Conclusion

The thesis has tried to discuss Agha Shahid Ali in detail and attempted to discuss most of the issues he conversed with in his poetry. Ali belonged to the generation of postcolonial poets who wrote some of their poetry in India and most of it in diaspora. In chapter I, the thesis has tried to show how Ali started writing under the influence of T S Eliot and English Romantics, particularly P B Shelley. This influence, however, was short lived and he developed his own style of writing which is a blend of Urdu tradition and the Western tradition. Ali’s was influenced by his own Indo-Islamic culture and he began to write on subjects like Indo-Islamic music, Urdu language, Muharram etc. Ali, as the thesis has tried to show, bears quite resemblance with the poetry of A K Ramanujan whose localism, preoccupation with family, and cultural plurality are very much similar to Ali’s poetic concerns. However, Ali has not been much acknowledged by his critics in India as much as he deserves to be: a very few Indian critics have written on his poetry. He is not even included in Jeet Thayil’s anthology, 60 Indian Poets. His non inclusion in Indian anthologies and critical books has more to do with deliberate marginalization and not with the credibility of his poetry. The main reason for this is his concern with Indo-Islamic culture which is not considered to be a typically Indian culture. Ali, the thesis has attempted to show, has been doubly marginalized both at the spatial level (based on physical location), as he was an expatriate, living outside India, and he has also been marginalized on the societal level also (which includes culture and religion) unlike others Indian writers in diaspora. However, Ali marginalization in India has been compensated by his acceptance at the international level. He is found in more than fifteen International
poetry anthologies including the famous *Norton Anthology of Poetry* where only three other Indian poets have been able to find a place. This is a great achievement.

Chapter II has dealt with Ali’s relationship with his home, Kashmir. Ali has romanticized his home in some of his early poetry with memories hanging around the time spent at his home. But with rise of violence in Kashmir Ali’s idyllic Kashmir turn into hell, so does Ali’s poetry. Ali shifts his poetry from mere longing for the home to the lament of the devastation back in Kashmir. The tone of his poetry becomes angrier and lyrical, wherein he witnesses the human rights violations in Kashmir. The thesis has tried to read Ali’s letters as an attempt to write to the rest of the world and tell them about the silence of media on the gross human rights violations in Kashmir. The poetry becomes, to use the phrase of Carolyn Forche, the poetry of witness, a source which records the catastrophe in the valley. Ali alludes to many poems which refer to human tragedies in various parts of the world like Russia under Stalin, Ireland during Irish war, Bosnia in 1990s etc. trying to show the sheer height of disaster in Kashmir. The thesis has tried to show how his witness poetry and angrier mode turns his poetry in resistance against the atrocities, thus his poetry can be read as resistance literature.

America, Ali second home, features substantially in his poetry. His two books *A Walk through Yellow Pages* (1987) and *A Nostalgist’s Map of America* (1991) are concerned with America. Chapter III of the thesis has tried to show how Ali’s concern with America is quite different from many other Asian American poets, particularly Indian American poets like Meena Alexander, A K Ramanujan, Vikram Seth, Jeet Thayil and Vijay Seshadri. He is primarily concerned with the painful history of the Native Americans in the post Columbian era wherein he laments the loss of Native American
culture and language. Ali repeatedly uses Emily Dickinson’s metaphor of evanescence to show the painful history of the Natives. Ali’s lament is neither the settler American’s re-reading of Native American history pitifully nor is it like the Native American writers’ reading of their own history of obliteration; but Ali sees their painful history as a poet of loss, who finds its semblance in his own exile and lost home. In addition, Ali parodies a few stories of Grimm Brothers, and in so doing he tries to reveal the power structures and violence hidden in the fabric of language and discourse.

Chapter IV of the thesis has tried to deal with the plurality in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali which is the result of his multicultural upbringing. The language used by Ali is many times a mélange of his Urdu sensibility and English education. Most of his poetry besides ghazals seems to have been written in ambience of the postcolonial terms like hybridity, syncretism, creolization, bricolage, and cultural translation. This feature is not a deliberate postcolonial attempt, but a natural outcome of his cultural and linguistic plural upbringing and sentence. In addition, Ali’s Muslim background and his upbringing in the culturally rich environment gave him a Sufi sensibility which is, to a certain extent, manifest in his poetry. Ali’s Sufism is not because of some religious sensibility, but because of his cultural upbringing and his influence of Urdu poetry. His connection with Sufism, therefore, is mechanical and not deep rooted as there is no experience or desire for any experience, but only an emotive feeling. Ali’s multiple exile shapes his identity which is multidimensional and exilic. Ali’s journey gives him an identity of Ishmael who lives in exile and this for him is accompanied with loss, pain and desire which stamps most of the his poetry, whatever be its subject.
Agha Shahid Ali’s ghazals in English is a remarkable achievement to bringing “real” ghazal to America. Ghazal in the West was not known in its true form and subject. Agha Shahid Ali gave true form and shape to the English ghazal. Although he wrote the ghazal in English, its form, content and context was truly oriental called Sabk-e-Hindi. Even though, language structure of English is not feasible to write ghazals, as it demands strict rhyme, rhythm and meter which hold a poem together, still Ali wrought it well. Ali’s great accomplishment is not only that he wrote ghazals himself, but he encouraged many young American poets to write ghazals which he compiled in form of an edited book, Cal Me Ishmael Tonight. This book of ghazals is in itself a remarkable achievement: it shows how this new form was internalized by the western writers and they formed ghazals on various themes, of various metrical lengths, and also fiddled, to a small extent, with the original form so as to make it a bit different and acceptable. Besides writing ghazals Ali also translated Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Ali’s translation of Faiz is a great attempt of translating a poet by a poet. Ali’s translations as compared to other translators of Faiz are different and attractive because he transcreated the essence, rather than translating the text too closely for its meaning. In addition, the chapter has tried to deal with his use of language in his poetry which is a mixture of the musicality of the Urdu language and post colonial use of the English language.

The Thesis is a modest endeavor to look in to various themes and concerns of Agha Shahid Ali; however, it does not claim to have covered all aspects of his poetry. There is lot more scope for further research on Ali which this humble attempt could not encapsulate. Ali can be compared with many poets both new and old to unravel some
more aspects of his poetry. He can also be compared with the contemporary Kashmiri poets and many other South Asian English and Non-English poets.