to live happily. In "The Blooming Season for Cacti," Mira goes to America in the hope of building her future bright because it was unpleasant situation in her home country:

There was the lush, sweaty jostle of Bombay, the torrential monsoons that swept through the city. . . . Everything I had loved, and then hated. People thought I came to Texas because my older brother was the only relative I had left. The real reason was that I needed something as different as possible from Bombay. (Divakaruni168-169)

But Mira does not find America so different from India. To be an American, she makes a boyfriend, goes to the night clubs and dresses like Americans. Though, she desperately intends to adopt the American life style, she fails to sustain peace in mind in the United States. Moreover, she does not find suitable job in the new world. She is forced to leave the job of cashier and living apartment too. It makes her frequently recall her caring mother in her loneliness and hopelessness.

Similarly, Dominic Head considers *The Unknown Errors of our Lives*, a distinct manifestation of the immigrants 'real experience in the United State. Divakaruni's narratives illustrate the South-Asian Americans' difficulties on assimilating themselves in the new world (306). Almost all the characters suffer from alienation and loneliness. Characters like Mrs. Dutta, Khuku's mother become alien in the New Land because they have left their home country; they also lose their friends, and traditions. They have no friends in America and even the family members do not have time to share feelings among themselves.

Characters in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* stop communicating with other people. Some of those include Mrs. Dutta and her son's family Didi and Tarun, Tarun and his mother, Khuku and her mother. All adults are busy on their job and come home late. They cannot manage time to care their mothers. Mrs. Dutta lives alone at the home all the day and her son and daughter-in-law go to work and come home tired. They do not have time to ask welfare of their mother. Moreover, America is the busy land where making friends and visiting neighbors is a rare thing for Khuku's mother. Khuku is a hasty woman. There is no sweet relationship with Khuku and her mother because of the crisis of time. Tarun, in "The Intelligence of Wild Things," do not make any contact to his mother who is near the point of death in India. It is because Tarun is fascinated with an American culture which is based on individualism. He has lost his real identity and forgets his mother. Though Tarun and his Didi live in the same country, they do not have any contact for a year. Didi's husband and Tarun both prefer privacy, individuality in their lives. They are very busy and do not care to each other.

Protagonists are also frustrated. Mira is frustrated in America because she has come to America in the hope of good future but the scenario here is different. She does not find job related to her qualification. She makes a boyfriend and takes a physical relationship with him as American cultures but does not get happiness and mental solace. In the same way, Mrs. Dutta and Khuku's mother, the widowed mothers come to America to live in a family, with children but are not cared by them. Their fashion style, tradition and culinary arts are not liked by their daughter and daughter-in-law respectively. In their frustration, they long to come to home country.

In addition, the main cause of their frustration and mental restlessness is their familial and social environment in the New Land. About this text *The Unknown*

Errors of our Lives, Guiyou Huang has also talked about the social and familial conditions of immigrants women in America in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (27). For example in the short story “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter,” Mrs. Dutta is a widow visits California from India. She struggles in the new world where the neighbors are strange from India. They do not talk each other. They do not frank and share the experiences. She is not appreciated by her daughter- in-law and there is the rare talkings with her son. Similarly, in the story “The Names of Stars in Bengali,” mother’s fashion styles like wearing white sari are the matter of abashment in front of others for her daughter. They have bitter disputes and blame each other on very meaningless things. At one point, Divakaruni says that “They couldn’t inhabit the house together and couldn’t be mother and daughter, as in the old way” (Divakaruni 261). Finally, Mrs. Dutta requests her friend for a rent in India and Khuku’s mother also asks Khuku to send her back home.

In *India Today International*, it is written that *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* examines “the allure of change many immigrants face and the pull of home they cannot avoid” (74). In “The Intelligence of Wild Things,” Tarun adopts American life styles, indulging himself in liquor and women. In South Asia, sons and daughters are expected to care their parents but he does not call his mother back in India for years even in her last days. At last, Tarun sees hopes flying in the sky freely and calls his sister “Didi”. It implies his suffocation in America and adherence with the home. Similarly, Mira changes her fashion style as Native American girl and goes to disco and night clubs with her boyfriend Ajit. She regrets over what she has done. She feels so restless while tilting towards Americanization. Mira momentarily remembers her childhood and her mother. This also represents her attachment with the home country.

Sathupati Prasanna Sree views upon this text with the perspective of cultural studies where he states that *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* “portrays a plethora of delicate affinities among human beings in a broad spectrum” (206). Divakaruni's characters are the human beings with some basic flaws. Mrs. Dutta in “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter,” cannot adopt in the American culture. She feels loneliness and loss of status. When she compares to the host country and home, she chooses own nation. Khuku’s mother in “The Names of Stars in Bengali,” is also unable to survive in America because of dissimilar culture in dwelling country and of familial dissatisfaction. Her sight, sound, costume, tradition, way of thinking, and living are under looked as a matter of back warded and clumsy by her daughter. They do not have sweet relationship in America. So, she also insists to back to India.

Numerous critics have examined *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* from different perspectives, particularly focusing on immigrants’ experiences in the United States. These receptions revolve around immigrants’ feelings of dislocations and bond with their homeland. It seems there is a need to conduct research on this text from the diasporic perspective. Without proper study on this issue, the meaning of text will remain incomplete. Taking this fact into consideration, the present researcher proposes to conduct the research from the theoretical strands of Diasporas studies.

Cohen considers diaspora a movement of the people from its original homeland. A diaspora is the dispersed population having a common origin in a smaller geographic area. The word 'diaspora' was first used in the classical period and dominant in the late 20th century. This term was first used for Jews and then to Greeks, Africans and Americans. Diaspora is a process of dissipating of people from its original homeland to the foreign regions. They migrate either in search of better life or some compulsions, such as war and conflicts. To those people, the

consciousness of ancestral home and history sustained over a long period. They have the collective memory of the nationality and extremely nostalgic of home (1).

However, people in the Diasporas often look back to their original indigenous cultures despite all the material comforts and logistic supports. While living in a new society, they recurrently connected to their original homes and communities. As a result, they often feel alienation and dislocated in their new homes with people from different societies. In the twentieth century, the Indian Diaspora has become a pertinent issue of location and dislocation. This research work explores some of central concerns and issues of love and relationships in the Indian Diaspora in the US.

When in the US, the immigrants suffer from the contradictory and simultaneous feelings about their original country. Neither they can leave it nor totally follow. They are attracted in the New Land for money, luxury and sophisticated life but somehow repulsed when they do not find their position and self-esteem in the foreign land which makes them nostalgic of their own motherland. Homi K. Bhabha also reveals that

Diaspora is the particular ambivalence that hunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it. It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of ‘origins’ of nation as a sign of the ‘modernity’ of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much moral transitional social reality. (1)

In these five selected stories, too, the immigrants have ambivalent feelings and behaviors. They come to America from India to have a sound family life. Eventually, they try to adjust in the new environment and culture but their nationality always hunts them badly. They do not feel so comfortable in America. Moreover, they suffer

from the identity crisis here. Therefore, though they tilted towards the American culture at the beginning, they are finally pulled by own origin and culture. They have the immense love of their own nation and tradition. Like Mrs. Dutta and Khuku's mother feel suffocation in alien kind of American culture. They daily practice their own tradition and cultural activities. Tarun, Khuku and Mira initially take part in American living style. They try to be happy on it but cannot persistently be pleased in this New Land. Mira and Khuku have simultaneous feeling about America. They intend to pursue money, and at the same time they are distanced by the American lifestyles. They hope of the bright future, but they are repelled because of identity crisis, alienation and familial disharmony.

Divakaruni has presented characters of different generations. The old generation always looks back whereas young ones look ahead. Like Mrs. Dutta, Khuku's mother is so traditional and prioritizes the past things and event whereas, Shyamoli, Mira and Tarun are the young generation and look forward. They are desperate for the job, career and future. Ruchira, the third generation is somehow inspired with her root culture. She has a great respect for her original traditions but also forwarded and determined in her life. R. Radhakrishnan considers the diaspora as:

The tension between the old and new homes which create the problem of divided allegiance that the two generations experience differently. The very organicity of the family and the community, displaced by travel and relocation, must be renegotiated and redefined. The two generations have different starting points and different givens. This phenomenon of historical rupture within the "same" community demands careful and rigorous analysis. The older generation cannot

afford to invoke India in an authoritarian mode to resolve problems in diaspora, and the younger generation would be ill advised to indulge in a spree of forgetfulness about “where they have come from. (206)

In the same way, these characters here have different feelings and opinions about America. The old generations like Mrs. Dutta and Khuku’s mother are unable to adopt in the new environment where they suffer from acculturation, alienation and familial conflict whereas, for the second generations like Mrs. Dutta’s son and daughter-in-law, Tarun, and Khuku about to forget their homeland and indulge in the materialistic society. The familial ties become so weak and fragile. But the third generation like Khuku’s sons and Ruchira, though they were born and grown up in America, influenced by the Indian culture and mythical legends and valorizes it. They are somehow attached with their root culture. It is also proved by Ruchira’s acceptance for arranged marriage.

Salman Rushdie suggests that the “ambiguous” and “shifting” energies of diaspora have the potential to produce strategies of negotiation to contest the reductive processes of homogenization at work in the formation and consolidation of nation and cultural identities (qtd. in Ray and Rama Kundu 72). For him when people enter into the new culture, they become ambivalent. They neither can forget their root culture nor fully adopt the new culture. There comes a hybridity and fluctuation in their lives. They get respect nowhere. They live an alien life in the foreign land and are already aliened from the origin because they leave no any identity at home. In "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," Divakaruni's old female protagonist sells all of her properties of India and goes to America to span her rest of the life with son. She is enthusiastic to have a complete family in a highly developed country. When her hopes

and predictions turn into an illusion, she feels her heart broken. She again turns to India and asks her friend for a rent.

Due to an ever expedited process of globalization, people migrate all over the world from various spatial zones. They are pulled by an uncontrollable force of modernity in the model of the West. They deliberately tend to break away from established social values and norms. They want to use industrial products for comforts and change. In their intent to become modern, they depend upon money and matters at the expense of values and relationships in line with their indigenous cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Though it seems that they sweep away of their nationality and originality they are knowingly or unknowingly attached to their own country and identity. They have a strong feeling of their sod. William Paul states that

Despite being geographically dispersed, the people of a diaspora maintain a strong, shared and collective identity centered on the point of origin to which they can trace the history of their ancestors. The memory of this point of origin establishes it as a homeland, a place of belonging, to which return will be possible in future. (115)

In these stories, the characters are immigrated to different places of America like California, Vermont, and Sacramento from India. They are eager to take every opportunity and momentarily forget the origin. Mira desperately wants job, money and sex on which she forgets her real position. Khuku is a cursory woman who longs for her family management but forgets own mother's felicity. But finally they all recall their mother and motherland where they can find their safe position and ownness. They remember their homeland and parents frequently.

People migrate from one place to another in search of better life. They go from less development or ruler area to the highly developed area where they can find well

education, job, and every facility. At this present age people from less development country go to the highly developed western countries like America and Europe. While they migrate to such an imperial land, they adore and follow the foreign culture. Like Mira goes to night clubs with a boy friend and keeps premarital affair on the name of modernity. Robins argues that global capitalism has in reality been about westernization- the export of western commodities, values, priorities, lifestyles (qtd. in Barker 132). Mira sits, walks, speaks and dresses up as an American girl. It means she values the American culture and life styles and forgets her own. But it is short timed. She cannot be pleased in her life in America. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, says for Safran members of a diaspora retained a collective memory of 'their homeland; they idealized their 'ancestral home,' were committed to the restoration of 'the original homeland' and continued in various ways to 'relate of that homeland' (4). Likely, the characters have collective memory of their homeland, India. They get ultimate mental solace in their own root culture and most of them decide to return back their home.

This research work can be a useful resource and master for researchers in the future to explore the experiences of the immigrants in the New Land and their suffering. Though the immigrants initially try to become happy and indulge in the new environment, they cannot become persistently pleased. So, all the immigrants have a common ideology about their homeland and indigenous culture. It is an integral part in their life. More the people live outside of the own country, more haunted with the nationality.

Sufferings in America/ New Land

Characters in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* embody immigrants and their experiences in different parts of America. This research work explores Indian

immigrants 'loneliness and disintegration in the new land, America. Since the characters like Mrs. Dutta and Khuku's mother are unaccompanied by their children. They are forced to stop their dressing and cooking styles. Practicing religion is seemed heavy and irrational to their children. It makes them hurt. Similarly, Mira, Radhika and Didi are the preys of deception either by the husband, boss or boyfriend. Whereas, some of the characters like Khuku, Mrs. Dutta's son and his family and Tarun are closely integrated in American society. It does not mean that they are happy in America. It is their compulsion to span the as usual life. They want to hide the reality as every American do.

Establishment of identity is possible only after the protest. Protest comes when there is the realization of their past sufferings and bitter experiences. For example, Martin Luther King Junior establishes the equal identity to Whites after the actualization of Negroes' plight. King Junior writes that "we have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional God given rights. . . . hate-filled policeman curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters" (qtd. in Longaker and Jeffrey 256). Due to the memory and experiences of such brutality, Blacks protest and get the equal identity to Whites. It implements not only to the large revolution but also applied to the identification in a minute level. Vijay Agnew also presents that "memory is an act of representation and performance, then we can ask what its relationship is to 'fact' and whether memories are 'real' and 'authentic' interpretation of self, home and history" (7). During the days with son's family, Mrs. Dutta experiences awful situations and behaviors. She bewilders to mention her feelings in a letter at the beginning. Later on, her degree of tolerancy gets break and confesses it to Roma in a response letter. She wants to achieve her identity in her own land.

Immigrants seem like a pendulum clock that always moves back and forth and cannot remain constant of their identity. They neither can fully adopt in the New Land nor forget the origin. Their psychology that's why fragments into two parts; here and there, this and that, do and not to do. Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography writes:

I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thought and approach to life is more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me . . . I am a stranger and alien in the west. I cannot be of it. (qtd. in Agnew 15).

Mrs. Dutta experiences despite being with the son and his family and having no any relatives remained in India, India still clings her, there she gets the true happiness. She thinks "how alone she is in this land of young people and how unnecessary. She is not sure how long she sits under the glare of the overhead light, how long her hands clench themselves in her laps. When she opens them, nail marks line the soft flesh of her palms, red hieroglyphs- her body's language, telling her what to do" (Divakaruni 33). With this phrase, we can guess this old mother's plight in a foreign land. She has no friends and relatives to talk. She is speechless and remains in home depressedly. She feels that America is not for the old agers where all people are running after the material life. There is no humanity and brotherhood for her. Her son and his family are only her own, living in America. But she becomes lonely due to the lack of her son's love and respect. Similarly she does not dare instantly to live in India because of having no house and relatives there. In spite of these resentments in her life, finally she asserts to live with her old friend in India.

In "The Intelligence of Wild Things," Didi suffers from alienation. She has so hasty life that she can't deliver the message of her mother's sickness to her brother

though they live not so far from each other. She says “I haven’t found a time to tell Tarun that our mother, to whom he hasn’t spoken in years, is dying in India. I haven’t found a way to beg him to go to her” (Divakaruni 36). She has no more friends and relatives in America. Her brother is the only one relative besides her husband but when she requests her husband to keep her brother with them, he ignores it and says that he doesn’t want any disturbance in their private life. She also says “I hated this change in myself, this shrinking of sensibility, this failure of intelligence. But I didn’t know what to do about it. Did anyone else suffer from such a disease? I was afraid to ask Sandeep, who was the only person I knew well enough in America to ask” (Divakaruni 43). Because of a constant communication gap between brother and sister, Tarun and Didi cannot live together in the same family in the US.

Characters recurrently express their resentments to new lifestyles in the United States. Mira, for an instance, expresses her dissimulation in “The Blooming Season for Cacti”.

Oh, I was quick. Because only the quick survive. Or the fortunate- but already my life had proved I wasn’t that. . . . I wanted to climb to top of the highest dune. . . . people thought I came to Texas because my older brother was the only relative I had left. The real reason was that I needed something as different as possible from Bombay. (Divakaruni 168-69)

Mira sinks into an ocean of despair. She is dehumanized by her restaurant boss. He makes her compel to lose everything. She loses job, habitat and even her virginity in the new land. Likewise, Radhika is also in full of tears and disappointment. Though Malik has transferred his properties and the building to her name, the whole thing, she

owns it but cannot become happy because he already has his wife and children. So, she tries for suicide in many times in her despair.

In “The Names of Stars in Bengali,” there is a heavy cloud of misunderstanding between Khuku and her mother. They donot make conversation as in India. If they meet, they would blame each other and hold responsible for their mistakes. Mother feels her fate defeated in America. Khuku sees her mother’s action as an irrelevant and gets angry. “things the daughter saw as inconsequential- the burglar alarm, the answering machine, the knobs on the dishwasher loomed like huge, barbed obstacle on her daily horizon” (Divakaruni 259). They fight in very trivial matters and create bitter dispute on the incidents of many years ago. Khuku blames her parents and family for not taking parts her in a fun activity. At one point writer mentions, “In this world, they couldn’t inhabit a house together, in the old way. They couldn’t be mother and daughter in that way again” (Divakaruni 261). It is a bitter reality of an American immigrant. Khuku is self oriented and abducted in the materialistic American society, so she cannot maintain her mother’s wants. There is a doubt, guilt and misunderstandings between the mother and daughter.

Telling story is an oral form of giving message. It is told and heard since the ancient period. It carries the messages which can be the enlightenment in life. Story is formed when there is the recording of the incidents in mind and shapes to the tale. Memory is the active process which makes us understanding the both past and present. When Khuku visits India with her sons, her mother tells a story about her childhood age, how she is innocent and lovable to her mother. After listening to her, she becomes so emotional and realizes that how she is deserted in America emotionally. Telling story is a nice way to present a life with an impressive language.

People of diaspora cannot remain happy in the foreign land permanently. Their feelings and emotions get suppressed and feel the crisis in their identity. Neither the old generations nor the Young generations are happy. Old ones are worried because of having lack of children's love and care. Similarly, young ones are sad because they are unsecured in the foreign land, having no respect and personality. At one point Divakaruni asserts the words using for immigrants in America; "Fucking Dothead go home". It's a bitter reality of the people who are migrated to the foreign land seeking for good future.

Rising Consciousness in the Female Protagonists

During the time process, the consciousness is immersed among the female characters in these selected stories. The consciousness here means feelings of own inner soul and understanding the past and the present. It's a form of having enlightenment. They find out their problems and seek the ultimate solution. Or at least they realize themselves.

"The perennial fascination of letters, journals and domestic writing lies in their conscious and artful renegotiation of the boundaries between private and public spheres" (Susan and Brown 69-70). It is a means of representing own feelings. Similarly, Mrs. Dutta in "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter" and Ruchira in "The Unknown Errors of Our Lives" record their feelings and past events in the form of letter and diary writing respectively. Through their life writings, they understand their inner feelings and reveal it out. Mrs. Dutta ultimately articulates her actual life in America; how much she is living alien like creature in this unknown world, the behavior of her daughter-in-law and the grandchildren and so on.

Likewise, Ruchira in "The Unknown Errors of Our Lives," mentions her past incidents. "For a moment she fingers the book's . . . wonders what's inside, it's been

that long since she wrote in it. Then she remembers of course! It's her book of errors, from her mid teens, a time she thinks back on now as her Earnest Period" (Divakaruni 211). It is the manuscript of her life up to these days. These recordings help her to understand the errors of her lives. "Thumbing Through her book of errors . . . one day you look back your teenage self And pompous to boot. Here, for example, is the quotation . . . An unexamined life is not worth living" (Divakaruni 215). By looking back the written diaries she comes to analyze her adult age or teenage and feels that an unexamined life is not easy and meaningful to live. With this phrase we can also predict that she learns about her mistakes of her life and wants to be improved. She seems aware of her faults.

Fredrick Luis Aldama, in "World Literature Today," underscores a raising consciousness among the female characters. He reviews this text as it describes South Asian characters who struggle in a patriarchal world to get freedom (113). So for him text raises the feminist issue. In "The Forgotten Children," a female narrator recalls her childhood age strangled with poverty. Her father was a drunkard, manner less man who scolds, slaps and spits her mother. He does not care of the family. She weeps by remembering her hard laborious caring mother. She cultivates the memory of her disgraceful father; "In our fantasy, entire sections of words have disappeared from the dictionary: fear, fracture, furious, fatal father" (Divakaruni 153). She does not know what the love of a dad is. She and her brother never get a parental affection and support. Rather, his brutal and wild nature prevails in their mind.

Writing and painting are the excellent ways to express feelings. Great arts come through the abyss of pain and sufferings. In the same way, when Ruchira in a title story comes to know that Biren is a play boy, and already deceived Arlene, she has a great pain. She becomes confused to marry him. Meanwhile, to minimize her

pain, makes a painting. This painting is about the Hindu legends. Through this painting she reflects her despair as well as hope. It is her self realization.

In “Love of a Good Man,” Monisha dislikes her father. To some extent, she hates him. It is because of his irresponsibility to the children and family. She thinks that he is the only cause of her mother’s depression and death. Her father leaves them in his adult age and does not care even after her mother’s hundreds of thousands of pleadings. He is hedonistic and only cares the self. He goes to America but leaves the wife and daughter. They compel to span the gloomy days. She says, “My mother’s life, precious and fragile as this silk I’m wearing, and ripped it apart”. (Divakaruni 111). In this way, she raises her voice against her father and hesitates to welcome him in her house. With this Lui’s review, it comes to know that there is the rise of consciousness among the female characters. They realize their position and hindrances of their life. Mostly, they find that patriarchy is the main barrier of their career. In this way, women evoke their voice against the male members though they are their own father, or a husband.

Even if women become nostalgic, what they recall and recreate are usually the good memories: love and sharing in a familiar place. But they can also remember the problematic situations back (Rodriguez 19). They present their stories in a way that highlighted their endurance, as well as their agency. In “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter,” we can feel Mrs. Dutta’s sufferings through these words: “Since Sagar’s father died. . . she missed his father, of course, especially in the evenings, when it had been his habit to read to her the more amusing parts of the newspaper while she rolled out ruti” (Divakaruni 11). “Mrs. Dutta had been ill before, but those illness had been different . . . but now there was none to ask her, querulously, just how long do you plan to remain sick, no one waiting . . . no one whose life was inconvenienced the

least bit by her illness” (Divakaruni 11). With this story, it is revealed that there is none in America who cares and feels Mrs. Dutta. Her own son and his family remain indifferent to her even in her bitter sickness. Nobody asks about her health because it does not affect anybody’s lives. Her presence or absence does not make any meaning to their lives. It shows her painful sufferings at old age in the foreign land and how selfish of the young generation being an American.

In “The Intelligence of Wild Things,” Didi wants to bring her brother Tarun to India where their mother is in dying sickness but Tarun tries to remain indifferent to his mother. He hasn’t called his mother for several years. So, Didi tries to tell their past stories very carefully. “Everyone called Tarun a good boy. He never got into trouble like the other neighbor kids who talked back to teachers. . . .He preferred being with my mother and me. Even when he was a teenager. . . . but what he liked best was listening to my mother’s stories” (Divakaruni 39). Didi persuades her brother that her brother is a good boy since his childhood and lover of his mother’s stories. She draws his attention instantly with the flashbacks of the childhood memory. Moreover, in this story Didi realizes herself that how much selfish behavior she compelled to have. She is unable to keep her brother within them because of her husband. She realizes that how much she deviates from her responsibilities and emotions due to the immigration. Lastly, Didi is so careful to tell the story to her brother. “Tonight I will tell my brother a story. Once there was a widow- woman who had two children. I’ll tell it the way the old tales were told, without guilt or blame, out of sorrow and hope, in honor of memory” (Divakaruni 53). In this way, Didi expresses that how she is bounded in relationship and how she is muted. She wants to move her brother’s psychology towards their mother who is dying in India.

Divakaruni establishes the female characters as a tragic hero. They are good having some flaws within. These characters are able to draw the great pathos of audience. Sometimes, it makes the audience to cry guilt and hope as well. All the female characters here learn the lesson from their mistakes. Female are the source of love and inspiration. They can bring anyone in a right track as Didi brings to her brother and khuku's mother to her daughter. They are so kind and have the high degree of endurancy as Mrs. Dutta. But when it crosses its limits, they can be harder as Monisha and the narrator of "The Forgotten Children". Divakaruni's stories revolve round the real life scenario of the immigrants. Therefore, it is a best example of logos. This collection is more credible because the writer herself is an immigrant. She migrates from India to America. She is an Indian-American writer.

Back to the Home, Original Culture

People like to live in home. Outside home they make new homes to live with shared feelings and emotions. They have their cultures of their own embedded with their homes. They have their original cultures and homes in that new world. People are connected by their cultures wherever they live in. Almost all the characters of these selected stories are gone back to the homeland or original culture. While they are living in America, they experience different problems. Though they try to adjust in New Land and adopt some new living styles to some extent, finally they are unable to dwell in America, they momentarily have the nostalgic feeling of their indigenous land and culture and return back to it. According to Gayle Greene, 'Nostalgia' is the desire to return home, 'to remember' is 'to bring to mind' or 'think of again,' 'to be mindful of,' 'to collect' (qtd. in Rodriguez 19). To some extent, we remember or think about something means we want to have it again though it cannot be always possible. As the above citation Mrs. Dutta in "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter," recollects the

memory of her past life where she had her husband and a happy family. She remembers her son's childhood and her pleasant moment with her friends. But in America, she is living as an indifferent and alone days where nobody is friend and even own family is not her own. Precisely, she decides to return home country and asks a rent to her friend in India.

Similarly, Didi in "Intelligence of Wild Things," is also returning home with her brother in India. She becomes so excited before the day to go to India where her mother is. "Stitch a smile onto your lips . . . You're going home tomorrow. You did your best, and now you're going home. Home. I turn the sound over on my tongue. . . . A dim cement- floored alcove in Calcutta, the smell of frying bitter gourd" (Divakarini 49-50). There is the immense love and affection to the home. Actual happiness does not exist in material world, but is in the world where our spirit smiles. Living in own land is just like living in a heaven as to Didi.

People have tendencies to travel from one part of the world to another. When they move to the new place, they form a community of their own to share among themselves feelings and thoughts. Living in a new place not only offers opportunities but also poses challenges. They look for new options to improve living standards while disturbing them with their past memories and longingness. In that sense the diaspora is a beautiful community of immigrants in a new world. Likewise, Khuku and Khuku's mother also return home. Khuku's mother does not like to stay in America and tells her for sending back home in India. "The daughter put her hand on her mother's feet. They were very cold. . . . her father had died like this. . . . Mother! Finally, without opening eyes, her mother said, Khuku, send me home" (Divakaruni 261). Khuku's mother loses her hope in the new land where everybody seems unknown to her even her own daughter. In her anxiety she says nothing but tears

down and insists to back to India. Khuku's children also find their mother more happy and cheerful in India than in America. "She seemed younger and foreign and laughed more than at home and ate with her hands" (Divakaruni 238). Feeling of own ness only exist in indigenous land, People can flourish here. One gets pleasure in own motherland as Khuku laughs and eat more in India. Priya on the other hand, a minor character in the story "The Blooming Season for Cacti" lives in America but now she goes to India for arranged marriage. "Just two more months left," Priya says . . . my wedding. He's in India. My parents have set everything up. I've been saving all my money for the trousseau" (Divakaruni 180). Though, she has been living in America, she believes in arranged marriage, her own tradition which reflects her attachment to the origin.

The situation of in-betweenness prevails in many of the diaspora people. People born in one place, move to a new place for multiple circumstances such as war, opportunities and change in mind. In this connectio Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses* states that he becomes neither of English Part nor of Indian Part. His identity is fragmented into "here" and "there" "a bit of this and a bit of that". (qtd. in Ray and Rama Kunda 72). Mira also splits into two parts. First, she wants to adopt herself in pure American style and practices it. Second, the memory of mother hunts her frequently. Tarun in "The Intelligence of Wild Things," has dual identity of being here and there, this and that. He has an American girl friend whereas his mother is in India. He forgets his mother and keeps a distance with her. But finally, he realizes it and goes back to India with his 'Didi'. Susan Jacob also notes that when there is the transition from the familiar environment and relationship to an exotic environment, it demands a breakup with the past but they cannot shed their past completely nor can be nurtured solely by it (42). Mrs.Dutta, Mira and Khuku's mother mostly face the

existential crisis in America. Mrs. Dutta and Khuku's mother are from old generation. They are widow women. So, their dressing styles and traditional activities are deemed as worthless and under looked by their daughter-in-law and daughter respectively. They try to adopt in new culture but at the same time leave behind the old culture. They face the great shock of cultural dissimilation which is very different to their old one. For example Mrs. Dutta chants the song of Holy gods whereas her son and grandchildren enjoy the English songs. Khuku is an Indian girl but marries to an outsider, an American man. So she is left in-between of Indian and American, Hindu and Christianity.

Diaspora is the group of people who are migrated to the foreign land from their ancestral home. "Diaspora indicates the dispersal or scattering of a body of people from their traditional home across foreign lands" (Israel 1). Diaspora people directly or indirectly suffers from the nowhere-ness and dislocation in the migrated country. In order to console oneself, people of diaspora either plunge into the nostalgia of their homeland or return to it. In these chosen stories too, all the characters are came to America and live dispersedly in the different zones of America. Mrs. Dutta comes to California to live with her son's family. Didi lives in Vermont and Tarun is also nearby her. Mira comes to Sacramento. Khuku is also an immigrant of America. They are scattered into various regions in America but ultimately they choose their nationality. They find their please and satisfaction positively in own forefathers' land.

In conclusion, Divakaruni portrays that how different it is between the assumption and reality in life of immigrants. Her characters are ambitious, have dreams and desires and overwhelming attraction to the ephemeral luxuries and pleasure but are failed to secure. They suffer from human tragedies, forlorn and

despair in the new land, America. Due to the lack of in-country employment and opportunities in India, Mira goes to out of the homeland in order to achieve the full and productive employment and decent work. But when she reaches there, she feels that it is not easy to find the work and social securities in foreign land. She works as a cashier in an Indian restaurant, keeps pre-marital sex with Ajit. It is her first sex but cannot be the last. She is expelled out from her job and apartment with emotional harassment. Similarly, Mrs. Dutta is an image of a traditional Hindu woman who still lags behind man in many domains. So, she chooses to live with her son after the death of husband. But this old widow does not get peace, familial and social respect. These elements hinder her happiness. Thus, in order to come out from familial conflicts, to have a social inclusion and mental peace, Divakaruni's protagonists choose their own motherland and join together.

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