

Interpreting the Conflicted Self: A Reading of Agha Shahid Ali's Verses

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Abstract : The aim of this study is to bring forth the interpretation that Agha Shahid Ali in his verses exhibits. The study will focus on the conflict and chaos in his verses, reflecting the sense of identity attached to Kashmir. His verse advertently depicts the political turmoil and social dissent in the 'un-silent' valley, and ultimately, it expresses the chaos, anguish, and suffering, a sense of longing and belonging to this conflicted state of 'being' as well as 'mind.' Agha Shahid Ali, Kashmiri- American poet who writes of Kashmiri tragedies that continue to remain unarticulated and unheard to the major parts of world, articulates the narrative that showcases the conflicted self of Kashmiris in general and Ali's in particular. The focus of the paper will be his poetry that debunks the claims of civility and how Kashmiri identity is kept either maligned or obscured in the major narratives that arise from the mainstream writers. However, Ali's verses are substantially broad and clear, and very brilliantly, he rewrites Kashmir in his avid and novel voice, his verses embracing the Kashmiri self, effectively anew in English language. The paper will clearly indicate how Ali remains true to his name, 'shaheed' and 'shahid,' both a martyr and witness. Ali's fate has been intricately entangled with Kashmir, even after his untimely death. He has fully and beautifully immersed himself in the surreal world of the conflict prevalent in the Valley, and this paper will examine the grotesque and gory history that has been spanning over the years in Kashmir with never ending cycle of conflict. The originality and innovation of his poetry surfaces from the anarchy of Kashmir, spanning between its culture, historical context, the art of memory and imagery.

Keywords : identity, self, turmoil, Kashmir

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