

Agha Shahid Ali- Internationally Acclaimed Indian Poet Lesser Known in his Own Homeland

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Abstract: *An unsung genius that shone bright in the firmament of Indian English poetry, Agha Shahid Ali (4 February, 1949– 08 December, 2001), celebrated Kashmiri-American poet who won over massive popularity in the United States, ironically remains largely unnoticed in his own country. Ali, born in New Delhi in 1949 and raised in Kashmir, was a celebrated Kashmiri American Muslim poet of Indian descent. He emigrated to the United States for higher education where he also embarked on a successful career and settled permanently. A poet, academician, exponent of ghazal form in literature- one who wore many other hats, Ali inexplicably continues to remain little known in India.*

While we commemorate a galaxy of Indian English poets that also encompass expats of Indian origin, Agha Shahid Ali, a diasporic poet with roots in India, undoubtedly deserves far greater recognition and awareness about his works and genius. He has articulated his perception, feelings and imagination evocatively about his homeland, Kashmir in his works. He endured a deep sense of devastation, displacement and loss as his native motherland Kashmir had been in turmoil.

A deep sense of love for his motherland and unfathomable grief caused by the destruction engulfing Kashmir recurs in several poems he penned. This, along with reflections over the fact that he deserved far greater recognition and popularity in India, are the central premises of this paper.

Further, this paper appreciates three prominent poems that Ali penned, viz.

- ‘The Country Without a Post Office’
- ‘Postcard from Kashmir’ and
- ‘Farewell’

which convey diverse themes revolving around his love for Kashmir, the pain overwhelming his heart as he witnessed the icy hands of devastation pervading his native land and his secular outlook.

Keywords: Agha Shahid Ali, Obscurity, Kashmir, Oblivion, Exile