Conclusion
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Human society and relationships when studied in relation to culture is a vast area of study. In the relationship between individuals and other institutions of a society there is a hierarchical base which leads to marginalization and oppression of the less powerful among the social members. When the question is of such importance and magnitude, it is not possible to come to a final word. The question of Afghan women as raised in the novels concerned is enmeshed with the culture and history of the country in such a manner that it becomes a herculean task to wind up any discussion.

The thesis starts with a detailed historical account of Afghanistan with a stress on the condition of women at different periods in the history. What comes to light in chapter One is that the political and social situation in Afghanistan has always been disturbing. There have always been wars either with the external aggressors or among the local powerful lords. The major reason behind political disturbances is the internal fight for power and supremacy among tribal leaders of various ethnic groups. Ethnic heterogeneity and tribal interpretation of religion play a major role in deciding the nature of the socio-political arena in Afghanistan. Afghans are simple and honest people with a strong strain of patriotism in them. They never tolerate any external interference whatsoever and always fight back successfully with such interferences. The three Anglo British wars, the resistance for Soviets, the ouster of Taliban and the present upheaval against the US proves it well. The matters related to women of Afghanistan are one of the reasons behind this political disturbance. Women have been always treated as scapegoats in the name of religion and morality. An important point noted is that contrary to the beliefs that Afghan women have always been
voiceless and suppressed, at some stages in the history, particularly during the times of king Amanullah Khan and king Zaheer Shah, they had almost equal opportunities with their male counterparts in the field of education, politics, jobs and social status. However when one compares the present situation of Afghan women with the women of the 1950s and 1960s, the progress does not appear satisfactory. The security of women is a most widely discussed issue at present.

The war-ridden Afghan society has strict moral codes (Pashtunwali) for both men and women and the local laws usually go in favour of men. Though the constitution has always granted equal rights to both yet the social situation has not been as favourable for women. Gender roles can be termed as a historical accident and are strictly defined and any deviation from the norm is treated as a threat to the social status quo. Culture is a strong force which creates stereotypes. These stereotypes get imbibed in one’s nature from the very infant stage and one grows up with a mentality where one always sees woman as a secondary being. This is because of an inseparable coalition of cultural conventions with the human psychology where coming out of such conventions seem to be aberrant as they are considered a part of true human nature. In almost all the four novels wherever there has been any such aberration, be it Samira’s masculine way of living, Shirin-Gol’s struggle for a happy and prosperous life, Mariam and Laila’s escape from the brutality of their husband, Azadine’s modern outlook or Gol-Sar’s idea about the equality between men and women, it has been crushed with iron hands of the local brand of patriarchy. In the light of the feminist and social theories by Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Virginia Woolf, John Straut Mill, Sara Mills, Kate Millet, K. K Ruthven etc the Chapter Two tries to research how far the social conditioning and upbringing is responsible for the construction of gender based on division, disdain and inequality. It
lambasts the idea of heteronormativity and questions the demarcation of sexes in the light of Siba Shakib’s *Samira and Samir*. It concludes from Samir’s case that its only practice which decides and gives power to an individual. Samir’s liking for other women in the novel has been thoroughly analysed with the conclusion that it is not an inborn quality to like and love the opposite sex rather it depends on the social conditioning of an individual.

Power has an important say in the role assignments not only on the basis of gender of individuals but also in case of their economic standing, religion, social status etc. Education too is considered a male prerogative where in women’s education is considered unnecessary. This is witnessed in the cases of Samira, Gol-Sar, Mariam and Shirin-Gol. However there are some men like Hakeem and Mullah Faizullah who favours women’s education and the result is the educated women like Azadine (*Afghanistan, Where God Only Comes to Weep*), Laila (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*), Sofia Akrami and Soraya (*The Kite Runner*).

In all the four novels the female voice has been suppressed and thus inaudible. Read in the light of Muted theory, Dominance theory and Difference theory and Ecriture Feminine, the novels reflect some gross violations of the basic human rights where the marginalized sex class (women) do not have a voice. At a general level, Virginia Woolf discusses the presence and absence of female voice from the mainstream literature in her writings. Almost all the discourses are dominated by male voice while female voice is suppressed. As a result an entirely fabricated and artificial form of speech is attributed to woman. No doubt there are some attempts to deconstruct this kind of attribution and many theorists have achieved success, nonetheless the strong and dominating voice of men still reigns to a great extent. Such
a parallel is found in the novels where the female voice is not audible. Even the voice of ethnically suppressed class has some affect as seen in Hassan's case but women have no such impact in the novels. We have silence and mutedness in the character of Samira in relation to her tribal customs which are patriarchal in nature, Laila and Mariam in relation to their abusive husband, Taliban and society and Shirin Gol in her war with poverty and male dominated culture. Although there is no major female character in *The Kite Runner* yet there are echoes of repression of voice and the presence of female characters is felt through ethnically suppressed voices. Nonetheless there is a reference to a Hazara woman Homaira who represents the inaudible and doubly choked female voice.

What forms the unity of all the novels is the spirit of female friendship and shared experiences and voices. Whenever these women get a proper opportunity, they share and try to find strength in one another in order to avoid a total collapse. Shirin-Gol's friendship with Azadine and Abina, Samir's attachment with Gol-Sar and the prostitute, friendship between Mariam and Laila symbolize the spirit of female friendship and form a kind of resistance. Sisterhood and same sex relationships put a question mark on the norms of heterosexual world as depicted in the novels and Siba Shakib in particular questions the essentialist view of sexual relations. The novelist, in fact hints that the sexual orientation has nothing to do with the sex one is born with and all depends on how an individual grows up. It can also be concluded that she questions the most accepted heterosexual social setup of this human world in general and that of Afghanistan in particular. Such an association among women, however, makes their voices audible to a certain extent. It gives them strength which however proves weak when it comes face to face with the external patriarchal forces like Mujahidin, Taliban, war, gender biased society and violence.
The phrase “sexual colonization” used in the last chapter imbibes all the forms and factors of suppression where women are colonized. Further ‘sexual colonization’ also connotes sexual harassment of women in the hands of their husbands and other institutions of the society. The chapter comes to the conclusion that women in the novels are exploited in the name of family, home, marriage and social codes. *Burqa* is used against women to keep them away from active participation in social affairs. However the concept of *burqa* has been deconstructed and demystified to a large extent in this work. Most of the female characters themselves feel insecure once they are outside their homes because of the sexual violence they may face outside. However it is ironical that the ‘safety’ of home may not provide them safety as the enemy or perpetrator of atrocity is at home in the form of a relative. There are women like Daria, Shirin-Gol and Samira who have no home at all. And there are women like Mariam and Laila who escape from ‘home’ in order to save themselves from the brutality of ‘the owner of the home’. On the stand taken by Marxists and Radical feminists particularly Kate Millet regarding home, marriage and family, this aspect of the study finds that woman in expected to behave as Rousseau’s “Sophie” in the hands of patriarchy.

Mariam and Laila are colonized within the four walls of their home. Samir is colonized by the strict demarcations based on gender. Shirin-Gol becomes a prey to the love and emotional attachment for her family. All these social institutions combined with law and order problems due to war, Taliban and Mujahidin add to their confinement. Even if they dare to come out, they are thrashed back as happens in case of Mariam and Laila. There is widespread rape and sexual violence in the novels. It is used as a weapon by the commanders, militia and other forces as a means of revenge and terror and to dishonor the men of a rival tribe.
The thesis presents a sincere and honest attempt to read the novels and bring out the instances of victimization of women in the hands of culture and history. There cannot be an escape from the historical survey of the country as the novels seem to be deeply rooted in historical events of the country. It is an effort to bring ‘Afghan Writing in English’ in general and Afghan English novels in particular to the notice of literary critics and theorists. A lot has been said in this thesis regarding the social and cultural victimization of women in the select novels but it can never be overstated and still a lot needs to be studied in this area. What forms the essence of the study is that most of the analysis has been done with a sociological approach in relation to history, politics, social and cultural conventions of Afghanistan and the novels are read as co-texts to the history of the country with a progressive outlook and voice that this may prove to be a stepping stone towards a better future for the marginalized and oppressed victims of gender, history and culture in Afghanistan, the land of unconquerable.