

Nostalgia – A much deeper purpose than meets the eye.

It is not unusual to hear older people lament about the Good old days. By this, they mean an often-romanticized memory of a previous period in their life or history, that they feel was better, simpler, and happier than the present. Psychologist and behavior experts see this as a coping mechanism against the stress, disappointments and chaos of the current time of their life. They posit that through nostalgia, a person tries to emphasize positive memories while filtering out past hardships. Some experts see this as evidence of the fact that many tend to appreciate life's moments only after they have passed.

Although Nostalgia is an almost universal human experience, research show that some individuals may not experience it at all, as this depends on a person's "**nostalgia trait**"; — that is the ability or tendency to bring to mind, and **reflect in a longing way**, upon meaningful experiences from one's personal past¹. However, its prevalence is supported by research which indicates that, in the USA for example, approximately 68% to 80% of Americans experience nostalgia. This cuts across all age groups, from the younger generations to adults. And among older people, nostalgic memories are often viewed as a vital reminder of what matters most in life².

Embedded in these definitions and statistics are facts that have significant implications that are lost to many. Facts which we shall now explore to bring out their great Spiritual significance for those who have this personality trait, or those who wonder why this common phenomenon appears among humans.

First, we need to appreciate that nostalgia is not the same as just remembering. The key difference being that nostalgia evokes a kind of longing, characterized by a yearning to go back to times when we felt loved and supported. Times that bring back echoes of a sense of stability, safety, and security. This is even if the historical past with which we associate the nostalgia had its own chaos and insecurity. For example, an 80-year-old American who is today nostalgic about the 1960s or 1970s, no doubt, remembers the insecurity caused by the cold war during this period, or the protest against the Vietnam war, and the race riots that were tearing at the fabric of society. In fact, one could say that, except for the recent global political developments, the American society of the past 20 years has been outwardly more tranquil and secure than the good old days of the 1970s and 1960s. Not to mention the plethora of today's modern conveniences, compared to then.

So, if nostalgia is not the same as memory, which lies in brain/mind activity, where does its source lie within us humans? Should we perhaps look to the Spirit/Soul; since this is the only other

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S019188692400014X>

² Psychology Today - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/am-i-my-genes/202410/why-nostalgia-strongly-shapes-us-and-our-politics#>

consciousness that exists in a human being. There is also the key distinguishing feature of memory versus nostalgia. The former is a mechanical recall of events, usually for practical application, whereas nostalgia evokes feelings that are more emotional/spiritual, and awaken a longing for something higher and more noble. But recognizing that we are unable to rise to the immediate challenge, we describe them as sentimental, impractical. It must also be admitted that nostalgia does not always evoke noble emotions. For some it may evoke sentiments associated with positions of power and influence that they once enjoyed. Or a life style of libertine freedom in which they enjoyably indulged. Regardless of the quality, we cherish these nostalgic sentiments within our bosom (soul/Spirit). Even materialist³ experience nostalgia, although theirs is usually deeply intertwined with sentimental attachment to physical items from their past, that for them represent their "better" times.

If we pull these facts together, one can perhaps begin to see that this common experiencing of nostalgia may have a greater role to play in our spiritual life than we realize.

In the lecture titled "Once Upon A Time", from the book, "In The Light of Truth" (The Grail Message), by Abdrushin, he draws our attention to the unrecognized treasures, for our spiritual education, that are embedded in every day triggers of life. To illustrate this, he delves in great detail into the hidden Spiritual lessons from the emotions triggered by this very common introduction to children's stories.

He starts the lecture with the words.....

FOUR WORDS ONLY, yet they are like a magic formula; for they bear within them the quality of instantly arousing some special intuitive perception in every human being. Seldom is this intuitive perception of the same kind. Similar to the effect music has. Exactly as with music, these four words also find their way straight to the spirit of man, his real "ego". Naturally only to those who do not keep the spirit completely locked within them, and have thus already lost their real humanity here on earth.

On hearing these words, however, every human being will involuntarily and instantly think back to some former experience. This rises vividly before him, and with the picture also a corresponding intuitive perception.

With one it will be a yearning tenderness, a melancholy happiness, or also a silent longing impossible of fulfilment. With others, however, pride, anger, horror or hatred. Man will always

³ Statistics of *materialist* versus *believers* in the America (i.e. 60% to 65% of believers versus 35% to 40% of non-believers).

think of some experience which made an exceptional impression upon him, but which he also thought long since extinguished within him.

Yet nothing has been extinguished in him, nothing lost of what he once really experienced within himself. All of it he can still call his own, as really acquired by himself, and thus imperishable. But only that which has been experienced! Nothing else can arise with these words.

Man should for once closely heed this with care and with an alert mind, then he will soon recognize what is really alive within him, and what can be designated as dead, as a soulless shell of useless memories.

Only what has so deeply affected him during his earth-life as to stamp an indelible and ineffaceable imprint on his soul serves to benefit man, by whom we must not imagine the physical body. Only such imprints have an influence on the forming of the human soul and thereby, going further, also on the advancement of the spirit for its continual development.

Abdrushin goes on to say....

Happy is he who can call his own many such powerful experiences, no matter whether called forth by joy or sorrow; for the impressions they leave will one day be the most precious that a human soul takes with it on its way into the beyond. —

Purely intellectual work, such as is customary today, when properly applied, serves only to facilitate physical life on earth. Closely considered, that is the actual ultimate aim of all intellectual activity! In the final analysis there is never any other result. With all erudition, irrespective of which branch of education, and also with all activities, whether in public affairs or in the family, with every individual, or with nations, as also, finally, with humanity as a whole.

But unfortunately, everything has subjected itself quite unconditionally to the intellect alone, and therefore lies in heavy chains of earthly limitation of the perceptive capacity, which was naturally bound to bring in its wake disastrous consequences in every activity and happening, and will continue to do so.

In effect, nostalgic feelings are not intended to send us into revelries of past glories, or sentimental longings. Rather, this is Life giving us the opportunity, through triggers, to recognize how we have truly lived our lives up to that point. And, in doing so, to recognize the things to which we have assigned the greatest importance.

With such frequent opportunities for assessment, no one can truly say that they never had an opportunity to reflect, when, in accordance with the laws of Creation, they have to suffer the consequences of where they buried their hearts. Those for whom nostalgia evokes sentimental and noble emotions should also see this as a reminder to remain steadfast on their path, and not succumb to the disappointing experiences of their present, that may be triggering the nostalgia for the *Good old days*.