



A Study of History and Diaspora in the Poetry of Agha Shahid Ali

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ABSTRACT

Shahid Ali is studied based on the wide range of experiences which he gained not only from his exile life but also from his motherland by different means which help to grow his diasporic consciousness. He came across different cultures directly or indirectly. As a Kashmiri Indian writing in West about his motherland and diaspora life, he has three cultures (Kashmir, Indian and West). There is no doubt in it that Agha Shahid Ali spends most of his life in far off America but he was never far away from his motherland mentally. He feels much more feelings of isolation than that of diaspora because his poetry depicts that his consciousness is much more than that of a diaspora writer. He has left his motherland for gaining higher studies, but it was 'blessing in disguise for him as it is his exile that feeds his feelings and emotions about his motherland and he gives vent to them in the form of diaspora poetry. It gives him the opportunity that his mother land 'Kashmir' becomes the imaginary homeland represented by him in his nostalgic technique of poetry.

Keywords:- Psychology, Diaspora, Pleasure, Pain ,Memories

A Notion of History and Diaspora

Poetry has the distinction of being the earliest literary art form in history. History, as a discipline, often draws its material from poetry and other literary arts. In their beginnings, both poetry and history described dispersion, movement, displacement, migration, spread, and scattering of people due to domination, coercion, cruelty, tyranny, subjugation, persecution, harassment, and repression by force. Hence, poetry, history, and diaspora are correlated since ancient times. These three disciplines – poetry, history, and diaspora are interrelated even in contemporary world. Both poetry and history still represent dispersion, movement, displacement, migration, spread, and scattering of people by choice, necessity, or force. Hence, the description of the present-day diaspora issues differ from their description in ancient poetry and history. As a diaspora poet, Agha Shahid Ali expresses his recollections of the bygone times in his poems, which at times form or embody history. Premises of the Study: Poetry, as a constituent of literature, is written in a social, cultural, and historical context. It emerges from the deepest corners of heart. Hence, it gives the true account of many domains of personal life be it physical or psychological. It stands for everything under the sky be it visions of the forthcoming time or memories of the bygone times, happiness or sadness, pleasure, or pain. Aside from poetry, the researcher is interested in the concepts of history and diaspora. The researcher discovers a synthesis of all three: poetry, history, and diaspora in him. He benefited from three distinct cultures: Muslim, Hindu, and Western. Even though Urdu was his native language, he produced poetry exclusively in English. His poetry was written in both free verse and traditional forms, and he experimented with verse forms such as sestina – a poem composed of six stanzas of six lines each and a concluding triplet, with each stanza containing the same six words at the line ends in six different sequences – and canzone – an Italian or Provençal song or ballad; a type of lyric resembling a madrigal. He was eager to go to any length to have his poetry seen. He is credited for introducing and popularizing the Ghazal form in American English Poetry. His voice is poetic, meditative, and graceful, with syllable repetitions, half rhymes, and cultural topics enhancing his performance. He pioneered a completely new idiom in English Poetry via his efforts. His poetry is very personal, with allusions to exile and Ali's Kashmiri origins. His work mixes Kashmiri and American landscapes, as well as a range of complex emotions associated with exile, immigration, sorrow, sickness, and death. He raised awareness to the community's and individual's grief-stricken existence via arresting graphics. By sharing his experience of many linguistic, geographical, and historical dislocations, he invites us to see culture as a dynamic reality in connection with other cultures, rather than as a tranquil, fixed, or given entity. Through his poems, he demonstrates the processes of cultural engagement and attempts to initiate dialogue across cultures.

Keeping all these in view, the researcher selected to carry out research on 'A Study of History and Diaspora in the Poetry of Agha Shahid Ali

Notion of History

History is a challenging term to describe because of its transdisciplinary nature. To grasp it, one needs interact with a wide range of disciplines, including human, social, and physical sciences, as well as the arts, such as sculpting and literature. It is critical to understand the fundamental issues, the main and sub-fields, as well as the schools and philosophers linked with historical studies. Now, the word 'history' refers to events that occurred in an earlier period, the discipline of investigating past events, and the portrayal of past events. History refers to all historical events, the study of historical events as

a topic at school or university, and a written or spoken explanation of historical events, as per Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. In addition, in his book *History: A Very Short Introduction*, John H Arnold explores the same terminological difficulty. It is possible that the language will be problematic. Historians not only write about what they know, but also what they do not know. Both the practice of writing history and the study of that process are referred to as 'historiography.' In this work, the terms historiography and history are used interchangeably to refer to both the writing process and the final output. In this book, he argues that 'history' and 'the past' are two distinct concepts. Aveizer Tucker in his *Introduction to A Companion to Philosophy of History and Historiography* reflects on the problem. Even the basic distinction between historical events and their representations, in his view, is difficult to define and grasp, since the same term, 'history,' is often used to refer to both historical events and the writings that historians write about them. Even in theoretical context, employing history as an all-encompassing metaphor would have led to a huge mess. This suggests that the major problem with the concept of history is terminological. The same term denotes three different things: the past itself, the discipline for the investigation of the past, and the descriptions of the events of the past. For this research enterprise, the term history is used in its broadest sense, to mean all three: the past itself, the discipline for the investigation of the past, and the descriptions of the events of the past. The first concept of history as past itself contemplates history as idle passive things or events in the past. The second concept of history as the discipline for the investigation of the past reflects history as a cluster of methods for the investigation of the past employed by the professional historians. The third concept of history as description of the events of the past contemplates history as oral or written description of the events of the past. However, the terminology is not as simple as it seems. Therefore, John Arnold asks a rhetorical question. A real narrative from the past that is repeated in the present is known as 'history,' and this is exactly what it is. With the return of the past, we are once again in a position of uneven touch with the earlier period. Is the historian now done with his or her quick introduction to History, or is there still more to learn? 4 There are many more issues to consider, including the roles, scope, and processes of history. Here, it is evident that the word 'history' refers to the descriptions of a previous era. This concept of history is undoubtedly flawed since it conflates literary art with philosophy and science. Historians often assert that, like physical sciences, history is an empirical science. Nonetheless, history is concerned with abstract notions of the discipline and its description. Language is required for any description, and any description will take some form. As a result, the terminological and epistemological issues surrounding the idea of history are addressed here.

Scope and Function of History

What is the function of history?' is a major question for the discipline of history. There are various claims on the function of history. General perception of the function of history is to describe the actual stories of the events that took place in earlier period. Truth is the principal preoccupation of the idea of history. It is the nodal point where philosophy arrives into the territory of history. Linguistic description of the events of the past is another significant preoccupation. It prepares the way for history's interaction with literary arts. Despite the explicit agreement over the significance of truth in history, different historians, scientists, philosophers, artists, and critics view the function of history differently. Ancient idea of history was derived from the notion of myth. Initially, providence was given the prominent place in the historical discourse. Like myth, history is supposed to have the unity of time – a beginning, a middle and an end guided by destiny. Such notions of history were influenced by theosophical and religious discourses of the time. They viewed history as having a certain direction. Theosophical and religious perceptions of history conceive history as a tool to discover the direction of the course of events in the past to find out the universal human nature, the universal laws, and the universal Truth, which may be at work behind historical occurrences and it may be helpful to explain the universal existence. However, the modern notions of history inspired by developments in sciences, philosophy and literary arts consider such totalitarian concepts mistaken and misleading. Contemporary notions of history are accompanied by a degree of skepticism and postmodern pluralism. As opposed to the theosophical and religious 5 notions of history, contemporary perceptions disregard the unity of time in history. It views history as chaotic without any direction and end. It also denies the notion that the universal human nature, the universal laws, or the universal Truth is at work behind the historical phenomena. It is also opposed to the very idea of the universal human nature, the universal laws, and the universal Truth. It propounds that human reaction to the events are contextual and should be studied in isolation irrespective of the generalizing principles. Further, individuals, and events have contextual truths, which are different from the universal Truth. Hence, modern perceptions of history emphasize individuality of experiences and events. Therefore, instead of grasping the complete existence, it attempts to grasp the distinct individuality. However, Rankean notion of function of history is to tell 'how it really was' still is fundamental in historical descriptions even today.

Epistemological Issues in History

As previously said, the word 'history' refers to three distinct concepts: the past itself, a discipline for studying the past, and linguistic depictions of the past. The phrase is most often employed in its third definition, that is, as linguistic depictions of the past. Furthermore, history must reflect the truth as it existed in the past. This historical 6 concept is challenging, and it raises some fascinating questions about the nature of truth. Furthermore, the broad scope of history encompasses the whole past. Despite this, it is hard to accurately describe the past. Therefore, historians are forced to make decisions based on their own preferences and historical beliefs. This raises the issue of objectivity as well. As a result, the following are the two key epistemological concerns about truth and objectivity in connection to history

History of History

To understand the notion of history, one must be familiar with the shifting meanings of the term across time. The past was conceived in an epic manner in antiquity. There are many parallels between the early histories and mythology of the period. The histories were created for a variety of reasons, including theological and transcendental ones. In his 'Philosophy of History,' Zdenek Vasicek explains that the past (and often the future as well) was

originally the subject of mythology, tradition, folklore, epic literature, and religion. Writings about history appeared later. To begin with, events were presented as a tale, arranged in cycles or in linear fashion, and explained by reference to transcendence in both myth and history. Because the past is seen in an epic light and there were few instruments available for empirical inquiry into historical occurrences, tales had to be produced using plausible supposition. The historians of antiquity could not have directly seen the 9 events that they recounted in their history. Plato also said that historians could not be trusted since they did not have direct knowledge of the events they reported. Plato believes that reality is found through direct encounters with the truth. Because those historians wrote accounts of occurrences that they may or may not have heard from others, their accounts of historical events are far from accurate. Aristotle claims that poetry is more accurate than history in this manner.

Research Objectives and Methods

The objective of this research is to examine the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali in terms of history and diaspora. This study aims to examine his personal life and how he reacted to history and historical events via his poems. The author's physical and mental diaspora experiences will also be examined as part of this study. This also aims to examine the author's poetry considering his experiences as a diaspora resident. As a final objective, this project intends to bring attention to some of the concerns surrounding diaspora and history. For this study, the researcher will use the tools of historical studies and diaspora studies as proper for the field of literary studies in the light of the notions of history and diaspora, respectively.

CONCLUSION

This study on philosophy of history proves the evolving meanings of the term history as a word. With the development of critical reasoning, history discarded any references to improbable miracles formerly linked with myth and religion. It moved from the commonplace concepts of historical rules and generalizations to the improbability of any historical laws and generalizations, and the uniqueness of historical events. History is now part of the discourse that affects and is affected by various variables. Concerns about truth and objectivity have revealed that they are impossible to carry out. Historians, however, are guided by truth and objectivity. History, on the other hand, gives us a sense of identity and belonging. This inquiry also discovers the challenges of diasporic migration and the aspirations of diasporic communities to create a new world order. Diasporas face several challenges, some of which are exceedingly unpleasant and dangerous. Diasporas face colonial forces both at home and abroad. Diasporas, on the other hand, are vital in fostering a global, multicultural, and cosmopolitan society that values diversity. They are well placed to investigate being and becoming. This research also finds out what prompted Indian subcontinent authors in India and abroad to produce poetry in English. Even though many of them migrated abroad and wrote in English, they wrote about India, her grandeur, and her people. Reviewing Agha Shahid Ali's poetry corpus illustrates his continuous evolution as a great wordsmith. Earlier study shows his transnational and multicultural life and activities. This study finds the poet's concern for historical events and the events that occurred in or around his life. The research throws light on how the poet deals with tough and horrible historical events, such as the Bengali textile industry's manufacture of beautiful muslins and the British's brutal restrictions on it; a sad life and death in 167 exile in Myanmar for the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar; the Sabra-Shatila massacres in Beirut, Lebanon, murdered hundreds of refugees residing in refugee camps where the Israeli Defense Forces aided the slaughter; the horrific execution of captives who revolted against the British following the British siege of Delhi in 1857; the horrors committed by Hitler's Nazi Germany in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during World War II; the unlawful capture and relocation of thousands of striking mining employees from Bisbee to the New Mexico desert, where they were left without water, food, or shelter. This inquiry finds that collection of references in his poetry is multicultural and global in scope. He gives voice to the voice-less victims across time and place. This research discerns that the poet is infatuated with Kashmir and its history. The research throws light on how the poet deals with people, places and events of the past and present Kashmir ranging from the legend of Habba Khatun, a Kashmiri queen exiled to Bihar by Moghul Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century, lived among the people and performed songs inciting furious resistance to Mughal authority; the unrest in Kashmir caused by clashes between rebels and Indian authorities. the Hawal Massacre in Kashmir, when security forces opened fire on mourners attending Maulvi Farooq's burial; the allegation on Indian security forces sieging Hazratbal Shrine and Char-e-Sharif; the closure of postal services in Kashmir; the death of Hans Christian Ostro, a Norwegian Traveller; the Kashmiris' growing sense of self-determination; the brutality of administration and security forces; the security forces providing water and food during floods; the difficulties troops confront in their duties; the farewell of Kashmiri Pandits from valley. This study figures out that the poet is very subjective in his treatment of historical events. He finds state administration and security forces responsible for the miseries of Kashmiri Muslims casually ignoring the role of radical militants. His treatment of displacement of Kashmiri Pandits from valley as an unhappy farewell annoys the reader. In some cases, he got carried away by various political narratives. This inquiry also finds out the influence of Islam and his thoughtful considerations. This research explores how the poet deals with the battle of Karbala, Zainab, Hussain's sister, was seized while exiled and the instinctive comparison between the anguish of Kashmiris to Zainab's and believes that only Karbala can shape 168 their grief. The comparison between Karbala and Kashmir is indicative of the fight for rightful rule of Hussain, the blood of prophet and Nizam e Mustafa, respectively. This research also discovers his mother turning him into a Krishna as a toddler; the poet's intense grief for his mother; her death and burial in Kashmir; his grandmother's hard work; sorrow for Begum Akhtar and Faiz Ahmed Faiz; the Kumaon man-eaters, Mihira Gula elephants, Mansoor's crucifixion, and Mecca's Zamzam spring; the sentencing of kalapani; the battle of Hydaspes; the Sangre-de-Cristos nomads' crucifixion custom and the Hohokam tribe's lives in adjacent Sonora; the religious persecutions of Catholics and Protestants by Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary. This study also demonstrates the influence of birth in a Muslim family, life in between Hindu society and education in Western system. This finds his secular credentials. The event of Mansoor's crucifixion by Muslim fundamentalists shows his disapproval of such religious persecutions. This inquiry finds out how the poet studies history and discovers a connection between current circumstances, historical occurrences, and mythology. A lot of his work juxtaposes memory with history. However, his primary interest in the past appears to be in historical bloodshed, deaths, horrors, and murders. But his poetry was not hopeless, and he wished for world

peace. His poetry, like his presentation of historical events, is often subjective. At times, he got carried away by political narratives. He continuously depicts mankind's misery and suffering. But he neither investigates the root causes of these issues nor gives a realistic remedy. He wails for humanity and makes us aware of the global misery and tragedies. Thus, history in his poetry can be considered a true story but it is just a beginning; many things are given voice while countless things are left veiled, implicit, or missing. The study of history in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry instills empathetic and compassionate world-view in the reader.

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