

Vol. IV, No. II (Fall 2019)

Page: 19 – 24

p-ISSN: 2663-3299

e-ISSN: 2663-3841

L-ISSN: 2663-3299

DOI: 10.31703/glr.2019(IV-II).04

URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/glr.2019\(IV-II\).04](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/glr.2019(IV-II).04)

Agha Shahid Ali: Hyphenated Identities as a Tool for Understanding the Diasporic Sensibility

Abstract

The question of identity lies at the nucleus of literary theory, as well as socio-political discourse. The classification of one's identity is often used to analyze and better understand the work of many authors and their lives. However, the issue that arises regarding these questions is the urge to simplify identity as linear and monolithic. This proves problematic as such an approach overlooks major aspects of the authors' works, especially in the case of diasporic literature. It does not suffice to simply consider the multifaceted identities of these writers when categorizing them. The realization, of how these identities not only inform the writings of these people but also introduce into the English language flavors from other languages and cultures, is essential for the progress of a diasporic sensibility. A basic methodology is developed in this paper regarding multidimensional realities in poetry, with Agha Shahid Ali as a case-study, to elaborate on how a diasporic author can use and introduce novel forms into the English language.

Key Words

Agha Shahid Ali, Diaspora, Diasporic Literature, English Literature, Hyphenated Identity, Identity, Metaphor

Introduction

This paper looks at how the concept of hyphenated identities can be used to better assess the work of diasporic writers. The distinction must be made through between further dissemination of historical-bibliographical criticism and the introduction of new metaphors and forms into English literature. The aim of this research is to trace the various methods that Agha Shahid Ali uses in his poetry to convey meaning and narrate stories spread across continents and centuries, and how his sensibility is informed profoundly by his experiences. A basic methodology will be developed in this paper regarding multidimensional realities in poetry, with Agha Shahid Ali as a case-study, to elaborate on how a diasporic author can use and introduce novel forms into the English language. Ali uses his cultural and linguistic diversity to blend English poetry with the Arabic-Persian poetic forms *ghazal* and *marsiya*, creating an entirely original voice.

As knowledge about the poet's background and upbringing is of utmost importance in understanding the origins of his poetic form, the paper will glance over Ali's life briefly before delving into his work. This study is divided into chapters according to the various hyphenated identities of Ali: Kashmiri-American, Shiite-Muslim, English-Urdu. At the intersection of all these aspects of his existence lie the ideas of exile, nostalgia, and mourning, therefore, which will form a substantial part of this paper as well. The brevity of this paper neither allows for an investigation into other authors nor the development of a detailed framework regarding the

proposed methodology towards a diasporic sensibility. Hence, Agha Shahid Ali is used as a befitting case-study to achieve an outcome that fulfills both the aforementioned research interests.

From India to America

Agha Shahid Ali was born in 1949 in New Delhi in a Kashmiri Muslim family. He belonged to a highly educated family; his grandmother is one of the most educated women in Kashmir at that time. His father taught at a university in Delhi, having done his doctorate in comparative education from Ball State College in Indiana, US. His mother belonged to Uttar Pradesh to a family well-known for its Sufi heritage. He was brought up speaking English, Urdu, Kashmiri and Persian. Therefore, his family and cultural background played an important role in his writing and outlook on life. He was educated in Srinagar, Delhi and the US, and his training in school was in English. Ali lived in Kashmir, Delhi, and then later settled down in the US, where he died in 2001. The places he grew up in and lived in appearing throughout his poetry and influenced the innovative paths he took to writing.

One of the several aspects of Ali's identity was that he was born into a Kashmiri family and that he spent his childhood in

* Scholar, Department of English Literature, Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg, Germany.

† Scholar, Anthropology, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: mahwish.zeeshan@uaar.edu.pk

‡ Professor, Department of English Literature, Otto-Friedrich-Universität, Bamberg, Germany.

America, later moving permanently to Arizona. Not only was he Kashmiri-American, but he also belonged to the Indian Kashmir, adding more layers to his already complex identity. However, it would be incorrect to say that his identity was dichotomous, as his poetry draws on all these varied portions of his background and merge them into a unique style of writing. It should also be noted that his Kashmiri-Indian heritage is different than the Kashmiri-Indians the world knows today, as he was born right after the Indian partition.

Coming to the central question for this paper, as to how hyphenated identities can help develop a better diasporic sensibility, it is crucial to define these terms to achieve clarity in the argument. Sensibility is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “Highly or overly developed emotional and artistic awareness; extreme, excessive, or affected sensitivity or sympathy”. This definition of the word is as it was used by authors like Lawrence Sterne and Jane Austen. Sensibility is thus the means by which one derives their knowledge, by being aware and sensitive of the world outside and the world within. For the intents and purposes of this paper, a diasporic sensibility does not translate into a simple awareness that diasporic literature exists. The term, as used here, signifies that the route by which the author obtains their knowledge and emotional receptivity is through their diasporic heritage, their multifaceted identity. In this case, the diverse cultural, religious and linguistic background of Agha Shahid Ali.

A common feature of diasporic literature is that the authors write about all the various places that form their identity. They borrow landscapes, cityscapes, histories from several cultures and use them in their writing. Ali, too, utilizes and relies on a similar technique; however, it is not a mere borrowing of stories. Ali draws not only on his multicultural heritage but rather blends these images to a point where they are inseparable from the other. In one of his poems, Ali writes that “By the Hudson lies Kashmir”, which is an apt example to demonstrate this point (Ali.). No parallels are drawn between Kashmir and America, instead, they are shown as a singular entity. Often, in his poems, it is difficult to say with certainty where the author situates himself geographically. Instead, the reader moves from one place to the other with remarkable fluidity. In *Lennox Hill*, the reader encounters one such instance, “as she sleeps in Amherst (Ali, *Rooms* 18). Windows open on/ Kashmir” and then later “When the windows close on/ Kashmir”. These kinds of images suggest a geographic interconnectedness, while the opening and closing of these portals create a feeling of evanescence. *Above Cities*, as the title itself suggests, also deals with similar ideas. In this poem, however, the author creates a more concrete image of being transported and oscillating between multiple places, as he flies from “Boston-Frankfurt-Delhi” over “oceans, continents, deserts, cities” (Ali, *Rooms* 33). While this more concrete approach that merges these cities together might appear as mundane when compared to his usual geographic oscillation, Ali plays with temporal aspects of his heritage. He looks back, from modern-day Boston to 7th century Damascus and then to the year 1992. One loses the sense of time in these sudden shifts between continents and centuries. If the spatial setting is fixed and matches the authors’ reality, the non-linear events throw one-off.

Another important aspect of Ali’s life that shaped his poetry was the death of his mother. The event is relevant to this paper, not only for an autobiographical reason but because Ali drew heavily on his religious and cultural heritage that he learned mainly from his mother. His mother’s beliefs and stories feature throughout his poems, and at a certain point, they merge with his own perspective on life, as one observes his mother’s essence dissolving in Ali’s writings over the passage of time, especially as he approached his own death. On her deathbed, his mother hears the Hun Mirakula’s elephants being driven off the hills in Kashmir, and this image features in *Lennox Hill*, which is about his mother dying in a hospital in Amherst. Storytelling forms a part of many cultures, however, the oral tradition is especially significant in the Indian culture. The idea of his mother hearing the cries of “falling elephants” from the cliffs in Kashmir, from centuries ago, truly shows how important these stories are in the writings of the Indian diaspora (Ali, *Rooms* 17). “In Ali’s poetry the imagination links past and present, America and India, Islamic and American deserts, American cities and former American Indian tribes, modern deserts and prehistoric oceans” (King 17). These stories from Ali’s Indian heritage set against the backdrop of America, weave an original voice and provide him with the knowledge that is crucial to his poetry.

A Shiite-Indian Hybrid

Other than drawing from his Indian heritage and his life in America, the other important feature of his identity that Ali utilizes is his Shiite-Muslim background. This aspect is where Ali truly introduces a new metaphor into English literature: Karbala. Ali argued that “English would have to be renewed, and reworked even before it could be used by poets like me to meet the demands of hybrid culture situation” (Zaidi 164). The way he dealt with this problem of using a metaphor from Persian and Urdu poetry in his own work was to first introduce the history of Karbala to the readers and then later draw from that. In his *Rooms Are Never Finished*, he uses several pieces to introduce this metaphor to the American reader, *Karbala: A History of the ‘House of Sorrow’* and *Zainab in Damascus*. The words describe the journey of the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) grandson Hussain Ibn Ali to Kufa, with his family, friends and supporters, to speak up against the tyranny of the caliph Yazid. It describes briefly their whole journey towards Karbala, in modern-day Iraq, and how they were all killed on the tenth of Muharram (Islamic month). The latter poem describes the journey of Hussain’s sister Zainab to Damascus after she was taken captive with the other women of the prophet’s family, to be presented in the court of the caliph. It explains their sorrow and the misfortunes that befell Muhammad’s family.

Being from a Shiite family himself, Ali grew up with the history of Karbala, which is a crucial tenet of the Shiite faith. He explains himself this concept that “memorializing Hussain on the tenth of Muharram (Ashura) is the rite of Shi’a Islam—so central that at funerals those events are woven into elegies, every death framed by that “Calvary” (Ali, *Rooms* 23). These elegies that he talks about are called *marsiya* in Shiite Islam. The tradition of these elegies first existed in Arabic and was adopted by Persian, which later made its way into Urdu. Even though elegies existed already in the English language, these specific elegies that paid tribute to the sacrifices of Hussain and his family did not exist in the English language. *Zainab in Damascus* made Ali a pioneer in the tradition of *Marsyas* in English, which hasn’t been explored much by other authors. These kinds of combinations of subject and form from one language to the other are the product of a diasporic sensibility. Being able to draw from diverse histories, cultures and literary devices is what the diasporic author brings to the English language.

The advantage of giving a history of Karbala in the poetry anthology is that it introduces the unaware English reader to a part of Shiite faith, a metaphor that is rich with loss and exile. The brief history creates a vast vocabulary that Ali draws from in his poems, as the anthology opens cleverly with an account of Karbala. Ali “then picks up lexical nodes from there, (such as slain, grief, weeping, desert, water, thirst, exile from exile, night, darkness, tyranny, children, blood, doomsday, caravan, Kufa, Damascus, etc.), to evoke the reference to Karbala” (Zaidi 164). This new metaphor that he forms at the beginning of the anthology proves very useful because he equates Karbala with Kashmir, the loss of his mother, his own feeling of exile. The way that he uses this metaphor will be discussed later in this paper.

These lexical nodes are already imbued with such acute undertones, but Ali combines them with images from European history to create even more powerful verses. In his *marsiya*, he welds together the doomsdays from the Western world and Shiite faith, Karbala and the holocaust: “So weep now, you who of passion never/ made a holocaust, for I saw his children/ slain in the desert,/ crying for water./ Hear me. Remember Hussain, what he gave in Karbala” (Ali, *Rooms* 27).

Shiite-Islam is, however, not the only source from where Ali draws his knowledge. As he belonged to the Indian Kashmir, he was influenced by Hinduism very much as he spent his formative years in Delhi. The shift from telling the story of Karbala to the Hindu gods seems drastic at first, but the way that he pieces these disparate images together reveals the mastery of his craft. He moves fluidly between Hindu gods to the Islamic religious figures, from *Marsyas* to *bhajans*, from “the god of elephants” and “the blue god” to “the Merciful” and verses from the Quran (Ali, *Rooms* 29).

The ability to access knowledge not only from different cultures and religions but from one’s own diverse roots sets the diasporic author apart from the others. The connection that Ali can make with all these varied aspects of his identity translate well into his poetry because he grew up with them and was acquainted with them in a highly familiar manner. Therefore, such diverse ideas gel cohesively with one another in an organic fashion, with the imminent danger of sounding pretentious as a looming possibility. It is the sensibility of the author informed by his own roots that give him an upper-hand over others using similar techniques and allow him the artistic license to explore freely. The quintessence of this is Ali’s *Summers of Translation*, where a perfect harmony of all his religious roots expresses his grief over the state of Kashmir and the pervading sorrow:

Zainab wailed. Only Karbala could frame our/ grief:/ The wail rose: How could such nightfall on/ Hussain?/ Mother, you remembered perfectly that God is a/ thief/ when memory is a black and white film again/ (Dark Krishna,/ don’t let your Radha die in the rain):/ You wait, at the end of Memory, with what befell/ Zainab—/ from Karbala to Kufa to Damascus./ You are wearing black. (Ali, *Rooms* 31).

The metaphor of Karbala is a significant one in Ali’s poetry, not only due to his Shiite background but the dual purpose it also served to establish and enlighten the troubled state of Kashmir as “the interactional aspect of metaphor generates a double-vision where both the topics are enlightened by the connection established between them” (Zaidi 166). The usage of *marsiya* by Ali is also a by-product of his interest in Persian and Urdu poetry. Belonging to a family where his elders recited poetry from Kashmiri, Urdu and Persian, other than English of course, he had access to poetic forms and subjects that either did not exist in the English language or were not really explored. This combined with the rich metaphors provided by his Shiite background gave him the ability to wander fluidly between seemingly conflictual ideas.

Through The Looking-Glass of Ghazal

Even though authors like Adrienne Rich, James Elroy, and others experimented with the form of *ghazal*, it was in the 1990s with the efforts of American poets like John Hollander,

W. S. Merwin and Agha Shahid Ali, that the *ghazal* truly made its way into the English language. *Ghazal* is a form and genre of poetry that comes originally from Arabic, making its way to Persian and then later into Urdu. *Ghazal* means, in Arabic, to talk flirtatiously with women or a young deer, where the word gazelle comes from (Faruqi and Pritchett 111). However, a different interpretation of the term is the song of a wounded doe. This probably comes close to explaining the term *ghazal* much better than any other, as it encapsulates the mood of the poetic form.

Ali inherited the *ghazal* from his Indian background, being well versed in Urdu and Persian. His love for this form also

originates from his appreciation of the *ghazal* as sung poetry, especially in the voice of Begum Akhtar, who was the most celebrated *ghazal* singer of India. *In Memory of Begum Akhtar* shows Ali's fondness of the singer and the sadness he felt over her passing. The *ghazal* was taken to exceptional standards with the works of poets like Ghalib, Mir, Faiz, all of whom feature in Ali's poems. He translated a number of *ghazals* by Faiz Ahmed Faiz into English, publishing an anthology of his works.

The *ghazal* is diverse, in that it is both a form and genre. It is a form as it follows a certain metered rhyme and fixed structure. The *ghazal* is written in couplets, beginning with the *matlaa*, which is the opening couplet in which there are the *qaafiya* and *radif* in both the verses. The *radif* is the refrain word or even phrase, and the *qaafiya* comes right before the *radif* and has the same rhyme pattern. The *ghazal's* last couplet is called the *maqtaa* and has the poet's name in it. An example of the opening couplet is: "What will suffice for a true-love knot? Even the rain?/ But he has bought grief's lottery, bought even the rain." (Ali, 2003). However, the *ghazal* is also a genre, as it deals with certain subject matters. The tone of the *ghazal* is generally autumnal, and deals with concepts such as longing, loss, nostalgia, unrequited love and so on and so forth. Even if the *ghazal* doesn't follow the structural requirements, the poem can still be called a *ghazal* if it deals with these subject matters.

The success of Ali's transfer of the *ghazal* into the English language lies in the fact that he not only uses the *ghazal* as a form but also as a genre, classifying it as a true *ghazal*, something that lacked in the earlier attempts made by the other poets. Ali was inspired by the works of Emily Dickinson and other poets, but T. S. Eliot took up an important part in his life, the subject of his doctoral dissertation as well. So, it was only appropriate that with his love of the *ghazal*, which is highly allusive, and T. S. Eliot's influences in his work, which also used allegories and allusions heavily in his poetry, that Ali would reconcile these ideas and synthesize them into the English *ghazal*.

He takes the allusions a step further even, by not only referring to historical and cultural aspects but to events in his own life as well. As he writes that his grieves were greater than those of the entire world, it is expectable that he would not simply write about his life in his poetry, but also refer to his own past as one would to a historical event: "For compared to my grief for you, what are those/ of Kashmir,/ and what (I close the ledger) are the grieves of the/ universe" (Ali, 2003). He historicizes his own life and somehow this makes sense and works because he talks repeatedly about incidents in his life, creating a vocabulary of his experiences that the reader can pick up on later and connect the dots. He does with his life experiences what he does with the history of Karbala that is to first introduce a mass of lexical nodes, which he can later translate into metaphors and all kinds of literary devices. This works especially well with the *ghazal*, as the couplets are not related to each other but only through the *radif* (the refrain). The refrain is one of his *ghazals* are "exiles", and it is a concept that draws on his own feelings of exile and the exile of Hussain Ibn Ali's family. The way that Agha Shahid Ali uses the *ghazal* and the metaphors of Karbala discussed earlier, will be looked at in the next chapter.

Language of Loss, Exile and Nostalgia

Ali blended the *ghazal* form with the Western poetic traditions, as it suited the subject matter of his poetry more than sticking to one form. "He was as much a master of complex forms like the canzone or sestina as he was of the *ghazal*. He owed his lineage as much to Emily Dickinson and James Merrill as to Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mirza Ghalib", this created the cultural hybridity in subject and form that he wanted to achieve (Sabitha, 2002). The final objective of the development of the Karbala metaphor, drawing from his Kashmiri-Indian- American roots and his Shiite faith was to create a complex language of loss, exile, and nostalgia. The topics discussed earlier create the backdrop for these themes in his poetry.

Loss is a recurrent theme in his works: the loss of many lives in Kashmir, and, foremost, the loss of his mother. As he says in *Lennox Hill* "my/ mother/ is my poem", towards the end of his life he wrote more and more about the death of his mother. Ali uses the "windows", talked about earlier in the paper, to peek into the past when his mother was a new bride in Kashmir. Another image that he builds on, from his Indian roots, is the elephant. He imagines elephants in Manhattan, an animal that is not native to America, to add layers to his own loss. The elephant's cry does not only signify stories from seventh-century Kashmir but what the animal signifies itself. Elephants are known to mourn their dead by protecting the bones of their dead and Ali is aware of this and utilizes it fully to emphasize on his own mourning, "in one/ elephant's/ cry, by his mother's bones, the cries of those/ elephants" (Ali, 2003).

The metaphor of Karbala that Ali introduces earlier in his poetry is then used later not only in the *marsiya*s but also to express the loss of his mother and the state of Kashmir. In *Karbala: A History*, he shares that his mother always associated herself with Zainab, treating Muhammad's grand-daughters grief as his own. This memory, combined with his own Shiite faith, he equates constantly these two figures throughout his poetry. The incident of Karbala is also used to express the strife-stricken Kashmir, as people die every day and funerals are a common sight: "In every home, although Muharram was not yet/ here,/ Zainab wailed. Only Karbala could frame our/ grief", he says that every month in Kashmir is Muharram (month of sorrow), "It is Muharram again/ Of God, there is no sign" (Ali, 2003).

Other than loss, the other recurring theme in Ali's work is exile and nostalgia. He writes about the exile of Muhammad's family and his own exile from Kashmir. He first develops Kashmir as displacement itself and then links himself to his Kashmiri background

to describe his sense of exile. In *Postcard from Kashmir*, he says that “Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox,/ my home a neat four by six inches”, expressing how small his rich heritage has become to him (Ali, 2013). However, the sense of exile that Ali writes about is not exile as it is commonly understood since he wasn’t forced out. There is a feeling of displacement that is associated with exile, which is why the Karbala metaphor works for his own life as well as for Kashmir. The exile is part of how his life turned out, the fact that he chose to settle in America, willingly. Exile is portrayed as a memory that fades with time: “And my memory will be a little/ out of focus, in it/ a giant negative, black/ and white, still underdeveloped.” The feeling of exile is also closely linked to the nostalgia he suffered.

In the anthology *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, section I deals with this feeling of nostalgia about a past long gone, about that a past that he never experienced. The first verse of *A Lost Memory of Delhi* sums up the sort of nostalgia that Ali refers to, “I am not born/ it is 1948 and the bus turns/ onto a road without a name” (Ali, 2013). This nostalgia does not come from his own life entirely; it is a characteristic of the *ghazal*. As Ali grew up listening to Begum Akhtar, reading Urdu and Persian poetry, this idea once again is a part of his tri-cultural heritage. King notes this feature of Ali’s writing, arguing that he “looks backward to a unified culture and nation he has lost and which he tries to continue in his imagination, friendships and verse.

Such nostalgia for a lost unified culture has been a feature of Indian Islamic writing from the mid-nineteenth century”. Ali even wrote a poem as a tribute to Begum Akhtar, saying that she truly was the bridge between pre-partition/unified India and the divided place he was born into, her death being the “end of the world [as he knew it]”. He talks of exile again, as it occurs recurrently with themes of nostalgia and loss in his poetry. This time, however, it is death he says that has this effect, “exiling you to the cold mud” (Ali, 2013).

Since it is a common feature of Ali’s poetry to use metaphors, be it historical/religious figures or events from the past, another metaphor for the lost past is the last Mughal poet- emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. Yet another example of Ali’s diasporic sensibility is apparent in *After Seeing Kozintsev’s King Lear in Delhi* when he comes out of the cinema hall and looks at the streets of Delhi, Lear’s words reminding him of the poet-emperor Zafar. Zafar was captured by the British soldiers and led, through those same streets where Ali places himself, to witness the execution of his sons. The reason that Zafar is significant in this context is that he wrote *ghazals* about his loss, his exile to Burma and nostalgia over the golden days of the Mughal empire. The nostalgia is heightened by Ali as he juxtaposes the past with the present, “Beggars now live here in tombs/ of unknown nobles and forgotten saints/ while hawkers sell combs and mirrors/ outside a Sikh temple.” (Ali, 2013). These multi-layered metaphors and allusions create a profound sense of displacement, geographic and emotional, in Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry.

The Sensible Poet

The relevance of Agha Shahid Ali’s work to American poetry does not lie in the fact that he wrote in English while being from India, but he is an appropriate example of how the diaspora contributes greatly to English literature. Many poets from different cultural backgrounds write poetry in English and introduce novel forms and ideas into the language, Ali is one of these poets, and however, there is a notable distinction between him and other diasporic poets. He is a pioneer of *ghazal* and the *marsiya* into English literature and transfers metaphors from Urdu, Arabic and Persian into a language that doesn’t contain such ideas. The mastery of his craft is that he writes of Western concepts and forms with the lyrical nature of the Eastern world. Even other than the *ghazals*, his poems possess a style characteristic of the *ghazal*.

It is essential to not categorize Ali in the post-colonial tradition and leave it at that. The reason that this paper emphasizes a diasporic sensibility and not from a colonial perspective is the limiting and inappropriate nature of the claim. Many would argue otherwise, but as King says that he might be a part of the “post-colonial condition”, being a migrant, it is more suitable to call this a “new internationalism” because it’s “more useful than “post-colonialism”, [that has] its emphasis on a fractured, resistant national or cultural identity. There is no such fracture in Ali’s poetry, it is the very opposite of that since his work is an amalgamation of his hyphenated identity and moves fluidly between geographical and spatial components.

Conclusion

The diverse roots that Ali comes from inform his knowledge about the world and influence his language. Diasporic authors often borrow words from their language and use them in their work, which leads to an odd sensualizing and exoticizing of their cultural aspects. Such an approach leads to a one-way flow towards the English language, whereas a fluidity of poetic form and subject enrich languages and cultures, paving a way for other authors. The *ghazal* then becomes as much a part of English literature as English poetry is of Shiite elegies or the state of Kashmir. A fetish for integrating identities, or the urge to investigate dichotomy, instead of harmony, works counter-productively at times with regards to the diaspora. Further inquiry into comparable works such as Agha Shahid Ali’s is required to elaborate clarifies this ‘diasporic sensibility’. Research into this sort of exchange and unification of literary structures and themes, which is achieved through a diasporic sensibility, is needed rather than observing it plainly through the looking-glass of post-colonialism.

References

- Ali, A. S. (2003). *Rooms Are Never Finished: Poems*. WW Norton & Company.
- Ali, A. S. (2013). *Half-inch Himalayas: Miniature Edition*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Faruqi, S. R., & Pritchett, F. W. (1984). Lyric Poetry in Urdu: Ghazal and Nazm. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 19(2), 111-127.
- King, B. (1994). AGHA SHAHID ALI'S TRICULTURAL NOSTALGIA. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 29(2), 1-20.
- Patke, R. S., & Rajeev, S. (2006). *Postcolonial poetry in English*. Oxford University Press.
- Sabitha, T. P. (2002). The beloved witness: A homage to Agha Shahid Ali. *India Literature*, 46(1 (207), 180-183.
- Sensibility. (2019). OED Online, Oxford University Press, March 2019,
- Zaidi, N. (2007). Karbala as metaphor in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali. *Indian Literature*, 51(1 (237), 154-167.