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DEPICTION OF PROFOUND LOVE FOR KASHMIR IN THE POETRY OF AGHA SHAHID ALI

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Abstract: Agha Shahid Ali's collection of poems is woven with different regional colors, cultures, religions, and continents. Growing up in Kashmir, his poems respond to his love for Kashmir. The present paper attempts to analyze character and role for the land of Kashmir in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry. This paper explores the poet's region, a sense of belonging, love for Kashmiri beauty, the effects of alienation, and human sacrifice caused by political and regional instability. As a picture of enchanting Kashmir is frequently revisited by Shahid Ali, and this paper highlights the influence of Indian-Islamic traditions on his poetic world. Ali belongs to different cultures and regions: Kashmir, pave the way for America, Islam, India and the multi-ethnic ideology that prevails there in Ali's poetry.

Key Words: Home, Exile, Cultural Plurality, Kashmir, identity.

INTRODUCTION: Agha Shahid Ali was born in Kashmir in year 1949 in a respected Muslim and educated family. After graduating from Kashmir University, he did his masters from University of Delhi, and moved to the America to pursue his doctorate in English. Born into a cultural and linguistic environment, Agha Shahid Ali learned to appreciate literature and poetry, in Persian, English, and Urdu. It was very natural and wonderful because of the influence of these languages had on him, he considered Urdu language as his "mother tongue" and English as his "first language". But it is very interesting that he starts writing during the "exile" period, a sense of loss has always permeated his literary world.

Along with his tragic experience in exile, Ali brought a stunning beauty to his native Kashmir. All of his poems are deeply personal and also reflect his universal experience of his exile. His poems are autobiographical with hints of exile and Ali's Kashmiri identity. His poetry captures Kashmir and American landscapes with conflicting feelings of exile, displacement, and in the later poems loss, disease, and death. Since every human society has its own distinct culture and socio-cultural system, that experience is expressed in his works in the shape of cultural references. Agha Shahid Ali analysis the world of cultural experience expressed complex and symbolic imagery, leading to the creation of majestic picture influenced by multicultural experience in his poems.

Portrayal of Kashmir in Agha Shahid Ali's poems

In Shahid's poem "Postcard from Kashmir", he depicts the mechanism of nostalgia by purifying memory to apt postcard images of an absent landscape. Agha Shahid Ali was from Kashmir, where he was nurtured and raised. He experienced Kashmiri culture, but now writes this poem as an Indian American poet. "Postcard from Kashmir" is the inner and mental warfare in the poet's mind which makes him uneasy. The poet hardly realizes the reality of exile when he discovers that only a 10*15cm photograph of Kashmir's legacy remains, suggesting that he is unable to recreate it in his mind. Remembrance and photographs cannot replace the real life of being in own hometown. The postcard received by the speaker is just a representation of what it used to be like. The Postcard aroused nostalgia in him, increased his homesickness, and aroused cultural sentiments towards Kashmir.

Although the poet feels denationalized, but depicts Kashmir in a joyful and comforting light, instead of the exhilarating atmosphere prevailing in reality at the time. Despite the confusion and uncertainty, he admires Kashmir, the Himalayas, and Jhelum. Here are his proud words, "This is home. And this the closest I'll ever be to home". Ironically Kashmir was at the center of the conflict and the most flammable region in India. He belongs to Kashmir and is proud of it. That means he still holds a unique position for Kashmir and India. He admires the magnificence of Kashmir and its closeness that makes him hold it to close his heart. On maps, or in dreams and visions, Agha Shahid Ali sees the water of the Jhelum as clear and blue green color. However, he found that the real sights and conditions of his homeland Kashmir contradicted his imagination.

The "Postcard from Kashmir" has a crucial reference to Indian turmoil in Muslim-dense Kashmir. There is a serious dispute between India-Pakistan over ownership of the area. It conveys that he has a battle in mind because of the insecurities people in his community face in Kashmir, and the strong and warm bond he has with this chunk of the world. He perceives the issue not only as a rational one, but as an emotional and communal one. In "Postcard from Kashmir" there are three different mentions giving this an Indian mark. These three references are: the Kashmir, the Himalaya, and the Jhelum. Kashmir is the northwestern part of subcontinent in India. It also refers to a wider region that contains areas controlled by India, Pakistan, and China. The Himalaya forms a hurdle between Indian subcontinent plains to the south and Tibetan Plateau to the North. The river of Jhelum is the largest river flowing through Pakistan and India. It flows through the Jhelum district and originates from Kashmir. As he says, "This is my home. And this the closest I'll ever be to home. When I return, the colors won't be so brilliant, the Jhelum's waters so clean, so ultramarine. My love so overexposed".

The most striking feature of his hometown is consequently reduced and appears much less magnificent and meaningful. The speaker has a postcard, but has literally lost his connection to the place he loves.

The poem "Half-Inch Himalayas", records the poet's attempts to recover the past without clinging to it. "Half-Inch Himalayas" is strong title for the collection because it represents India and it is an important part in Indian history, culture and life. Geographically it is the dignity of India, a rich mixture of multicultural experiences. Agha Shahid Ali interacted various community groups of society and gained diverse knowledge that makes his life and shaped his art. The poet's main purpose is to elude the hard embrace of past by training and highlighting the resilience of memory. The poem deals with the issue of exile and chronicles an important phase in the poet's journey from the Indian Diaspora. Exile is a common situation that poet creates due to detachment from his subcontinent. The origin of the holy river Ganga is in the Himalayas. Sutlej, Sind, Ravi, Jhelum and Bias originated in the heart of the Himalayas. The Kashmir is an earthly paradise located in the Himalayas. Possibly due to racism and religious dispute between Muslims and Hindus, Ali finds this place inconvenient and inhospitable. One more key interpretation attributed to this title are that Agha Shahid Ali lives in USA and feels isolated and connected to his homeland. He visualizes longitude of the Himalayas using the length of the word "Himalaya" or its location on the world map.

Ali's "The Country Without a Post office" is a diverse collection of unique and beautiful words which together with a kind of emotional gel form a coherent and graceful whole. In this collection each poem is deeply personal and at the same time reflects the general experience of exile. A deliberate attempt is made to see the holistic ensemble of races, nations, and emotions as a policy for discovering diverse cultural experiences. Agha Shahid Ali expresses his love and care for his native people in "The Country without a Post office" which is written against the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict. Ali's long poem about the Kashmir uprising against India

in 1990, which sparked political violence and the closure of all post offices in India for almost seven months, is regarded as one of his masterpieces. At various places, he spoke about the historical events that increase the awareness of the Kashmir's as an ethnicity and nation, created memories that troubled and comforted them. This poem reminds us that there are many areas on this planet where people are dehumanized and degraded and are unable to use their right to self-sufficiency.

Agha Shahid Ali, in his poem "The Half-Inch Himalayas", asserts that his ancestors and the relics of his ancestors are decayed or being destroyed. The Dacca gauzes, bangles, and the images of his family, home create a sense of something irrecoverable loss in the poem. Similarly "cracked portrait" and "snowman" acknowledge and exceed ancestral traditions. Ali continually leads the reader deep into the sense of the chronicles and memory of the motherland and his lineage. The poet's historical background emerges as he explores the complex differences between portrait and the actuality of the lives of his ancestors. But he move towards the colorful reality presented to him through insurmountable problem of an identity crisis that allows him to face the obvious reality of Indian colonialism.

Agha Shahid Ali dealt with Kashmiri culture and as a result, Hena Ahmad said, various cultural experiences bisected, overlapped and united in poetry of Shahid Ali (35). He was born and brought up in Kashmir. He was so impressed by Kashmir that in an interview with Amitav Ghosh he revealed his last wish that I want to go back to my homeland to die.

Agha Shahid Ali was sincere and showed his determination to disclose the reality that Kashmir has become a "black velvet void". He admitted without any hesitation that his homeland is on fire and homes are being burning by the "Midnight Soldiers". Agha Shahid Ali closely receives the fact that his native culture has been exploited, so we have to admit that Ali's poems is actually a collective expression of the sadness of that culture across Kashmir.

Shahid described his hometown so distinctly in his poem "Tonight" by saying that Kashmir is a land completely shrouded in darkness. To record his memories of his distant frontier, in the subcontinent of India, while living in America, he briefly argued:

"And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee-----God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight".

In Ali's poem "I See Chile in my Rearview Mirror", he equated the situation of other countries with Kashmir itself, he can see Paraguay and Argentina under glass curfew and was also able to realize that "the night in Uruguay is black salt". This rhythmic interaction of moving subjects between and within the national traits, as Ashcroft thought, can be further discerned when Ali described his own identity as 'neither and both' or 'partial and plural' and wrote "he's brought the sky from Vail, Colorado, and the Ganges from Varanasi in a clay urn. [...] He's brought the desert too..."

What hasn't he planned? For music Debussy,
Then a song from New Orleans in the Cresecent's
Time nearing Penn Station" (23)

Conclusion

If multilingualism and multiculturalism are formed, the structure of his personality and the different places he lived helped him to get connected with other cultures to explore. His poems that capture his sense of loss and association, memories, remembrance, and imagination also made up his identity. Agha Shahid Ali's powerful creation helped him to create a national awareness on an international scale. If his poetry can reflect the feelings of displacement and homelessness, his imagination can overcome uprooting and help him invest in an international attitude

The cultural dimensions of Ali's poetry are present in his poems, which deals with many cultures of this world. The Kashmir is the hot spot between Pakistan and India. Because of the conflict, many indigenous people in the region were displaced. His poetry portrays him as a citizen of the world, but his connection with Kashmir is evidence of his cultural unity, which permits him to stick out from other writers. Readers, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality, are drawn to sympathize with his sad exile.

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