

## **MEMORY, PLACE AND NOSTALGIA: COSMOPOLITAN NOSTALGIA AND SUFISM IN AMERICA**

**Shermeen Bano**

Visiting Faculty, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, [shermeenbano1@gmail.com](mailto:shermeenbano1@gmail.com)

**Rahla Rahat**

Assistant Professor, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, [rahat.iscs@pu.edu.pk](mailto:rahat.iscs@pu.edu.pk)

**Ayesha Siddiqa Bugvi**

Lecturer, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, [ayesha.iscs@pu.edu.pk](mailto:ayesha.iscs@pu.edu.pk)

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the relationship between memory, place and identity through nostalgic construction of mystic practices at a sufi dergah in New York. In doing so we are interested in examining the way nostalgia is implicated in modern and multicultural religious communities in the West. The findings of this study are derived from an ethnographic field observation and in-depth interviews conducted between January 2012 to April 2012 in New York, USA. Participants of this study included religious practitioners that attended and participated in the events at the Sufi dergah regularly while recognizing themselves as disciples of the Sufi order. In total, 15 participants were interviewed. Findings of this paper suggest modern nostalgics are not simply passive consumers of hegemonic narratives of memory and place. Rather they are active participants in the creation of common places that represent conjunction of multiple histories (Massey, 1995) and therefore, are both multilocal as well as multivocal (Sheldrake, 2001).*

**Keywords:** Memory, place, identity, nostalgia, sufism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Sufi lodge is an inconspicuous white two-story building in Tribeca area of Manhattan wedged between a noisy bar and crowded restaurant. It has a single entrance; a wooden door that has a translucent window that either exposes silent darkness or faint shadowy figures depending on what day and at what time you pass by it. This Sufi order of Turkish lineage was brought to America by a Turkish Sufi master, Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak in 1978 who one year later crowned one of his American disciples as the Sufi teacher and gave her a new name "Fariha". In that moment the once heiress of a wealthy German couple that escaped Nazism and settled in New York, an art enthusiast, and a divorced mother became a Sufi master known by those who come to the lodge as Sheikh Fariha. This is a pivotal moment in the history of the order, a myth of origin that is repeated again and again during the zhikr.

The Sufi lodge is a private property owned by Sheikh Fariha. However, it is opened up to very different kinds of public on Thursdays and Fridays. On Fridays the lodge is converted into a mosque for Friday [afternoon] prayers and attracts Muslims from around the city, usually Manhattan and Brooklyn. Due to issues of space, the prayers are conducted in two sessions and the prayers are headed by an Imam. The men occupy the front rows while women fill up the ones behind them. On Thursday evenings it is a Sufi lodge that conducts an elaborate ceremony of zhikr [religious chanting]. The ceremony is conducted by the sheikh. Men and women assemble together in unsegregated environments both during and after the zhikr ceremony, the prayer is conducted by one of the male dervishes [disciples] but the sheikha shares the platform. The crowd on this day includes Muslims, Christians, atheists, tourists, students, researchers, artists, and official delegations among many others. Yet on other days the Sufi lodge is closed and if it is opened, it is accessible only to those who form the "core" of the order-the disciples.

The Nur ashki Jerrahi community is an order of dervishes within the Halveti-Jerrahi Tariqat (Sufi order of whirling dervishes), in specific lineage and spirit of sheikh Muzaffer Ashki Al-Jerrahi, Shaykh Nur Al-Jerrahi and Shaykha Fariha Al-Jerrahi based in New York city, with various circles

throughout the U.S. and Mexico. The order joyfully welcomes seekers and students of all religious and non-religious paths into their gatherings on Thursdays.

The Sufi order, a mystical order within Sufi Islam which dates back to a period of around eleven centuries. The founding Pir of the order is Muhammad Nureddin Jerrahi of Istanbul who was born in 1678 CE. The order is now headed by a female sheikha who spreads their message of universal Islam. The order meets every Thursday for an evening of *zhikr* [chanting and remembrance of God].

In this paper, we are interested in examining the *sufi dergah* as modern nostalgic project, and we are primarily concerned with the *zhikr* ceremony conducted at the Sufi lodge in New York City, USA. The purpose is two-fold. First, to foreground the relationship between place and memory and the role they play in mutual constitution of each other. The second is to reconfigure the limited notion of modern nostalgia as anti-modern and regressive. The aim therefore, is to reinstate nostalgia as a “fluid, multifaceted, and performative force operating at different scales and levels”. We do this through presenting the *zhikr* ceremony at the Sufi lodge as a reflective nostalgic project made possible through a cosmopolitan sociability. In conclusion, we want to highlight how modern nostalgics are not simply passive consumers of hegemonic narratives of memory and place. Rather they are active participants in the creation of common places that represent conjunction of multiple histories (Massey, 1995) and therefore, are both multilocal as well as multivocal (Sheldrake, 2001).

### ***Memory, place and nostalgia***

A significant relationship between place, memory and the identities is increasingly being acknowledged in academic scholarship. This is understood as a dialectical relationship between “environment and human narrative”. Hence a place may be understood as a space that has the “capacity to be remembered” (Sheldrake, 2001).

Given the recognition of a crisis of place in western societies characterized by a sense of dislocation, rootlessness and displacement. We now live in cultural environments where increasing cultural fragmentation has resulted from a historical decline in traditional systems of values and the optimism for modernity’s progress and reason is beginning to give away to a rejection of totalizing “master commemorative narratives” of modernity’s Truth (Sheldrake and Hervieu-Leger, 2000; Jameson and Zerubavel, 1995).

At the same time, the increasing emphasis on mobility among cultures and places with the onset of globalization has resulted in a “de-emphasis of place”. The modern conflation of mobility with freedom now makes remaining in one place seen a sign of entrapment and lack of freedom and choice. Hence, the post-modern subjects find themselves in an unending state of pilgrimage akin to that of a mystic where no single place can embody finality. They with “uncertainty of what is lacking, knows of every place and object that it is *not that*, one cannot stay *there* nor be content with *that*.” (De Certeau, 1992).

Hence our current period is characterized by a rootless and a disturbing sense of simultaneity/instantaneity. However, if “to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of human soul” (Weil, 1997), then the predicament of post-modern nostalgics in a “delocalized world”, is that while place has lost its “ontological moorings” (Appudurai, 2000), she instead finds herself in “non-places” that do not engage with her identities, relationships and history (Auge, 1997) rendering them hollow in their core.

However, others argue against the dichotomy of static original traditional places versus mobile free floating places of post-modern societies lacking any historical meaning. Arguing that interconnection between societies and places is not a new phenomenon but has existed prior to modernization they point out that that what is new is the intensity of these interconnections and mobility. Arguing against such essentialist and internalist trends, Massey (1995) points out to the fact that a place is “always already hybrid”. By asking how Kentucky Fried Chicken in Paris is not French she forces us to problematize this very mode of thinking. She reminds us that “‘local uniqueness’ of any place is always already a product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of ‘global’ forces, where global in this context refers not necessarily to the planetary scale, but to the geographical beyond, the world beyond the place itself.” The point that Massey wants to make it is a place is constructed out of social relations of two kinds; those that are internal and others that “link them to elsewhere”. Hence the uniqueness of a place derives from the interconnections with other places (Massey, 1995).

Elaborating on the relationship between past and present of place, Massey points out how traditions that we relegate to past are instead actively built in present. "The past of a place is as open to a multiplicity of readings as is the present. Moreover, the claims and counter-claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular, rival, interpretations of its past." (Massey, 1995). The presence of multivocal pasts shape the present in a two way process and places not only stretch in space but also in time. These pasts are the sources of narratives. "What makes a place distinct is the wider and deeper narrative currents in a place that gather together all those who have ever lived there."

### *Nostalgia*

It is often lamented that our present era is that of collective amnesia (Nora, 1989) where past is no longer our source of orientation in present. Those who cannot look to the future with a hope that is characteristic of modernity's optimism instead, find themselves wandering aimlessly into unfamiliar terrains devoid of any meaning and consolation. Their only option then is to regress back into the past and hide there as a child would in the lap of her or his mother, refusing hence to move on. Here, an anecdote of Freud may prove to be insightful.

"As I was walking, one hot summer afternoon, through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was unknown to me, I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not remain long in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street...I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another detour at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery." (Freud, 237, 2006)

What Freud's chanced encounter reveals is that even those who may deny any significance to memory or past continue to be influenced by it in ways that are not always so easily detected? Hence, looking back to past, as nostalgics do may not always be a regressive exercise but can instead be an act of agency.

Nostalgia plays a significant role, specifically in twenty first century, in communities around the world. The concept on the contrary has received much less credit in the academic circles. The little attention that it has got has been primarily negative-viewing it as pathological, regressive, and delusional. This negativity is rooted in a narrow conceptualization of nostalgia that stems from deep rooted enlightenment biases. It is against this trend in academic scholarship that the authors are attempting a reconfiguration of the concept that opens up possibilities for heterogeneity of nostalgias while acknowledging the limitations it puts to human experience of past, present and future.

Nostalgia is intrinsic to human experience. It is a sentiment of loss and displacement (Boyme, 2007) associated with feelings of *nostos* meaning "return home" and *algia* "longing". Pickering & Keightley (2006) further elaborate by making a distinction between "the desire to return to an idealized past" and the desire not to "recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future". Hence, it is a *structure of feeling* that is prevalent in Western modernity (Tannock, 1995). But it is also a historic emotion meaning not only that it emerges in specific socio-historic conditions but also that the way it is conceptualized, experienced and exercised varies with respect to power relations with a given society. It has a history in the Foucauldian sense.

Expanding on this point, one may ask when collective nostalgia emerges. Do all people who are displaced in space and time feel nostalgia and do that in similar ways? Can people feel nostalgia without having a prior experience of loss or can nostalgia itself create a sense of loss?

Muro (2005) argues that "nostalgia is likely to emerge in both ethnic groups and nations that have available evidence of that past. These 'raw materials' may include objects, buildings, texts, images, etc." This implies firstly that how we experience nostalgia is in part determined by our means of access to past. Not everyone has equal access to these means and some more than others are in a position to manipulate it. This is evident in the case of politicization of nostalgia by Basque nationalists. This is more likely to happen during epochs of social change. While this holds true in many cases, it is this kind of argumentation of politicization of nostalgia that the other authors are trying to distance themselves from. This is because it presents a narrow and singular conceptualization of the concept.

Also this is not the only case. Boyme (2007) shows how media and technology can create a sense of nostalgia prior to a sense of or actual loss (*ersatz nostalgia*). What does that mean for our conceptualization of nostalgia primarily as a response to displacement and loss? Important then is to look at the function of nostalgia.

Tannock (1995) in his article suggests that Nostalgia functions as the search for continuity. This means that it is not necessarily only a retreat into but a process of retrieval from a nostalgic past. It a “periodizing emotion” that makes sense of this past through construction of historical narratives that divide the past it into three key periods; prelapsarian world, lapse and post lapsarian world. This implies that the perceived or actual loss must not have to occur prior to the feeling of nostalgia. Rather it has to be constructed in the narrative at a specific moment. And it is such historical narratives that translate past into personal experiences of loss shared collectively among communities of collective memory. It is these historical narratives that provide the “evidence” for nostalgia to everyone in the community. These narratives can be of many kinds. For instance, Boyme (2007) distinguishes between reflective and restorative nostalgias.

But it would be wrong to assume that historical narratives are solely formative of nostalgia and the nostalgics. It is not a one-sided process as is mistakenly assumed by post-structuralists and post-modernists. And it is not only an elite-driven project either as is assumed by Muro. Nostalgia is also a defense mechanism, a strategy of survival for those who are displaced, marginalized or oppressed. Boyme (2007) argues that the” nostalgic is never a native, but rather a displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal.”

The nostalgic has agency in sense that he not only participates in the creation of narratives but also in defining them at the moments of reception. But what does it mean that he is never a native. This may be understood temporally and spatially. The object of nostalgia is spatially a “home” and temporally a specific period of time often characterized as the Golden age. The nostalgic therefore feels displaced in either one or both of these categories. And it is the longing of this kind that is found in most of us in twenty first century that brings us together. But the spatial aspect of nostalgia, of belonging to a home is bound to divides us. It is this, the tension of universalizing versus localizing tendencies of nostalgia that constitute its paradox. And this perhaps takes us back to Halbwachs (1980), that collective memories are always embedded in a social group outside which they cease to exist.

### **METHODS**

The present study aimed to analyze the relationship between memory, place and identity through nostalgic construction of mystic practices at a sufi dergah in New York, USA. In doing so we were interested in examining the way nostalgia is implicated in modern and multicultural religious communities in the West. The findings of this study are derived from an ethnographic field observation and in-depth interviews conducted between January 2012 to April 2012 in New York, USA. Participants of this study included religious practitioners that attended and participated in the events at the Sufi dergah regularly while recognizing themselves as disciples of the sufi order. In total, 15 participants were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in English and consent was obtained prior to the interviews. Each interview took 30-45 minutes and notes were taken during interviews. Data from the interviews was carefully coded using thematic analysis. The overall analytical approach was grounded in Lee Ann Fujji (2009)’s methods. According to it, the memory, place and identities were not seen as fixed categories, but instead as both dynamic and scripted. Findings from the study were cross validated with the respondents (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

### **FINDINGS**

Nostalgia for home and memories of significant events and people in our lives shape our motives in the present. But it also shows how nostalgia can bring people with diverse and often contesting histories, different sense of homes from which they find themselves displaced and varied identities together in shared projects of collective memory.

#### ***Reflective nostalgia at the Sufi lodge***

The nostalgia that is invoked at the dergah is characteristic of reflective nostalgia that is defined by Boym (2007) as a nostalgia that “Dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity.” Such nostalgics do not have a desire to return to a home or reconstruct it in their present. Instead it is an “ethical” and a “creative” challenge directed

to totalizing narratives of truth and history that deny voices to the memory of the nostalgic. But it is not an attempt to replace the present but find new ways to integrate with it and find new connections that are more empowering, integrative and responsible.

The philosophy of the Sufi community in question is not to go back to a golden age of past but rather to bring the heterogeneous and fragmented pieces of past into dialogue with the varieties of co-existing presents. This is most evident in the basic philosophy of the order.

The community conceptualizes itself as “Noah’s Ark” reflecting its displaced, floating and unfixed position in both the city as well as the minds of people. This reflects how the order uses past references to make sense of the present. The order moved into the current lodge a few years back after the original dergah, privately owned by the sheikha had to be given up due to financial issues. When I asked the dervishes about their attachments to that original dergah, there was little acknowledgement of any attachment to the place. The event however, was marked significantly in their memories. The order expressed instead attachments with the community of dervishes who they believed could make any place special if they were together. This shows how they used their collective memories to create sacred and shared landscapes of memories.

However, this also comes as a challenge for the Sufi order as the dervishes are constrained by their own mobility in keeping this community together. Most of them acknowledged that they never met each other outside dergah events because of long distances and other social and professional commitments. There was also a recognition that the membership in the community was not permanent since many dervishes and visitors were in the city temporarily or would have to move eventually for purposes of work or family commitments. Since the order’s participants keep changing, the order has to have a philosophy that can work with dynamism.

What the order successfully does is that it makes available a script that builds on Islamic traditions in ways that it is not restrictive. Instead it makes it an open ended and creative project that makes available a repertoire of memories from which participants can selectively pick and choose. It presents a script that is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time where no single group can claim ownership of it completely. It invokes an experience of “as 'being in place and being out of place simultaneously'. This condition of simultaneity enforces not only to displace hegemonic narratives of memories but at the same to acknowledge the presence of the narratives of “other”. Hence, nostalgia and the uncanny are intimately interconnected at the shrine.

#### ***Sushi- Prayers and The feminization of time at the dergah***

As Boym (2007) points out “the task of reflective nostalgia is to present an ethical and creative challenge, not merely a pretext for midnight melancholias.” This brings to attention that nostalgia is an active process that brings past in dialogue with the present. However, as mentioned above, in doing so it displaces the familiar and brings it together with the unfamiliar. Hence, “nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to turn history into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.”

This is most evident in the case of the feminization of time at the dergah that becomes most salient at the moments of prayers. However, while it challenges the modern conception of time, it also challenges a certain historical narrative in Islam that places men at the center of authority. Yet, as my own personal experience shows, this exercise of authority can create in itself both, feelings of empowerment and anxiety.

*“Through coming out of women in roles of leadership today, we have the manifestation of Allah’s feminine attributes. It’s the time and not by accident, but its emerging for humanity and the world. This has been long and coming and we can say, this is what will be needed to pull the world back from the brink.”*

These excerpts taken from a recorded interview that Sheikha gave in 2006 on the feminine quality of mystic path contextualizes the script that is presented for performance every Thursday at the dergah.

*“Sufism is intimacy with Allah”, she further says,*

*“The feminine quality is spontaneity and not being rule bound. It’s more organic, natural and Islam is said to be the natural path, natural to the heart. At the Deep mystical level it is resonating with a feminine approach and with the feminine. It is inherent.”*

She goes on to describe the masculine quality as,

*“Generally Men have mental fascination with rules that can cover up the truth...Sheikh Muzaffer broke the rule and got in trouble for that. But it’s necessary. But we have to break the rule to really reach out. So that a mother is really prepared to do it so save her children and raise her children.”*

The Sufi path is conceptualized as inherently feminine, through the quality of spontaneity. Therefore for a man to become a Sufi he has to not only destabilize his masculinity but in a way become feminine. Hence, the script that the dergah offers on zhikr nights has as its primary objective to destabilize existing categories of identification.

As she says,

*“We’re not just an identity, label, a worker in a factory or in a corporation. Identity, ethnicity, religious, all these facets are so extreme now. It is the feminine that can bring them together now.”* And it can be achieved by breaking of rules.

This destabilizing of religious, male and traditional categories is most evident in the following account.

It is my second visit at the dergah and its Prophet Muhammad’s birthday. The sheikha decides that two *nafl* salat [optional prayer] are offered for him. As most of the dervishes are sitting on the green floored seats, the sheikha smiles and asks,

*“Which one should we do? The Sunni way or the Shi’ite way?”*

A South Asian middle aged man, replies

*“Maybe we can do the sushi way”* and laughs.

While no one appears to take offense, I’m offended and shocked at the same time as I sit behind beside the wall and choose not to participate in the prayers. While it appears to be a crude joke as it appears to demean certain Islamic traditions I initially fail to see the function it serves. It is a re-affirmation that the order does not belong to any religious narrative and they are in their spontaneity free to worship the divine in the manner that they feel appropriate at a given moment.

The dervishes who are standing begin to arrange in rows. There are almost three rows. The sheikha and Murtaza begin to lead the prayer. Murtaza says the prayer while sheikha stands beside him. Also men and women are standing together in all rows. I’m surprised to see this because the Islam I had been familiar with up till now calls for gender segregation in prayers. However, what is more astonishing than this is a woman sharing the *minibar*, the platform with a man as they stand together, shoulder by shoulder leading the dervishes.

What is interesting is that sheikha is not leading the prayers herself but merely sharing the leadership space with the man. Instead of overcoming the authority of man in the tradition she is rather negotiating with it and displacing it in the process. While she lets Murtaza lead the prayers it is clear he is following her instructions. He begins when she nods displaying clearly who is in charge. All this while I sit back crouched beside the wall staring in amazement trying to process what I have just seen.

### ***Nostalgics at the dergah***

A crucial point that comes forth from the above mentioned reaction to displacement of personal narrative is the tension that the simultaneity and openness creates at the dergah. This forces us to look at the nostalgic herself. Dora (2006) in her article on nostalgia in displaced Armenian society of Egypt shows that nostalgics can be defined in two ways depending on their relationship with “the place” and their motives. I discuss these nostalgics in the context of the dergah. Dora (2006) refers to nostalgics as “pilgrims” who produce their own maps of place-their individual and collective memoryscapes. These are based on either “past lived experiences, on their 'spatial memory' or on the narration of the city by the authors they are 'worshipping'.”

### ***The romantic outsiders: Murtaza and recreating the experience of Turkish Zhikr***

The nostalgics are outsiders in sense that they visiting the place for the first time and therefore have to create their memoryscapes out of their imagination using their “memorative signs” that are available in their new surroundings.

The following account is an excerpt taken from my visit to an exhibition that was displaying the sufi art of the dervishes of the sufi order. It was arranged by Murtaza, a Bangladeshi immigrant in US who had lived his life in places around North Africa and America but very little in Bangladesh itself. He switched to Sufism during his academic years in the US and due to his dissatisfaction with the current forms of South Asian political Islam. Now in America he is married to an American female dervish who converted to Sufism. Today he shows me his interactive piece of art.

It's a small room in the corner of the room. I walk there and see that there is an opening in the wall. I walk in and I find myself in a small room. The room is a small square. The roof is only a few inches higher than me. The walls on each side have been covered with a black cloth. The wall on my back has a projector placed on top of it. There is a small wooden stool placed in front of the wall. The projector is throwing light on a white screen placed on the wall in front of me. The screen shows a view of a country side, with black spots on the screen (as you would see in old black and white movies). The picture is moving, sometimes zooms in or zooms out or moves to left or right, up or down. It is colored and then becomes grey and then colored again. The view of a natural landscape forms the background, over which I can see my own projection of a dark shadowy figure. On the left corner of the room, beside the wooden stool is placed an old styled music player. It's playing an original zhikr ceremony of Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak in Turkey.

*Murtaza explains to me the piece of art,*

*"Well it's very simple. It has layers. The first layer is the background, the country side, the world as such. The second layer is you, the figure, in the world." I nod my head.*

*"The third is the zhikr as you can hear. Its Sheikh Nur Muzaffer's zhikr you know." He pauses and smiles, "this shows how you go through life all together, as one." He smiles*

### **The ex-insiders: Zhani and Cosmopolitan Nostalgia**

The ex-insiders are those nostalgics that belong to the same place but choose to reinvoke it with alternative or counter memories. "The latter can boast stronger links, since direct experience of the place and 'lived toponymia' are involved." I choose here to share the case of Zhani, an American dervish who was prior to becoming a sufi a catholic seminarian. However, it was during one of the zhikr performances of the sufi order at their seminary that "hit her like a brick" and eventually led her into psychological breakdown. However, now she presents her own personal narrative where she still maintains links with her Christian tradition.

*"I always say how Muhammad brought me closer to Christ."*

However, now Sufism allows her to reassert her identity and memory in ways that was not possible before. Now as a Lesbian Muslim woman she brings a counter memory that challenges both dominant traditions in Christianity and Islam.

Levy and Sznajder, (2002) arguing against the nationalist argument of collective memory assert that the national container of memories is now being cracked and nations are no longer the only definitive and authoritative sites of memories. The current world, according to them is seeing a new phenomenon of cosmopolitan memories. Collective memories according to them are now readily available, outside the national context within which the specific event unfolded, to "others" who do not share the national identity. This according to them is most evident in the case of and decontextualized holocaust and its central position within European memory.

However, in my discussion of nostalgia I want to move beyond the idea of cosmopolitan memory to the idea of cosmopolitan sociability. Nostalgia can also have a 'cosmopolitan dimension' i.e. the maintenance of ethnic/national ties or religious commitments and identities can occur simultaneously in the daily activities and outlook of some mobile people. Hence rootedness and openness cannot be seen in oppositional terms but constitute aspects of the creativity through which migrants build homes and sacred spaces in a new environment and within transnational networks." And it is in spaces like the dergah the nostalgics can simultaneously create their "own possibilities of cosmopolitanism" through their own socio-cultural limitations that arise out of their unique paths. This bringing of past in dialogue with present in a way that brings the most contested memories together is evident in the following excerpts taken during Sheikha's sermon,

*"Most of the Muslims don't know how universal their tradition is. It's a totally universal tradition according to the Quran. Because its says in Quran, if you do not accept any one of all the messengers that I, God have sent to the earth you are not a complete Muslim." Pauses.*

*"You are not a fully mature believer. So it's actually incumbent [emphasizes] upon the one who says I am a Muslim to accept Buddha, [slightly laughs], Krishna, [Slightly Laughs] you know Rama Krishna, all of the great ones in every of the sacred traditions."*

Speaking on relations among people and dervishes, the sheikha replies

*And there are also mirrors that are used. That we say in a way, each other, we are the mirrors for each other. So the teacher is the mirror for the dervish. And in the mirror really the Dervish sees one's own soul. So it's also using certain outer means to come finally to one's own essence.*

*We do this in a community, through, as I said by being the grapes on a wine. It's not an individualistic...on the one hand it of course teaches one is unique. But we do not make an amalgam. It's not at all like that. But through being unique we also recognize the same being who is here in me and in everyone else. So this is how we meet the other. By recognizing that one being."*

Speaking on the issue of Danish cartoons of Prophet Muhammad to a delegation of Danish students at the dergah:

*I think it's the responsibility of every deep thinking person to look where things come from. So to me, of course it's painful if people do not understand, umm someone I love and follow. Not only myself of course but many many millions of others over the years and generations. So of course then it becomes painful when you see miscomprehension. But then one has to look at the other side, and say where is such a motivation coming from to make such a drawing. And you don't have to look far."* She pauses and looks around.

*"You look at the behavior of certain people and see of course that it could cause great fear in people or disgust and they would associate that with the founder in a way. And of course you look further and you see, speaking of social conditions, then you could look in the social conditions in which those people live. The further you look the more you have understanding for each side and each person and each situation and each experience."*

## CONCLUSION

Our current time, whether it be modern or postmodern, is marked with crises; that of place, memory and identity. It is increasingly argued that with the onset of modernity and globalization, the resultant time-space compression has brought cultures closer in ways that the defining boundaries between them find it impossible to exist as authoritatively as they did in past. The upshot for the people has been a sense of placelessness, displacement and loss of memory that has forced some among us to lament the present and find solace in past. This is most evident in the discussions of nostalgia in contemporary memory studies as a form of Freudian regression or fixation in opposition to the notion of progress. However, this paper is an attempt to reconfigure both, nostalgia and the nostalgic in the present times.

The paper, however, points out that nostalgics as displaced people are not "place-less" but have a particular location. Thus, the articles in this issue emphasize the social competence of dislocated people who develop these practices by relying on both their specific cultural 'self' and the broader human aspirations that they access, deploy, internalize and reconstitute in different situations. It also shows how nostalgia can bring people with diverse and often contesting histories, different sense of homes from which they find themselves displaced and varied identities can come together. It is not always a source of conflict or violence but can open up possibilities for responsible co-existence.

However, the study also point to both the aspect of fulfillment and disappointment that is part of this process. The point is to see neither nostalgia as a negative project nor a positive one. Rather as process that is always open and in the making that is contested but shared, fragmented but homogenous. Nostalgia is a way of bringing past in the present in an open dialogical process.

Hence, the paper brings place and memory in dialogue with each other and how nostalgia aids in constitution of cosmopolitan sociability. Looking back to an alternative past or counter memory is not always reactionary, intended to challenge modernity but can also reflect attempts at reconciling with modernity and the present on the terms the nostalgic.

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