In social cognitive theory, advocated by Albert Bandura, he speaks about the ways in which human beings react in different situations. He stresses on the fact that human beings conduct themselves variously in diverse situations and each reaction is a potent interaction of individuality, demeanor and circumstances. Self-competence and self-effectiveness, the main ideas of social cognitive theory, are perceived as a prominent inherent reserve, by which an individual applies some system of restraint over the way in which he functions in situations which can sometimes be adverse. A fragile sense of self-efficacy may lower the resilience of many people when they are faced with a number of antagonistic and detrimental issues that wreak havoc on their lives. The evolution from pain to positivism many a time can be arduous, tumultuous and haunted with the conundrum of definition when the route is one which is self-made. Resistance, as Kathleen Marks notes, is not just a modern response to a painful past; it is an integral activity belonging to memory, and as such has an archetype (Marks 6).

Purposeful and cold-blooded obliteration of the assailable segments of society by powerful sectors has always been a constant phenomenon in many parts of the world. But it can also be seen that such repressions have also run into hiatus of resilience from the marginalized groups who brace themselves against the oppressive forces, break the silence and articulate their resistance. They refuse to remain the ‘other.’ The oppressed takes up the claim to subjectivity, refusing to incorporate and bow before the ideologies of the dominating oppressor, thereby refusing to subsist in a specious condition.
Afghan women are considered as the most terrible targets of cruelty. They have been ill-treated and abused by their own menfolk. They have been treated without human dignity, most of the time as sexual beings without the power of consent. They have been regarded as producers of children, but are ‘allowed to produce’ only male children. If at all they ‘commit the crime’ of producing a female child, they are rebuffed and spurned. As wives, most of them are unfortunate beings because they are the receptacles of the anger and sexual perversion of their husbands. Most Afghan men disregard the women in their lives, be it wives or daughters. They fail them in every walk of life. Afghan women go through all kinds of unimaginable repression and cruelty and most of the time this bestiality is endorsed and advocated by their patriarchal society where religion and culture is misconstrued. However, the resilience that most of the women display helps many of the distressed, unfortunate women to come out of their tragic situation. This is realized mainly through female bonding and the community of women, who are considerate, affectionate and who go out their way sometimes risking their own lives to help their fallen sisters.

This study has tried to traverse through the oppressed world of the Afghan woman challenging many ideologies, accomplishing sensational intuitiveness as well as baffling conflicts. Using the tools of Resilience Theory used in psychology and sociology as well as Women’s Studies with special reference to the Afghan context, this thesis has tried to find justification to its underlying questions to bring forth many thought-provoking findings.

Theoretically, the study unveils a paradigm shift from victim feminism to empowered feminism in Afghanistan. Throughout the study, it can be seen that male chauvinism, which is a product of patriarchal schooling and which leads to the enervation
and lassitude of women is supplanted by an alliance of women which culminates in a sharpened understanding of self-regard. Patriarchal domination results in women becoming impotent and ineffectual whereas female bonding “starts with the assumption that women can marshal their power and win” (Wolf 179). The cruelties that they encounter at the hands of their men prove to be a buttress which toughens their spirits. The resilience that grows out this repression is the best deterrence they could develop so as to respond in retaliation. The women in the study have employed different forms of resilience to counter against the unequal social order and gender discrimination. The resilience displayed by the women is periphrastically aimed at the patriarchal Afghan society which scorns and ridicules the voices of their women who are denigrated. But the forcibly marginalized women neither refuse to be silenced nor do they allow their wings to be clipped. The study focuses on how they retaliate and exhibit resilience. They do fight against all odds, though they do not emerge winners in all their struggles. They strongly experience euphoria of conflict and the vitality to withstand while hitting back against those who torment them.

The discrepancy of the male dominance relations affords scope for resistance which entails reorganization of the quintessence of customs, conventions, speech and individuality. The writers whose works have been chosen in this study depict the oppressed women in Afghanistan exhibiting resilience within their cultural, socio-economic and political conditions and many a time their resilient expressions are different. The Afghan women delineated in their works are defined as life sustainers, towers of strength who commit themselves to the perception of the idea of a female community as an amplification of self.
A prescience of the prospective promise of a prejudice and injustice free Afghan society that is procreated as a result of the struggle and resistance of women against oppression is seen in the works selected for the study. In their works, the element of resilience can be seen in the style of narration, the various heart-wrenching incidents that take place in the lives of these unfortunate women and in many instances in the language that they wield; it is juxtaposed with a perceptible pattern of power, political, social and religious. It can be inferred that their works are entrenched not with the success ratio that the marginalized and oppressed Afghan women procure but a strong will to be resilient in the face of adversities, to stand up for their sisters and together resist the common enemy. There is a persuasive, impassioned appeal for the renewal of tradition and culture. The common thread that runs through the selected works is the despicable discrimination that Afghan women go through and the despondency and disheartenment of a coerced group of humans. The reprehensible viciousness and brutality are penned down in no mincing terms by the selected authors and the representation portrays the barbarity which certain human beings can perpetrate against their fellow beings. But what is commendable is that the Afghan women do not give in to despair. Though they know very well that the battle that they wage is against a very tyrannical and callous enemy, they choose to exhibit resilience in different ways so as to revive themselves.

Afghan women in this study have been analyzed not only within the framework of their experiences in their heavily patriarchal society where religion and culture play an important role, but also in the struggles arising out of their femininity. They resile not only against the cultural and religious mores instituted by their patriarchal society but also wield their authority as nonconformists and march into the world of freedom to transform their own
prospects. There is nothing so vicious in the world like brutally clobbering and assaulting a human being just because she belongs to a particular sex. The inhuman persecution imposed upon Afghan women is a blemish on their culture and it has intimidated them so much that they had endured all along all the atrocities without raising their voices, afraid to fight against their hegemonic culture and society. But they could not remain silent for much long time. The awareness about their own potential and power mobilized them to battle for their liberation, integrity and parity. This awareness was instilled in a majority of Afghan women by their own fellow women revolutionaries who were determined to edit history, to sculpt out a place for themselves, to organize a unprecedented aura for themselves, to proclaim to the entire universe their existence as “a person and as a presence, as someone autonomous and as someone responsible to a community” (Ansari 114).

The works selected for the study delineate Afghan women as people who assert their confidence, their positivism and an enthusiastic temperament in the midst of all the inhuman brutality they have to face at the hands of their own fathers and husbands as well as religious fundamentalists who take over their society. The writers selected for the study have depicted many Afghan women as dynamic personalities who have systematized themselves so as to empower the women in their community through female bonding and also through secret defiance so as to retaliate against the conservative prejudices as well as intolerance and biases rooted in tradition which they had been party to for many long years. Female bonding has been depicted as the one of the main ways the women have made use of to overcome their helplessness and forge a definite self-esteem.

Discrimination based on sex in the Afghan society has created not only an inferiority complex but has also given rise to an overwhelming fear in the minds of most
Afghan women. In a highly dominating patriarchal society where women are vitiated and brutalized just because of their sex, most of them in the deepest recesses of their minds time after time feel deprecated and undervalued that they are perpetually obsessed by a distressing perception of dismissal. It is like a slap in the face always. This painful awareness that they are considered a sub-human species tends to sap them off their vitality and they tend to become vulnerable and impotent. But in the works selected for the study the writers have depicted the Afghan women community who did survive the long years of bestial treatment while holding on to their own benevolence and generosity. The resilient among them go out of their way risking all dangers to empower and encourage other women and thus instill a spirit of rebellion and resistance in the minds of the female community. They firmly entrench the fact that the life of the Afghan woman is not always obscured by ambivalence and confusion and that her narrative need not always end in total collapse.

Many of the women depicted by the authors in this study are fiercely resolute in nature, resilient to suppression, progressive in the way they deal with difficult circumstances, ingenious and enterprising that they support and encourage other women who cower under violent and vitriolic attacks. When they realized that they were being pushed to the fringes of society, when they apprehended the fact that no one would stand up for them except themselves, when they became cognizant of their disparaging status, they began the attempt to resist and revolt, knowing fully well that they were up against a very brutal and savage enemy. In the course of the secret revolution, these women perfected aspects of autonomy, agency and insight. “The need for self-fulfillment, autonomy, self-realization, independence, individuality, self-actualization is as important
as the sexual need, with as serious consequences, when it is thwarted” (Freidan 282). By exhibiting resilience and perseverance, these women have been able to recreate their lives and determine the numerous phases of their journey – their advancement from an impotent ‘other’ to a ‘subject’ with autonomy and attitude.

“Cultural feminism is the ideology of a female nature or female essence re-appropriated by feminists themselves in an effort to revalidate undervalued female attributes. Women’s differences are not only unique, but superior” (Matthews 229). The works selected for the study verbalize cultural feminism by depicting an Afghan society inhabited by sagacious and resilient women who in the midst of the most pernicious and cataclysmic situations are shepherded by female concerns of unity, friendship and unanimity. Concepts such as interrelationships, collaboration, affinity, bonding, giving, assurance and hope are delineated side by side the powerful patriarchal penchant to deprecate and disparage women. The women in Afghanistan, as depicted in the study are discriminated against. They are not allowed access to education; they are prevented from leaving their homes without a male escort; they are obviated from taking up a job outside the confines of their home. In short, they are excluded from all kinds of activity that could interfere with them performing the roles of a wife or a mother. The Afghan society which is predominantly patriarchal cannot accept women doing any other role other than being a sexual gratification object for the man as well as a producer of male children. Their only recognized position is in the home. But they have always learned to brace themselves against many a storm and have not only displayed through their life and sometimes their death, what it is to live a full life, but have left a legacy of hope for the younger generation.
The discrimination as well as brutality which most Afghan women had endured stimulated them to trowel into their past history and culture so as to script a new story of resilience. Instead of becoming despondent and pessimistic, they have learned to pervade the hiatus with their contention and integrity. By bonding together and forming a close-knit community, many resilient Afghan women have tried to bring about a change in the lives of their sisters whose lives have been torn apart by marginalization and physical abuse. The works chosen for this study prove how the reassuring support of female bonding as well as the will to be resilient capacitate Afghan women to triumph over their decrepitude and establish a liberated mind which would help them to forge a strong sense of self-esteem. They refuse to be stereotyped but instead with their self-confidence and resilient spirit fight against their opponents.

In each of the works selected for study, the women characters inch closer to a wholly matured self. They bond with other women as well as become resilient survivors, integrating and assimilating an impressive vision which, eventually, strengthens them and imparts a sense of wholeness. Afghan women are depicted as women with distinctly entrenched personalities who move towards a more integrated individuality. As most of them toil to describe themselves afresh, they struggle to torpedo the dominating patriarchal past which pushes them to the fringes of society. But it is not an easy task as they have a number of hurdles to overcome. They encounter a more arduous exercise than simply having a make-over into the completely tenacious selves they crave to be. They have been so used to being psychologically and physically hurt that they often become too docile and many a time unknowingly allow society to impose roles upon them.
A cogent analysis of the Afghan women’s resistance to patriarchal discourses has revealed the intense realities of the women’s movement. The works chosen for the study validate the oppressed state of women in Afghanistan, the mutilated sensibility because of the collapse of democratic ideology of gender equality as well as the untiring attempts of a few strong revolutionary women who display resilience in the face of all brutality to create a space for their sex. The works strongly authenticate the power of resistance and bring to light how women refuse to be puppets in the hands of patriarchal power; instead they question and subvert patriarchal dimensions. This is analyzed using the Resilience Theory which is widely used in psychology and sociology.

Though women in Afghanistan were subjected to a number of monstrosities during the years that war ravaged their beautiful countryside, though they had to witness inhumane and barbaric acts, they never lost hope. In spite of the appalling and horrendous conditions of life in a country ravaged by war and strife and ruled by misogynists, Afghan women find a space to display agency and autonomy challenging the essential construction of the passive Muslim woman bounded in domestic space.

The women portrayed by Zarguna Kargar hold off from being pigeonholed; alternatively, with their indomitability and assuredness they face the system that prey upon them and subjugate them. They believe in themselves, especially in their resilient strength and find the temerity to take up solid and unshakable steps to affirm their stance. Dear Zari is a testament that attests the resilience of the oppressed Afghan woman. The raconteurs are both the sitting targets of injustice and marginalization as well as the attestor who verbalize the agonizing ordeal. Their harrowing tales incorporate their readers also as a troubled observer of their anguish. The persecuted Afghan women in Dear Zari are the leading witnesses who
proceed from experiencing to articulating. The traumatic experiences that Nasreen, Shereenjan, Illa, Gulahi, Sharifa and the others go through at a particular time and their vocalization of the same down the years, make them victim/witnes of the effected experiences. They are also witness to the sufferings of other women like them and in the due course of their verbalization, they proceed from personal to composite to experiential testimony. But it can be seen that in spite of their travails, in spite of the ruthlessness that they are subjected to, there is a flowering of the self which has been ambushed in sheer invisibility and which triumphs over the confrontational forces of the dominating male world. The tormented self is desirous of redeeming the beleaguered others and sets out to empower them leading both to redemption.

The feminist consciousness revealed in the memoirs by Malalai Joya, Latifa and Zoya enunciates the sequestered and quashed voices of the oppressed Afghan women as a result of which the victimized women are instilled with confidence and courage to break free from their victimization. How many strong-willed Afghan women engraft self-esteem, determination and dignity in other women can be seen throughout the writings of the three women. They vehemently campaign for women’s rights and give the clarion call for the total annihilation of gender based social systems. But it is also apparent that they are not demanding greater autonomy for Afghan women than they can logically maintain. These memoirs recount the voices of individual women perpetuating and proclaiming narratives of torment, grief, disengagement, expressing the fate of the Afghan community and restoring the history of their women broken by trauma. Through their writings, these women view the scenes of assault and rampage from the feminine angle, broach social, economic and moral concerns relevant to women, bring up moral and ethical issues of women’s sexuality and restore the voices of women who have been for ages forced to be mute.
Afghan women as a marginalized group resist hegemony to which they have been subjected to through a variety of ways. Latifa and Zoya use their writings as a site of resistance to supersede and subvert the dominant patriarchal voice. Malalai goes a step further. In her memoir *Raising My Voice* she speaks about the reprehensible plight of women in the so called democratic Afghanistan. The real situation of Afghanistan has been obscured behind a smoke screen of words and images which have been fabricated by the U.S and it is only falsehood that the Western media depicts. As Malalai writes in her memoir, “Afghanistan remains like a bird with one wing clipped. As long as the subjugation of women persists, our society will not be able to take off and move forward. Not only are women still denied their rights but, in a cruel irony, the cause of women has been used to justify and perpetuate a brutal occupation” (Joya 212). John Follian and Rita Cristofari who interviewed Zoya and encouraged her to write her memoir record how Zoya wanted her book “to stand for the suffering of all Afghan women” (Zoya 234). In *Zoya’s Story*, Zoya writes about the fearlessness and resilience that she and other RAWA members displayed. They were ready to risk their lives, prepare themselves for the possibility of being arrested, of being tortured and of making sacrifices. They were willing to go through all these dangers only because they wanted to encourage Afghan women to stand up for their rights. Latifa displays resilience in taking a huge risk in flying to Paris to talk about the plight of Afghan women. As she says, “Such testimony is the only way we can resist” (Latifa 184).

In their texts, Malalai, Zoya and Latifa emphasize on breaking the stereotypical images of Afghan women that have been perpetuated so far, and strive to give them their due in terms of identity, position, efficacy and emotional gratification. They make earnest
efforts to educate the world about the meanness and malevolence laid against the women of Afghanistan who are trapped within their male chauvinistic society. They also furnish distinct accounts of the resilient Afghan woman giving her hands to her diffident and terrified sisters to break out of the darkness that engulfs them.

The memoirs therefore present the Afghan woman who is strongwilled and decisive and who fights for others besides her own battles. They likewise unfold the metamorphosis of the Afghan women from bafflement to awareness, from hopelessness to optimism, from reticence to articulation. As Zoya puts it, RAWA presents the concept of ‘sisterhood’, a female network to create a feminine comradeship towards the social feminist movement. The writings of Malalai, Zoya and Latifa are thus saturated with the gender discrimination that forms the crux of the Afghan society. The family and the society are dominated by men who set the precedents for female behavior. The males reign supreme and have the upper hand. They keep the women under their thumb and render them silent. The memoirs are suffused with sketches of gender inequity and injustice. Male and female children are treated discordantly just because their genders are different. Daughters are looked down upon and are considered a liability whereas sons are considered as an asset. The woman who gives birth to a female child is considered cursed. The root of tradition has been so deeply ingrained in the minds of most women that they find it difficult to escape its asphyxiating hold. But there are resilient women like the writers of the memoirs who help their vulnerable sisters to take a deep introspection of their lives, which have been a shadow till then, and find the courage and determination from within themselves to resist against the forces that try to suppress them.
The resilient metamorphosis of the dynamic women characters presented in the novels *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *Afghanistan, Where God Comes Only to Weep* is assuredly more profound than the conventional depiction of women in literature. The women characters in their novels do not impulsively pursue traditional precepts. Though they suffer many setbacks during the war, though they understand thoroughly that their enemy is not only the warlord outside but also their own menfolk within their homes, though they face many a brutal clobbering, they do not allow such negativity to crush them. Like the Apostle Paul says, “They are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). They bond together to defy the forces that aim to annihilate them. They not only try to strengthen each other and rise above their demoralizing situation but also actively take part in the routine of rehabilitation.

Self-confident, resilient and tenacious, they refuse to adhere to the hypocritical beliefs of morality and purity when the circumstances require them to take a less travelled road in the war for survival. In these novels, it can be seen that the women characters presented are not isolated beings. When one woman takes a stance for herself, she stands up for all women who have had to face brutality and discrimination. There are women of different ages, different social and economic strata in the novels of Hosseini and Shakib. Each has a distinct perspective about life, a distinct way to make things work and a distinct objective. Some skyrocket to their goals, while others keep on attempting to liberate themselves from the shackles constricting their flight.

Mariam and Laila in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are the prototypes of the strong and resilient Afghan woman. When the man in their lives starts
to rip out the very roots of their subsistence, the two women bond together to rise in defiance against him and find a way of their own, repudiating all dominant influences. For both Mariam and Laila, marriage turns out to be another bastille which impedes their motility towards self-determination and self-actualization. The idea of rape within marriage is considered an outlandish idea in Afghanistan because in that country a woman is considered to be a man’s property and a man can have sexual intercourse with her whenever he feels like it and the woman has no choice in the matter. Her consent nor pleasure is never his concern because he owns her and can do whatever he wants with her.

In Siba Shakib’s *Afghanistan, Where God Comes Only to Weep*, the central character Shirin-Gol validates herself as a resilient person, who has been able to extricate herself from the constraints and curbs promulgated by the male dominated Afghan society, culture, nature and also liberate herself from her own anxieties and regrets. She has received the epiphany, an insight into the underlying veracity that one can gain freedom from one’s shackles only by reaching into oneself and exercising the power that is there within. She apprehends the fact that that neither her father nor her husband can be her security and sanctuary. She is her own stronghold. She has to conquer herself. She has to exorcise the ghosts that hound her and she has to identify her own course to redemption and restoration.

Through the characterization of Mariam and Laila, Hosseini tries to prove the fact that Afghan women have always been the susceptible group of the society, repressed, and without any social and legal stand. He tries to depict the hidden life of the Afghan woman, the burqa being a smokescreen so that the craving for a normalcy of life in the thick of the pandemonium is not exposed. For Laila the burqa is a means of resilience. Though it seems to the watching world that the burqa negates the identity, face and
integrity of the Afghan woman, Laila seeks asylum in the burqa to camouflage the humiliation she is exposed to as well as to obscure the defiance that she exhibits against those who try to stop her from living her life.

The thing that unifies both these novels is the sense of female companionship and the common ordeals that the women characters go through. Whenever these women get a suitable occasion, they open up with each and strive to derive courage and fortitude from each other so to prevent total disintegration. The strong bonds that Shirin-Gol builds with Azadine and Abina, the companionship that Mariam and Laila share epitomize the spirit of sisterhood and form a kind of resistance. It is from the resilience that they build from this shared space that Laila and especially Mariam, who had been fearful earlier, learn to stand up fearlessly against their abusive husband Rasheed. It is this resilience which enables Shirin-Gol to announce her dissent against the patriarchal supremacy which the Taliban advocates and which twists religion to suit their needs. Though disturbed and perturbed, she does not restrain herself from resisting.

Both Hosseini and Shakib highlight the actuality of war and its eventualities which deepen the afflictions that Afghan women undergo. As a result of political upheavals Afghanistan had to face intimidations from many fundamentalist groups like the warlords or Mujahedeen and the Taliban who with their conspicuous antagonistic treatment of women made life a living hell for them. Though they blatantly claimed to practise Islam in all its reality, the truth was far from it because they were highly fundamentalist and regressive and made all attempts to push the women of the country into a quicksand of orthodox culture. Women were confined within the four walls of their homes which soon became their prisons. Their plight was much more terrible than that of beasts.
However, within the throng of marginalized and tortured Afghan women, there can be found a few significant women of strength and resilience, some like Laila who have been fortunate enough to be initiated into the world of letters, while some like Mariam and Shirin-Gol who have had to watch their dreams and aspirations about going to school go up in smoke. They predicate themselves in different ways, facing all their adverse conditions boldly and refusing to give up without a struggle. They prove to the watching world that it is not necessary that men should always be the master of the situation. The fundamentalist dominant patriarchal system, the chaos and the anarchy that prevail during war may not accord them their fundamental rights, nevertheless they strive to achieve their desires and bring to fruition their aspirations within their constrained spaces. Laila, Mariam and Shirin-Gol symbolize the Afghan woman who makes every effort to create a life of respectability and quality in the midst of the quagmire of marginalization and patriarchal dominance.

The title of the thesis ‘Beauty for Ashes’ has been taken from Isaiah 61:3, “... and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes.” In many instances in the Bible it can be seen that people sit in ashes or cover themselves with ashes to declare sorrow or bereavement, such as anguish and heartache over an upsetting situation, grief over a national calamity, or remorse associated with repentance from one’s own sin. Ashes were therefore associated with agony, misfortune and distress. The nation of Israel had been taken captive and the people were being laboriously oppressed by their captors. In addition, political turmoil in the region further complicated their situation, and many people were confused, afraid, and certain God had left them for good. Isaiah, the prophet reminded God’s people in many places that it was their sin against a Holy God that
had forced His hand into allowing their pain and suffering; on the other hand, he also
reminded them that God is merciful, His anger doesn’t last forever, and He had future
blessing planned for them. He reassures them that God was able to take the situation that
burdened them and caused them pain and turn it into beauty. He would pick them up out of
the ash pile of life and make something beautiful out of them.

Similarly Afghan women strive to find beauty for ashes. In the midst of all
turmoil and adversity, they come forth as strong people exhibiting optimism and
endurance which make them stand out as people who do not give up in the face of nerve
racking experiences. They try to remain positive even when negative emotions wreak
havoc on their very soul. Amidst resentment, regret, sadness, anger, apathy, hatred,
disempowerment, disappointment or other destructive anxieties, they try to find the silver
lining in the dark clouds that threaten to rain thunderstorms on their lives. Each of them,
be it Maghul, Janpary, Wazma, Zoya, Malalai, Latifa, Mariam, Laila, Shirin-Gol,
Azadine or Abina has a rare and extraordinary personality and a clear cut approach for
survival amidst all strife and turbulence. Starvation, hard times, misfortune and not even
death can decimate their strength of mind. Even when the waters of their spirits are
churned and murky, they do not capitulate, instead they try to alleviate the fears of their
less strong sisters and reinvigorate them. In the obscurity of the war and chaos, they are
as conspicuous as bright rays of light spreading their warmth and luminescence even in
the darkest corners encouraging many Afghan women to stand up boldly for their rights.
Their life can be seen as living out the words of Matshona Dhliwayo, the Canadian based
philosopher and entrepreneur, who says, “Our most beautiful dreams are born from our
most unpleasant nightmares” (Web).
Findings of the Research

One of the major aspects of the Afghan society is gender inequality and the treatment of women as second-class citizens. They are dispossessed of their basic rights. Women are subordinated to men and are obligated to obey them. The despotism of the Afghan society tyrannizes their women and demotes them to the hems of society. They face issues like extreme need, incapacity, illiteracy, marginalization, and absolute estrangement which are so constraining that the women have no other means than to retaliate. In urban areas, conservative families and husbands demand that their women must observe seclusion (hijab) and wear the chadari (burqa), a garment that entirely covers the wearer, whenever they leave the home. Society dispenses severe punishments to women who violate the established social and cultural traditions. Women have no rights or the means to defend themselves on charges leveled against them, and society looks poorly upon such women who take matters into their own hands and attempt to expose men’s brutality. Women can be victimized not only by the husband but also by men of power and authority and have no recourse to fight back.

But it can be seen that women who are the most marginalized and brutalized community in the history of the country, have begun to passionately energize themselves so as to become courageous trendsetters who are able to topple traditional norms. Afghan women have begun to take a deep introspection and garner the strength from within to redefine their identities and metamorphose their images through their resilient behavior.

It has been found that there are a lot of Afghan women who commemorate female culture by standing up for their own rights in a country that openly disowns them. They realize that there are many women in the country who cower under attacks by men
and who are pushed into the dark labyrinths of silence. They reach out to such women and empower them by giving them basic lessons in resilience and self-esteem which help them to create their own pockets of freedom. Women arm themselves with the credo of self-definition and self-valuation with which they break patriarchal patterns and empower their weaker sisters to come out their shell and resist the oppression meted out to them. They understand the depth of their oppression but do not wallow in self-pity, instead come out of it with confident astuteness and farsightedness. The struggle of the Afghan women is characterized by casualties like torture, beatings, hardships and anguish because they leave no stone unturned to obtain emancipation and egalitarianism in the socioeconomic, cultural and political space. They do not accept the ideology that they are doomed to be victims of social evils and they are ready to resist with all their might so that they are not decimated forever. Though they have undergone bitter experiences of oppression, they are not ready to give up. Instead they steel themselves to arise with redefined force and strength to fight it out. They are not losers or victims, instead they are glorious survivors. The positive energy that they garner from their bonding with other women pushes them to retaliate against any authority that can be inimical to their advancement.

This study derives much of its understanding from women who are unequally placed; most of them are socially excluded, marginalized or stigmatized. It shows that women can not only challenge patriarchal power and systems, but can also appropriate its meaning from an external, hierarchal concept to an intrinsic and egalitarian one. The focus is beyond seismic moments in Afghan women’s lives. It delves into the miniscule moments in which resilience shapes attitude, behaviour and self-worth. Though
many of them are not able to show their resistance openly, their resilience is revealed in the fact that they showed reluctance in accepting what was forced upon them.

Women characters in the works chosen for this study are not assessed in terms of palpable success but in terms of the levels of the innate contentment and tranquility they encounter as well as their capacity to respond emphatically so as to resist against the impasse they find themselves in. Instead of being goal oriented, women are relationship oriented – to them relationships are more important than work and technology. Therefore for Afghan women forging alliances can be seen as a productive prowess which helps them to become resilient and thus overcome their predicament.

**Limitations of the Research**

Each research study remains inconclusive because of the extraordinary nature of the themes selected for study. The theme of this study is enormous. But as a self-imposed restriction, this study focuses only on a few works on Afghan women namely, *Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan* by Zarghuna Kargar, *Raising my Voice* by Malalai Joya, *My Forbidden Face* by Latifa, *Zoya’s Story* by Zoya, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini and *Afghanistan, Where God Only Comes To Weep* by Siba Shakib. Added to this, not much prior research has been done on this topic and the researcher has had no extensive first experience with Afghan women.

**Scope for Further Research**

The study about Afghan women has an extraordinary reach and ability so whoever analyses the various novels, poems, biographies and memoirs on Afghan women may stumble upon many incidents which may provoke them for further analyses.
There are a lot of potential hands who spend time perfecting the craft called objective analysis – research. Every home has a recipe handled down from generation to generation from one to another. The works on Afghan women are rich, amazing and overwhelming with hundreds of themes and subjects. Maybe from this research endeavour on the resilience of Afghan women one can find divergent topics which can make another interesting study.

On a concluding note, this study clearly depicts how patriarchy has dominated the Afghan nation and how women have been subjected to subservience which has culminated in their expulsion, servitude and derogation. But it can be seen that although attempts were made to virtually deprecate Afghan women or squelch them coercively and fiercely, many of them succeeded in raising voices of protest. The voices sometimes might have been faint but in spite of the sexual exploitation, the drubbing and the trouncing, they manage to outlive such trauma and make themselves heard.

This thesis thus recounts the peregrination of the Afghan woman from the conventional suppressed consciousness to an emancipatory sensibility. Most of the Afghan women depicted here are en route to contend for their independence and self-reliance, to make their voices heard and reveal their resilient nature which had been for years smothered under the yoke of patriarchal domination. The Afghan women presented in this study also redefine human relationships by coming to the realization that the power to make a difference in their lives lie within themselves. Their identities have been quashed and it is up to them to emerge from the ashes like a phoenix. The conventional roles like daughter, sister, wife, and mother which have been thrust upon them have to be re-defined and it is only through such a process that they would achieve autonomy and agency.