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## Nostalgic Impact on Characterization in the “Reluctant Fundamentalist” by Mohsin Hamid

### Abstract

*This paper aims at investigating the nostalgic impact on the characters in The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid. Nostalgia is regarded as the state of homesick or a mental sentimentality for one's past. Everyone is more or less nostalgic, and nostalgia plays a vital role in the lives and experiences of individuals in daily life. The present study is a qualitative and descriptive textual analysis. The Reluctant Fundamentalist has been examined by analyzing the words, sentences, characters and their actions from the nostalgic point of view. This study has investigated the nostalgic impact on the characters, especially on Changez and Erica, through the lens of nostalgia by focusing on their personalities, works, social lives, actions and reactions. This study has found that nostalgia influences and molds the lives and experiences of characters and individuals to an extensive extent. Changes and Erica spoil their lives but are not ready to come out of their nostalgic worlds. The Reluctant Fundamentalist has been analyzed and interpreted through different dimensions, but no one has discussed it from a nostalgia point of view before. So, this paper is a primary investigation and would surely contribute to the present stock of knowledge.*

**Key Words:** Nostalgia, Reluctant Fundamentalist, Changes, Erica

### Introduction

Almost every country possesses a considerable ratio of its population as foreigners, and it has been observed often that students, teachers, workers, businessmen or job holders in foreign are under extreme pressure of homesickness and/or nostalgia. Such pressures not only hinder in the way of their progress by disturbing them mentally as well as physically but also they can lead to refusal from the study, work or business and even difficult situations like a nervous breakdown or suicide. To protect them from or survive in such situations is the need and desire of the victims as well as their families and near and dear ones. The statistics of such victims and the nature of such cases may vary from country to country. The present research is qualitative research, and it is not supposed to analyze any numeral or statistical data, but the fact remains that it is a global issue that needs attention and possible solution.

Still, no such research has been conducted on Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to tackle the issue of nostalgia diagnostically and find some remedy to protect from or survive under the pressure of it. Such preventions may not be confined to only this novel confront such situations and cope with them. Similarly, mentors and counselors in different institutions, firms and organizations may help them to survive and come out of the worst conditions of nostalgia.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary has been given as “a feeling of sadness mixed with pleasure and affection when you think of happy times in the past.” (“Nostalgia”).

The definition of ‘reluctant’ from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary has been given as “hesitating before doing something because you do not want to do it or because you are not sure that it is the right thing to do” (“Reluctant”).

Definition of fundamentalist noun from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

1. “A person who follows the basic rules and teachings of a religion very strictly.”
2. “A Christian who believes that everything written in the Bible is completely true” (“Fundamentalist”).

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But textual pieces of evidence prove that none of these definitions of the fundamentalist suits Changez, and in the analysis chapter, this study has revealed what fundamentalist really means and how it has been misinterpreted by the critics and commentators.

### Introduction of Mohsin Hamid

Mohsin Hamid, the Pakistani author, was born in Lahore in 1971, but he spent his childhood for a considerable time in the United States. Hamid's father was a professor, and Hamid spent his childhood with his father when he was doing his PhD at Stanford University. When Hamid's family returned to Pakistan, he attended Lahore American School for his early education. For Higher education, he joined Princeton in 1993 and graduated with summa cum laude. He remained under the supervision of Toni Morrison and Joyce Carol Oates and developed fervor for writing. He started writing his first novel in the workshop of Toni Morrison.

In the year 2000, *Moth Smoke*, his first novel was published. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is Hamid's second novel which published in 2007. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* another praiseworthy work. His latest novel, *Exit West* published in 2017 and is about immigration and refugee problems.

### Introduction of The Reluctant Fundamentalist

This novel starts at a cafe table in Lahore, where a Pakistani named Changez talks with a nervous unnamed American stranger. They share tea and dinner in the old Anarkali market, and then Changez accompanies him to his hotel room through the murky night streets of Lahore. In an extended monologue, Changez expresses his experiences of the United States as a student and as an employee of a valuation firm called Underwood Samson to an uneasy American.

Changez belongs to a respectable family in Lahore. He moves to New Jersey after attaining a scholarship to Princeton and then a high-paying job at Underwood Samson. While spending his holidays in Greece with other Princetonians, he falls in love with a young uneasy American lady Erica who is uneasy due to the death of her childhood sweetheart, Chris. She feels affection for Changez and perceives him as a shadow of her former lover through the memory of her ex-lover hampers her to develop any new relation.

Changez visits his family in Pakistan, which is at the brink of war with neighboring India and Changez considers the United States equally involved in it. When Changez returns to America, he refuses to shave off his beard as a token of his past in his present. He experiences discrimination at airports, at the workplace and in the streets. Meanwhile, Erica has been moved to a clinic as she gets increasingly ill.

Changez disillusionment is noticed at Underwood Samson, but still considering him valuable for the firm, they send him on a business trip to Chile. Changez, troubled with the prevailing political situation and preoccupied with Erica, is neither passionate for his work nor charmed by the prestige of his company. He confronts the chief of the assigned company. He abandons the assignment, knowing well that by doing so, he is abandoning his job and forfeiting his American visa. On returning to New York to pack his luggage, Changez discovers that Erica has disappeared from the clinic, presumed to have committed suicide. Her mother gives him a copy of Erica's manuscript before he departs.

On returning, Pakistan, Changez joins the University of Lahore as a lecturer and an activist and protests against the foreign policy of America. Changez's activism remains unclear as the story ends after Changez accompanies the stranger back to his hotel. After the last page of the play closes, the reader is left untold whether the American was a secret agent or it was a by the chance meeting of Changez and the American.

### Research Questions

This paper aims at answering the following questions:

1. How does nostalgia influence the lives of Changez and Erica in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?

2. How much are the characters affected by nostalgia in the shift of their stances in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid?

### Rationale of the Study

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has been analyzed and discussed through different dimensions but has not been analyzed through a nostalgia point of view before. Most of the critics and commentators have emphasized identity, loss of identity and identity crisis as the main themes of the novel but the text of the novel favors nostalgia more than identity issues. Changez is a foreigner, but Erica is a native having no identity issue at all in America, but she destroys her life just for her dead lover Chris because she cannot come out of his memories. Changez has been declared as an Islamic and cultural fundamentalist, but in the lines of the novel, we see him drinking beer or doing things we cannot expect from an Islamic or cultural fundamentalist. It is because the word fundamentalist in the title of the novel has been misinterpreted.

### Literature Review

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has been studied and commented upon by wide varieties of critics and researchers through various dimensions. In an interview with Hamish Hamilton in February 2007, Mohsin Hamid replied to his question about the starting point of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* that he had started writing that play in summer 2000 following the publication of *Moth Smoke* one year before the incident of 9/11. He says that he had lived in America in the last decade, and he wanted to investigate his own growing desire to leave America. He says: "It was confusing territory for me because I loved -- and still love -- so much about America, and yet was still uncertain about staying on. Similarly, I loved Pakistan and yet felt unsettled about returning there ("mohsinhamid.com").

Abdul Ghafoor Awan, in association with Shaista Andleeb and Farhat Yaseen, says in an article that Mohsin Hamid is a post-colonial exponent novelist and his heroes are an exponent of the contemporary Pakistani mindset. Like other commentators of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, they also discuss the novel from a post-colonial perspective. They say that this novel is totally a description of the 9/11 mishap. He says that due to other incidents, Changez underwent a transformation. The 9/11 incident greatly influenced the lives of Pakistanis settled in America (10).

Sobia Kiran, in her article *Identity Crisis as Reflected in Selected Works: The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid and the Black Album by Hanif Kureishi*, concludes that identity loss is the main problem of the people of duce origin. They remain 'Others' to both cultures in spite of their best struggle to absorb in the dominant culture. Humera Tariq, in her article *Identity at Stake: Mohsin Hamid's "The Reluctant Fundamentalist"* highlights the issue of identity. She says that identity is one of the issues faced by many immigrants. It is very problematic for the immigrants to keep up their native identity in an altogether changed and different environment abroad. This problem gets worse in the case of Muslim immigrants who immigrated to a non-Muslim country due to the clash between the Islamic and western ideas and code of life (237).

Karen Olsson, in his review in *New York Times* of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* "I Pledge Allegiance." pledges that Mohsin Hamid has used the title of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as ironical to make us understand and compel us to question ourselves whether the title is about an American upper-class capitalist or labeled non-Muslim fundamentalist. He further says that the novel is more interesting than these mere comparisons (Olsson 2007).

Daryoosh Hayati, in the article *East, Meets West: a Study of Dual Identity in Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, talks about glocal (global + local) identity, which is at stake due to cultural conflicts. Daryoosh says that the author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* complains about labeling Muslims as terrorists. He asserts that anti-American contempt by Muslims is totally non-religious. It is possible, and Muslims should not be stereotyped as terrorists due to their religion (31).

Different critics have interpreted *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from different angles. Their viewpoints are no doubt important for the literature review, but no one has yet interpreted it from a nostalgia point of view. This paper has attempted to see the impact of nostalgia on the characterization of the novel.

## Research Methodology

This research paper is about nostalgia and its impact on human beings. It is qualitative research as qualitative research has got its general recognition that is concerned with the processes rather than simply the products or outcomes. Qualitative approaches are more appropriate to give insight to understand participants' perceptions of the experience or to understand their role in the event as this study has done. After the improvement of the analysis methods, qualitative approaches are used more than quantitative approaches for people who prefer to use better ways for data collection about some problem. That is why the present study has adopted the qualitative approach. John Creswell says that qualitative research explores a variety of dimensions of social life and qualitative procedures rely on images and texts. In the complex process of learning, if one wants the environment to be effective, it needs the complex interaction of various variables. Assessment of learning is best done by observing during the participation of the participants and watching their progress in that process. So, the description is more valuable than research outcomes or products. Moreover, it is difficult to predict with accuracy the behavior of complex organisms. Quantitative research may bring obscurity into the insights and experiences of the participants, which the researchers needed for the sake of addressing the complexities and contextual factors for learning and the learning environment. Hence the qualitative and not the quantitative approach has been adopted.

Conventionally, this chapter has been divided into labeled subsections. The tool for this study is text. The subsections include the research paradigms, the classification of paradigms, the research design and method, the nostalgia approach in the novel under study, data collection methods and the evolution of nostalgia theory.

## Analysis and Discussion

The impact of nostalgia has been analyzed and discussed on the main characters one by one, and the answer to the research questions have been given turn by turn.

### The Nostalgic Impact on the Author Mohsin Hamid

The narrative strategy of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is of great importance as Changez narrates the whole story in the form of a monologue. Stephen Morton says that Mohsin Hamid borrowed the narrative strategy of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from *The Fall*, a 1956 novella of Albert Camus. The only difference is that Camus' hero confronts the philosophical questions while Hamid's protagonist shows his dissatisfaction over America's vast military influence. Through his hero, Hamid narrates the actual framing of Pakistan indifferent to terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism (7-8). But when went through the pages of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* thoroughly, it comes to the limelight that Changez has resentment for America due to his nostalgia as he tells his American listener that often during his stay in America, such comparisons made him troubled rather resentful, "we, the people of Indus River Basin, had cities that were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians" (Hamid 38). This is about the author, and the same conditions can be witnessed in the characters of the novel.

### The Nostalgic Impact on the Protagonist Changez

Mohsin Hamid personates his nostalgia in his protagonist Changez making the novel to reflect an autobiographical element as Alastair Sooke in *The Telegraph* declares, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* more autobiographical than his first play, *Moth Smoke*. *The Telegraph*, April 18, 2007 (as cited in Jajja 83). Mohsin Hamid went to America; he loved America but had a growing desire to leave America. So, he returns home and teaches at a university in Lahore. Same like the author, his protagonist Changez too went to America, loved America, studied at Princeton, worked at Underwood Samson but finally returned home and started teaching in a university in Lahore. This similarity at the superficial level gives an autobiographical touch to the story, but deep down, it personates nostalgia.

Mohsin Hamid has given the novel an autobiographical touch by first-person narration. Protagonist Changez becomes the mouthpiece of Mohsin Hamid to convey his message in the form of

a dramatic monologue. Abdul Baseer and Safia Dildar Alvi, in their article *An Analysis of Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, call the novel a fictional autobiography of first-person narration. They say that the novel has a linear plot and is based on a real historical event and the first-person narration makes it more real to the readers as personal experience of the narrator. So, it becomes a sort of account which is convincing to the reader as well as is reluctant (293). When looking through the perspective of autobiography, it comes to one's mind that the life of a person is a bit more eventful and lengthy than a single event. The 9/11 incident must have influenced the protagonist's life, but he had his life which is in full swing even before the incident of 9/11. His mind was not empty before that sad event, and a lot of memories had layered his brain. So, calling the novel a fictional autobiography and then confining it to a mere incident would be an unjust analysis of the novel.

Changez, the main character of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, seems to be very ambitious for telling about his past life. His ambition for narrating his past reflects his love for his past. At the very beginning of the novel, he tells the American not to be afraid of his beard as he is a lover of America. He tells his autobiography to the stranger possessively because he loves his past and feels happy in narrating it. Changez is so ambitious and possessive to tell his story that his conversation with the stranger turns into a monologue in which Changez speaks while the stranger listens only.

Changez himself is unaware of the real cause of hatred in his heart for America. When in Manila, he hears about the collapse of the twin towers, his initial reaction is to be pleased as he smiles that at least someone has brought proud America to its knees (Hamid 83). Hoineikip Halady, in her article, says that despite 9/11 being the main catalyst for the development of Muslims contempt for Americans but keeping in view Edward said's remarks in his *Orientalism*, Muslim American animosity is traced back since crusades, and this contempt has now developed to 'Islamophobia'. She further says that American society is responsible for post 9/11 anti-American contempt, and this has resulted in the rise of the latent Muslimness in Muslims, and they accept to assimilate their 'otherness' (300). This is said in the sense that American people had started hating Muslims and labeled them as terrorists generally without any discrimination. So, such behavior of the American society was creating a latent resentment in the hearts of the Muslims for them. As Changez loved America, his beloved was American, and he had an American dream in his mind, so his mind could not accept the resentment though he too is upset by the interference of America in other's matters and his smile at the collapse of twin towers is like a catharsis for him.

Most of the commentators of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* declare identity or identity crisis as a major theme of the novel. The motive behind this identity crisis is considered the 9/11 incident but the textual pieces of evidence from the novel fail to support these claims of commentators. Humera Tariq, in her article *Identity at Stake: Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, highlights the issue of identity. She says that identity is one of the issues faced by many immigrants. It is very problematic for the immigrants to keep up their native identity in an altogether changed and different environment abroad. She further says that this problem gets worse in the case of Muslim immigrants in non-Muslim countries due to a clash between Islamic and western ideas and code of life (237). These are the general concerns that are quite true in their general setting but are not true in the particular setting of the subject novel. For instance, at the time of his first interview at Underwood Samson, Changez was not only declared hungry by Jim, but also his hunger was declared as his plus point. Changez does not react rather appreciates Jim for having seen in him in so less a time that people had not seen in him in so many years (Hamid 10). There, his identity is not at stake at all. The identity issue was the burning issue after the 9/11 incident, but in general settings, the subject novel fails to support this identity point as it narrates more than identity.

Changez's nostalgia has been confused with identity crisis by the commentators. After joining Underwood, Samson Changez has everything, even the western identity, but he yearns for that cup of tea in the city of his birth when he says, "Princeton made everything possible for me. But it did not, *could not*, make me forget such things as how much I enjoy the tea, in this the city of my birth, steeped long enough to acquire a rich, dark color, and made creamy with fresh full-fat milk" (Hamid 16-17). Robert Jonsson discusses the novel from a nostalgia point of view and says that in the form of regressive nostalgia, patriotic outrage may evoke, resulting in unity against a common enemy as scores of un-involved non-terrorist Muslims like Changez were harassed in the west after 9/11 (20-22). So, we witness that this regression of nostalgia gives rise to aggression in Changez and the sweet memories

of his past diminish the charm of western world's life and facilities available there. He is not satisfied even after attainment and achievement of identity and prestige there.

The title of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has been misinterpreted by the critics and commentators. The word fundamentalist has been interpreted as the very basic learning of Changez imbued with his religion and culture. Ingrida Egle Zindziuviene in her article, declares that Mohsin Hamid, in his novel, has explored the decline of the American dream, American idol conflict, east and west artificial relationship, the narrow-mindedness of the American society and the reversal of fundamentalism (148). Hager Bin Driss in his article says that Hamid has dealt with the deadly issues of fundamentalism but his readers are thwarted by another economic fundamentalism (36). Similarly, Yara Amr EL Masry in his Ph.D. thesis, declares "fundamentalist" as the major term used, and he says that it is evident in Changez's first smile on the collapse of the twin towers, in his keeping beard and in his return back to Pakistan (238). But all these comments prove untrue, and all these are misinterpretations of the term fundamentalism. By this fundamentalism, Hamid means a person who focuses on the very fundamentals of his company or workplace. So, hereby fundamentals means the willingness, principles and necessities related to his job or work.

Changez makes the meanings of fundamentalist clear in the novel. When he is about to leave his job and is very much disturbed due to Erica, he tells that he is unaware of the loss of his job and Erica, but he knows one thing that his "days of focusing on fundamentals were done" (Hamid 175). So, in other words, this fundamentalist has become reluctant for focusing on his job and work. Here one cannot find any clue regarding religious or cultural fundamentalism. This is the interpretation of fundamentalist, proved by the textual pieces of evidence and is relevant to novel otherwise, general discussion on 9/11, religion, Muslim and non-Muslim animosity misleads to religious or cultural fundamentalism. Since the actual facts, real reasons and cause and effects in the novel get blurred due to these generalized interpretations, hence do not give the real picture to the readers.

Changez was labeled as fundamentalist. Erica's father tells Changez that he likes Pakistanis, but the elite has raped Pakistan well and good. About fundamentalism, he says to Changez, "you guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism" (63). Changez mitigates his aggression by being polite and assures him that things are not as bad as he heard of. Erica says that he is touchy about where he comes from. At this Changez apologizes to her for being rude to bring reaction on his face. Erica denies his rudeness and says, "And I think it's good to be touchy sometimes. It means you care" (Hamid 64). So, to be touchy towards one's origin is natural and this trait can even be found in animals. It is not specific to any race, religion or culture. Loyalty does not mean extremism.

Although more than one factor is responsible for Changez's failure in focusing on his fundamentals but patriotism is the main reason behind that. So, in the words of Robert Jönsson, a regressive nostalgia evoked the patriotic outrage against America which troubled him so much that he fell asleep after three bottles of whisky. It was for the first time that he got late for work. Changez says "that day I found it difficult to concentrate on the pursuit – at which I was normally so capable – of fundamentals (Hamid 114). Hofer too seemed proud of some of his patients; for him nostalgia was a demonstration of the patriotism of his compatriots who loved the charm of their native land to the point of sickness".

Instead of continuing to win Erica, Changez accepts Erica's wishes and leaves her to the nostalgic world of Chris. Changez does his best to bring her back from her nostalgia but she does not want to come back to this world and she want to prevent Changez from walking on the same rutted path. Changez who was so helping and kind to Erica would never have left her alone if he has not been possessed by the feeling of a spurned lover as she is not ready to leave the world of Chris and adopt him.

Changez is suffering from his own nostalgia and is worried about what is going on in his own continent. He is helpless to help his family out except sending them money and in Erica's case, he meets failure. Though he is the fittest and the brightest yet he is of no use, neither for his family nor for Erica. He feels guilty for taking the persona of Chris in order to provide Erica an alternative, but he failed, rather did a great harm to Erica by disturbing her and intensifying her nostalgia. So, he decides to write Erica an email of apology and to invite her to resume their contact (Hamid 168-169). Changez's piece of mind is disturbed due to the feeling of uselessness about himself. He is greatly affected by



his shift in his stance. He cannot win Erica even after taking the persona of Chris as Erica does not want to come back from her nostalgic world.

Changez is on the threshold of change and Juan Bautista's remarks serve as a catalyst. So this fundamentalist becomes reluctant. But, this reluctance has emerged due to various reasons and none of the reasons is Islamic or cultural. Such reaction is obvious and expected from a person who considers himself the fittest and the brightest. Such a person cannot remain unmoved by such advances by his employer company. Here his patriotism wins over his selfishness. Patriotism demands sacrifices and Changez gets ready to sacrifice his American dream, his job and even his beloved but is not ready to serve the country that is intruding and invading his homeland.

Changez mental tension increases when he comes to know that Erica is missing from clinic having left nothing except her folded clothes on a rocky bluff. Her mother gives Changez a copy of Erica's manuscript, which has nothing related to Changez rather a story of a girl on an island. He had attached false hopes of Erica, who had been living with Chris since his childhood, and she at least required the same amount of time to come out of the agony of premature, unnatural death of Chris. Perhaps Changez himself has become so possessive after living in American society, whom he calls possessive, that he wants to be the character rather than the hero of the novel that Erica has written before her intimacy with him. When one attaches false hopes of someone or expects irrationally, repentance is the result, and we witness this in Changez.

Changez feels the same disappointment that once Erica had felt when she had invited Changez for picnic lunch in Central Park, for places get change with the passage of time hence fail to provide the same charm. Changez wanders the city and visits the places Erica had shown to him, perhaps in the hope of finding something of them, but he gets frustrated as the places had changed either due to seasonal change or perhaps inconsistency was in the nature of the city. According to nostalgia theory, things get changed with the passage of time and then returning home or the places one yearns for cannot be the cure of one's nostalgia. The changing circumstances even turn the romance into a problem as after the reverie of Erica, Changez's leaves his jacket as a token of warmth for her, but that creates a problem due to the changed meaning of the jacket.

### **Nostalgic Impact on Erica**

Erica's memories are, in fact, a kind of severe nostalgia for her. Erica has spent a pleasantly memorable past with Chris, and after his death, her balance between her past and present has got disturbed. According to nostalgia theory, for a healthy mind, a proper balance between past and present is indispensable, and such a balance requires the examination of the relationship between past and present. Hofer says that troubled imaginations are responsible for nostalgia. Erica's childhood intimate and lover Chris had died due to lung cancer, and her imaginations are troubled to the extent that she becomes a patient.

Changez is witness to a misbalance between Erica's past and present. Changez says that for the first time he saw and perceived in her something broken like a crack in a pearl visible only under magnification which otherwise remains concealed under its glow and a second time when he was invited by Erica for a picnic lunch in Central Park. There she tells Changez that she is doing this after a long time since Chris. Though she is trying to keep herself busy, we see that her activities are also as a memorial of her past. So, she is going more deep into her past rather than coming out of it. It seems as if she is passing her present but in actual she is trying to mimic her past to have those feelings again which are not possible. She is determined not leave his memories and past for his present so, her past and present imbalance leaves her to enjoy none.

Erica's yearning was not for the places she had visited with Chris but was for the bygone times she had spent with Chris. In picnic lunch at Central Park she brings a basket of eatables as she used to bring for Chris and wanted to create the same atmosphere but missed one item and that was Chris (Hamid 67). In replacement, Changez was there, but she had memories with Chris and not with Changez. Kent says that returning to one's home also results in disappointment because the place also gets changed. The realization that time is irrevocable becomes the reason why returning home cannot be the ultimate cure for nostalgia.

Erica's nostalgia was reciprocated by Changez's nostalgia. After picnic lunch, when they depart, Changez offers his arms to Erica, which she accepts with a smile. They walk out of the Central Park holding each other, and Changez describes feeling her skin as cool and smooth. He says that they had never remained in bodily contact for such a prolonged period and this sensation of her body remained lingered with him for weeks afterwards that in his hotel room in Manila at times, he would wake up as though touched by her ghost (Hamid 69). Perhaps when Erica is trying to come out of her nostalgia for Chris, Changez is becoming victim of Erica's nostalgia unknowingly. Although he is trying to help her but if fact, he is making himself helpless as later he himself cannot come out of Erica's nostalgia.

Erica does not want to lose Changez as she does not want to be alone again. Erica tells Changez that her mother has told her perhaps they have to leave the city so, she is upset due to the fear of being alone again as the 9/11 attacks have churned up old thought in her mind. In fact, hardly she had come out of her previous condition and likes to remain in the company of Changez, her only intimacy; with whom she could share her secrets and her past. But the fear of becoming alone is again lurking over her head. So, the thought of being cut off from Changez scared her as she was continuously haunted by the memories of Chris (Hamid 91-92).

Erica's nostalgia is so strong that it defeats a living person against a dead person. When Changez returns from Manila to New York, Erica invites him out regularly, and he accompanies her happily. Changez is pleased by his role and thinks it the life he was meant to live. He was rubbing shoulders with the elite of New York and his Princeton degree and Underwood Samson service card also won him respect and reverence. He says that in this situation he felt that he was entering the same social circle in New York which in Lahore his family was falling out (Hamid 97). More than this, the basic reason behind Changez happiness was the company of Erica, and he could see her for hours (Hamid 98). In spite of all these pleasures and prestige, he feared to enter with Erica in a relationship more than a friendship. The only hindrance in their relationship is Chris, the dead lover of Erica. Hence Changez, a living person gets defeated by a dead person Chris.

Erica's nostalgia not only defeats a living person against a dead person but also defeats present against the past. Though Erica keeps herself busy in fundraising for 9/11 victims, in dinners, in her friends, in new openings etc., in the company of Changez, even in crowds, she used to be utterly detached. Her eyes were turned inward and she seemed lost in her own world. When friends realized her about her detachment she would call it spacing out and satisfied them with a smile (Hamid 98). Changez suspected that actually she was at war with herself. Changez brings her back by keeping his hand so close to her and she would bridge that gap with caress (Hamid 99). Living in her present she used to be in her past. L.P Hartley in the opening lines of his novel *The Go-Between* says: "the past is a foreign country, they do things differently there. Though she keeps herself busy in social activities but her present along with its charms and liveliness cannot bring her back from her past.

The cure for Erica's malady which was declared as nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, was to transport her to the world of Chris if not physically, at least mentally. Due to haunting memories of Chris, Erica was not only mentally disturbed but was deteriorating physically as well. She could not sleep without any medicine. When she wants to celebrate after having found an agent for the publication of her novella at Changez's studio, Changez makes love to her but she responds coldly. She says sorry to Changez and while weeping tells him that she has not achieved any orgasm since Chris's death except once which was also due to fantasizing of Chris (Hamid 102-103). Even a talk about Chris made Erica relaxed and comfortable for it transported her to her nostalgic world of Chris.

Changez diagnosed a powerful nostalgia responsible for the decline of Erica and he considers it a discretionary power of Erica whether or not to return from it when he says:

"I never came to know what triggered her decline – was it the trauma of attack on her city? The act of sending out her book in search of publication? The echoes raised in her by our love making? All of these things? None of these? – but I think I knew even then that she was disappearing into a powerful *nostalgia*, one from which only she could choose whether or not to return (Hamid 129).

Erica disappears again for a considerable time and when found she apologizes and suggests that they should try not to see each other often. When Changez visits Erica's house her mother's concern for Erica makes him worried. On her mother's request, he abandons his contact with Erica after his recent meeting with Erica, in which Erica avoids eye contact with him.



## Conclusion

To investigate the nostalgic element in the novel and to see the impact of nostalgia on the lives and experiences characters, particularly on Changez and Erica, thorough, exhaustive and comprehensive studies were made. The credibility, validity, and reliability of findings in this paper are unquestionable as the analysis has been made with textual evidences. After analyzing the data, the study has found that the lives of Changez and Erica are influenced by nostalgia to the extent that Erica loses her present, her taste of life and even her life due to nostalgia and Changez loses his job, his dream of America and above all, he loses his Erica too due to nostalgia. The study has also found that the characters of the novel are affected greatly by nostalgia in a shift of their stances. Changez is haunted by the memories of his near and far past, loses concentration in his work and as a result, he has to lose his job and America. Similarly, Erica neglects Changez, the only person who could bring her out of the nostalgic world of Chris, and she becomes the victim of nostalgia even though her stance is that she does not want to see Changez becoming the victim of the same nostalgia as she has for Chris. She gives her life but not her will to come out of the nostalgic world of Chris.

This research paper has revealed that the lives of Changez and Erica are influenced by nostalgia to a considerable degree. Nostalgia deprives Erica of the tastes and colors of the world, and she surrenders before it. She does not compromise upon her past and sacrifices her present for it. She gives her life but not her will. Perhaps nostalgia has overwhelmed her so intensely that she has forgotten that life is given but once. Similarly, Changez too loses his job and his beloved Erica due to nostalgia as he is haunted by the memories of his past and cannot focus on his work. Nostalgia is not only confined to fiction. If it is not dealt with wisely, it may upset the lives and experiences of individuals around the globe by being a hurdle in the way of achieving their goals.

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