

**REPRESENTATIONS OF AFGHAN WOMEN  
BY NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH TRAVEL WRITERS**

**A Master's Thesis**

**by**

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**Department of History**

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**Ankara**

**September 2015**



*To my parents*

**REPRESENTATIONS OF AFGHAN WOMEN  
BY NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH TRAVEL WRITERS**

**Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University**

**by**

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**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS**

**In**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA**

**September 2015**

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **REPRESENTATIONS OF AFGHAN WOMEN BY NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH TRAVEL WRITERS Nawandish, Maria**

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**September 2015**

This thesis attempts to represent the life of Afghan women in the nineteenth century (during the Anglo-Afghan wars) through a qualitative and quantitative study of accounts by English travel writers using an Orientalist and travel writing discourse. The information collected and used in this thesis derives from more than 70 accounts by British travel writers (mostly military) who visited Afghanistan during the nineteenth century. The thesis offers a comparative study of the life of Afghan women according to region, ethnicity and class, since Afghanistan was (and is) a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, and the status of women changes when taking these factors into account. Like other women in the nineteenth century, the life of Afghan women was not easy. They were dominant in the domestic sphere; but they did not have the right to go out, to marry by their choice, and were expected to be secluded if they wanted to go out, despite some exceptions.

This study aims to investigate the social status of women along with their contribution to the economy and war which remained largely unknown for patriotic reasons, with the investigation of Western Women's life in Afghanistan during the nineteenth century.

**Keywords; Gender, women, Orientalism, Travel writing, Western, Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan**

## **ÖZET**

# **19. YÜZYIL İNGİLİZ SEYYAHLARINDA AFGAN KADINLARININ TEMSİLİ**

**Nawandish, Maria**

**Yüksek lisans, Tarih Bölümü**

**Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. David Thornton**

**September 2015**

Bu tezde, İngiliz seyahat yazarları tarafından yapılan niteliksel ve niceliksel çalışmalar ile oryantalist ve seyahat yazısı söylemleri kullanılarak, 19. yüzyıldaki (Anglo-Afgan savaşları dönemi) Afgan kadınlarının yaşamları anlatılmaktadır. Bu tezde yer alan tüm bilgiler, 19. yy.'da Afganistan'ı ziyaret etmiş 70'ten fazla İngiliz seyahat yazarının (çoğunluğu askeri olmak üzere) yazılarından üretilmiştir. Bu tez, Afgan kadınlarına dair bölgeye, etnik kökene ve sınıfa göre karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma sunar. Afganistan önceden beri çok dilli ve çok etnik kökene sahip insanlardan oluşagelen bir ülke olduğu için kadınların statüleri bu sayılan faktörler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda farklılık göstermektedir. 19. yy'da yaşamış diğer kadınlar gibi Afgan kadınlarının da yaşamları kolay olmamıştır. Hane içinde söz sahibi olabilmelerine rağmen, dışarı çıkma hakları ve kendi seçimleri doğrultusunda evlenme hakları yoktu. Bazı istisnalar olmasına karşın kadınlar dışarı çıkmak isterlerse peçeli ve örtünmeleri beklenirdi.



Bu alıřma Afgan kadınlarının sosyal statülerini, ekonomiye katkılarını, büyük ölçüde açığa ıkmayan savařtaki rollerini ve aynı zamanda 19.yy'da Afganistan'daki Batılı kadınların yaşamlarını arařtırmayı amaçlamıřtır.

**Anahtar sözcükler: Toplumsal cinsiyet, kadınlar, oryantalizm, seyahat yazarlığı, Batı, 19. yüzyılda Afganistan**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not be completed without the help and critical support of a number of people whom I owe this success. I owe much intellectually and professionally, to my supervisor Dr. David Thornton for his understanding, patience, valuable supervision, and guidance. Without his kind help and support it would not be possible for me to finish this thesis. I also want to present my sincere gratitude to my examining committee members Assist. Prof Paul Latimer and, Assoc. Prof C. Akça Ataç to attend my jury and providing me with worthy guidance. I would like to thank Bilkent University-History Department to support me financially by providing me scholarship to study here.

Without my family none of these would be possible and I would not be the person I am today. I am indebted all this to a person without whom none of these achievements in my life would be possible, the person who believed in me in any condition, who always supported me to whatever decisions I made in my life, and someone who is my role ideal in my life, my beloved Father Mohammad Yunus Nawandish who provided me this opportunity to study abroad. I would like to thank my kind mother Suraya Nawandish who supported me, encouraged me and believed in me

and wished for my bright and successful future more than anyone. I would like to thank my grandmother Bibi Zulikha for her love and encouragement. I also want to thank my Grandfather Moh. Gul Saqi for his encouragement and support. I also owe thanks to my beloved siblings Wida Nawandish, Farangis Nawandish, Shahrukh Mirza Nawandish, Mustafa Kamal Nawandish and my soul mate, my little princess Diana Nawandish. They always believed on my and supported me at each area of life. Their love and encouragement made me a strong person.

Without support of my friends this distance from the family and studying would be so though therefore, I am indebted special thanks to my great friends Başak Öztürk Bitik, Çigdem Akbulut Merchant, Tuğba Sağlamdemir, Hilal Dağ, Gözde Turan, Fatma Yayci, and Özge Filiz Yağcıbaşı.

At last but not the least I would like to thank someone who believed on me since my childhood, who wished me to get high in life, who trusted and loved me unconditionally, someone I miss each and every day in my life, My great grandfather Mohammad Yaqub. May God bless him and may he rest in peace.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Afghanistan is a country that has often been attacked by outsider powers of the world. Super Powers, like the British Empire and the Soviet Union, tried to invade Afghanistan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As history has witnessed, Afghans are a people who cannot accept any kind of force or invasion and are very sensitive about this issue, their land and their religion. A three-decade war which still continues is the result of Afghan nation's being very much patriotic. Among these historical invasions are those by the British Empire in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The British tried to invade the country three times and so there is three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839–1842), (1878–1880) and (1919). However, Afghans did not remain silent at these attacks and showed strong reaction toward these assaults. This patriotism was not only part of Afghan men's nature but also Afghan women had the same feelings. At the times when the Afghan men were fighting, Afghan women did not sit in their houses but stood beside them and fought against the invaders and played an important role. Many women even died during this war defending their homeland.

Unfortunately, the life of Afghan women and the bravery they showed during the nineteenth century is very rarely mentioned in documents and sources.

When these invasions started in the country, all areas and people were affected by it. Of all these, Afghan women represented that layer of the society, which were mostly affected. They have gone through so much of pain and suffering in each area of their life.

They lost their husbands, their children, and other family members. They were also denied good education which affected their social life the most, and did not have good health facilities. Furthermore they were also victims of the bad customs of the society's men. Since the men did not have good education to learn the women's rights, they behaved as they wanted. We can see the examples of this bad behavior of Afghan men toward their wife in these travel writing sources a lot. However, apart from all these problems, there were still women who were involved in politics and wars, or they gone against all the men made rules in society and made their own position in the society. Among them were some who were known as the heroines of those wars. The part about the Afghan women as Heroines is not mentioned in any of these primary documents written by westerners but just the Afghan sources.

This study focuses on the life of Afghan women in the time period of the Anglo Afghan wars as represented in accounts of outsiders during the nineteenth century. The primary sources for this dissertation are the works by the various British soldiers which written in the form of travel writing, memories, official daily reports, the daily writings of wives and other family members of the soldiers, as well as the writings of other officials of the British army such as doctors, nurses, journalists, visitors and etc, who came to Afghanistan during the nineteenth century, which later I will talk about some of

these writers in detail in my typology section. There are a few American primary accounts as well, writing about these wars in Afghanistan. As they are directly related to Orientalism so the theoretical frames work of this research is based on that. I would see it essential to begin with the Orientalism discourse and give a little explanation of these subjects.

In this Introduction, I will set out a chronological and methodological framework covering Edward Said's *Orientalism* with coordination to other books and articles, books and articles about Travel Writing and the methodology I have used for this research. I will attempt to evaluate Afghan women's life during Anglo-Afghan wars in accordance to Edward Said's Orientalism, the theme of Orientalism and what Said said about Afghan women in his work. In addition to that I see it essential to clear travel writing and its methodology, life of women through the eyes of the travel writers and were there any women travel writer, and if yes how much of the accounts of these women have been taken into the consideration? In the nineteenth century not only in Afghanistan but in all around the world travel writing of women were very rare and were not published in most of the journals.<sup>1</sup> However, the travel writing of men had some little said about women.

## **1.1. Orientalism**

As mentioned above the primary documents for this thesis are based on Western accounts of Afghan society, so I see it essential to give brief information about the

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<sup>1</sup> Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.122.



subject and I will be focusing on Edward Said's very famous and controversial work entitled "Orientalism". There for I will look back to the life of Afghan women inquired and analyzed, plus in which the Orient is allied with femininity in terms of Orientalism discourse. Said's book is a rich source for the subject Orientalism. For the reason, he had done a very good research, and then in critics and supporting of his work, many other writers did have good argument about the topic. His book is an establishment of the critique knowledge of the Occident about Orient. Said attempts to find out the opinion of British English and American Orientalism but he puts aside Germany. By this he did created the way for the further criticism. According to him, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and most of the time "the occident".<sup>2</sup>

According to this definition of Said, the West established the East relying on a set of ideological, political, and economical practices. In simple words, Said's work shows how the West has shown superiority to East. This means that the West made its own location that is advanced than the East and they created the Orient according to their own thoughts, and defined it as they wanted. Dealing with it, by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, by settling it, ruling over it: "In short Orientalism as Western style for dominating it, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."<sup>3</sup> So that he means that what is called the Orient is just a set of imagination of the Western subject. He claims that the 'Orient is Orientalized.' In his book he focuses that:

Ideas, cultures, and histories cannot be seriously understood or studied without their forces, or more precisely their configuration or power, also

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

being studied. To believe that the Orient was created-or, as I call it, “Orientalized”- and to believe that such things happen as a necessity of the imagination, is to be distinguished.<sup>4</sup>

Looking to the impact of Orientalism on women’s life, Said’s work’s surprising part was the issue of gender and sexuality. Though Orientalism was not intended to be a work of feminist study or theory, yet it has brought out feminist research and debate in the Middle- East and studies as well as beyond. It can be considered that Said’s work has explored the argument of gender and sexuality and opened a way for other scholars to go further in this discourse. As well as Said’s book presents a well-built justification for the historical and anthropological study that asserted to be going for further than stereotypes of the Middle-Eastern (Muslim) women and general relations in gender. His book provided the background recovery of historical feminism in the Middle-East.

As it seen the Edward Said argued that the Western world uses the Eastern world as an inverted mirror reflection, imagining them to be everything the West is not. In the title of the book *Orientalism*, Said, explained how this perceived binary segregating the Christian West the Semitic East traditionally established itself in art over idealized scenes of Eastern cultures introduced as unfamiliar, peculiar and every so dangerous. European artistes in 19th century turned to backgrounds of bathhouses and harems (private Muslim houses) to depict an environment of Eastern (non-European) pleasure-seeking’s and tantalizing temptation.

Orientalism carry on inflecting popular culture such as Arab and Persian (covering Afghanistan), nevertheless as we see ourselves different at this time, we see others different as well. The rise and increase of fundamental Islam (especially about

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

women's right) in the East, and the outcome Islam-phobia of the West has moved the focus to roughness coupled with religious fervor.

The rise of Oriental studies and the takeover of North Africa, and similar developments in Vietnam, in Egypt, in Palestine and, during the entire twentieth century, in the struggle over oil and strategic control in the Gulf, in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine have continued to Afghanistan.

The Afghan government (in last 12 years) desire to take over all Western-established helps (shelters) which they (the Afghan Government) asseverate are "more concerned with the budget than the women". There are several articles about women's better and good supports and equality in gander, safe havens and community, an act several Westerners would think progressive in a way they would not typically view the region.

There has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Afghan men and women for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, "like Easter eggs in the living-room."<sup>5</sup> The examples of these attacks can be seen in the primary sources description section later in this chapter.

The fact of Orientalism for Afghan women in last 12 years is brought them from homes to streets as young democracy that is fighting terror and encouraging girls to go to school and fight for their civil right but it was not the case back in the nineteenth century. They did not have enough education and right to what they can do today. The

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8.

aim of this thesis is to show how women were in Orientalist discourse back in the time of Anglo-Afghan wars.

In the book there is no mention about Orientalism influence to Afghan men and women but from statements we can see similarity of Arab culture in Afghan culture, so we can link Orientalism from Said thoughts to Afghan women situation.

## 1.2 Travel Writing

The entire primary documents for this research is based on the travel writing. It is essential here to point out what travel writing actually is and what affects it left on women.<sup>6</sup>

The essence and spirit of adventure lies in accepting challenges and exploring the mysterious, and therefore it is hardly astonishing to find early travel accounts be apt for the most part to be written by men, who moved and traveled more easily in the public environment.

In the European histories it is seen knightly questing or seafaring exploration, are male stories with women the matters of desire or journey's end points, rather than active co/supporting travelers, though the figure of the warrior-princess roaming the world in search of adventure was popular in Renaissance epics like *Orlando Furioso* and *Gerusalemme Liberata*.<sup>7</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (adventure quest) periods, when men traveled in search of fortune, wealth and renown to the deferent new worlds that were opening up further than the limits of Europe, such as Asia and Africa, they were explicitly gendered, since the idea of man as heroic adventurous traveler underpinned not only the great travel histories of the next centuries, but also much of the travel writing of the twentieth century as well.

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<sup>6</sup> For travel writing I will be focusing on 'The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing' and some other sources and will try to give the evaluation on Travel writing and gender.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender." In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited. Hulme, Peter, Tim Youngs, 225 Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Together with the myths of the epic traveler (man) however, there are other varieties of history, some of which have been produced via women. The certain women travel text as racism or social commentary transcends gender boundaries and limits, progressively in the twentieth century and the travelers (both male and female) have written self-reflexive writings that challenge easy classification as memoir, autobiography or travel account. In some writings by travelers (especially women) in twentieth century the Orientalism and culture influence can be seen the writings and memos in Middle East, Iran and Afghanistan (in Afghanistan, practically the Orientalism democracy practice/influence mostly introduced in 1950s-1970s by Western development projects).

Late nineteenth-century, few and some parts of the world have not previously been visited, documents such as written, photographed and recorded, and characteristically, nineteenth-century travel writings are more personal, more particular, and in some writings it is more about self-writing or autobiography. Most of the journeys and travels are generally chosen by the traveler for particular reasons, rather than for serious reasons of fact finding or exploration.

The modern travel writing never describes actual places visited or the practical details of travel, or makes social and political comment on places and peoples, but often we can find the personality of the travel writer projected onto the places being described. Writing often becomes much more subjective, more about the impressions places make on the traveler.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately it was not the case in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Durrell, "Travel Writing and Culture" (ENGL2045), 1. retrieved from: [http://www.english.hku.hk/courses/engl2045/ENGL2045lecturenotes\\_Week6.pdf](http://www.english.hku.hk/courses/engl2045/ENGL2045lecturenotes_Week6.pdf)

There were writers such as Lady Sale who tried to keep their writings as original as it could be.

Travel writings on gender, modernity and liberty presents a dialogue between Western and Middle Eastern women, that is often presumed never to have happened. Not only were women from the East imagined to be shut up in a harem all day without access to education, ideas or the outside world, but to some extent Western women travelers were able to engage with women in the regions they visited has often been overlooked.<sup>9</sup>

Some written collections from travelers provide considerable extracts from British, American, Ottoman and Egyptian writers. These texts introduces the development of knowledgeable, individual and serious discussions among women over a period of faster social change noticeable such as Arab nationalism and Egypt's move to independence and freedom, and the establishing of the Turkish Republic country after Ottoman Empire.

Orientalism, gender and the role of woman as one or the other guardian of tradition or in the vanguard of change was hotly contested in most of the Eastern countries and by all sides of the political range is clarified in a writer's introduction, overview, photo essay arrangements and the common themes of the collection.

In the travel writings and memos, an Orientalist anti-Islamic polemic has found fertile ground in the treatment of Muslim patriarchy and of Muslim women in Western Orientalism literature, which presents a "simple demonization of Islam". An enormous amount of fanciful intellectual Orientalist literary production gave such a pejorative

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, Reina. *Gender, Modernity and Liberty: Middle Eastern and Western Women's Writings: A Critical Sourcebook*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006. 1.

picture of Islam and Muslims (in Middle East, East Asia and West Asia) that modern society transformed them into misfits and their religion into a nightmare.<sup>10</sup>

From the above statements it is found that the travel writers for centuries tried to mention and point the main discoveries of culture, environment, languages, religion and other notable differences. In some parts travelers are mentioned about Orientalism in East, gender challenges and (positive and negative) influence of Western on the communities and societies.

### **1.3 Primary Sources**

The core of this thesis line is explained in the other chapters that can be considered as an attempt to evaluate the major documents that the research employs. Looking back at these documents, one can see that some of these people have been positive about Afghan Women, but some wrote unfavorably in their documents. In other words we can say that the explanation of the writers of these documents and their point of view about Afghan women are sometimes similar to each other but sometimes vary from each other even about a single tribe, ethnicity or region. After reading 70 accounts of these travel writers I will be trying to compare their work and give some examples of their work that how they differ from each other.

Among all these huge number of documents, there are few of them that I will be using a lot. The reason for it is that these writers give very clear pictures of the content. For instance, the works of Lady Florentia Sale, , Henry Walter Bellew, Alexander

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<sup>10</sup> Md. Mahmudul Hasan, "The Orientalization of gender". *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 22 (4) (2005). pp. 26-56.



Burnes, Lord Elphinstion Mountstuart, John Alfred Gray, Vincent Eyre, Rev. J. Gelson, Edward Thornton, Ernest And Annie Thornton, and Yate Charles are among the ones that I will be focusing more than other source, for they explain the core of my subject very clear and in detail. Nevertheless the other texts mention and discuss Afghan women briefly, in passing only but mostly about military activities. I will be giving brief information of those writers whose work was mainly used for this dissertation and provided more information than others in their sources.

**Arthur Connolly** was a British intelligence officer, explorer and writer.<sup>11</sup> His work *Journey to the North of India, Overland from England, through Russia, Persia, and Affghaunistaun* (1838) surprisingly gives a very different point of view about the life of Afghan women and the behavior of the male member of their family toward them. In contrast to all those writers who say Afghan men were ill-treating their women, he says the opposite and gives evaluation of Afghan men's nice treat, love and being proud of their wives. However in some parts of his writing he uses the orientalist view and even his words towards Afghans been used to be derogatory rhetoric. For instance, he wrote, "If dirt killed people, where would the Afghans be!"<sup>12</sup>

**Henry Francis Brook**'s account *Private Journal of Henry Francis Brook* (1880), which he wrote along with his wife, though doesn't have much information about women but there is some information about the women seclusion in southern Afghanistan.

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<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Arthur Conolly," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Arthur\\_Conolly&oldid=662527591](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Arthur_Conolly&oldid=662527591) (accessed August 28, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Connolly, *Journey to the North of India, overland from England, through Russia, Persia, and Affghaunistan*, 2 vols., London: 1838. 3.

**Captain Henry Walter Bellew** was a doctor at Kandahar and he reported his experiences in *Journal of Political Mission to Afghanistan* in (1857). Although he wrote three accounts<sup>13</sup> about Afghanistan but his account is one the sources used in this thesis since he is one among those few travelers who wrote about women. He is giving detail about both men and women. Appearance of women, the social concerns of the women, as well as how women took part in socio economic contributions.

**John Alfred Gray** is one of the main authors used as a primary source of this thesis. His *At the Court of Amir* (1895) is a rich source to examine the life of Royal women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan too, because he had spent a long time inside the king's castle curing the king himself, his wife and his children. In his account he talks about *Sultana* (king's wife) and explains about her in very much detail. In addition, he also provides stuffs relate to ordinary women.

**Lady Florentia Sale's** account *A Journal of disasters in Afghanistan* (1843), will be used as one of the key sources of this research for the reason that her account is been said to be one of the accurate writings of the time. Since she did record everything hourly even, and is a western woman who lived in Afghanistan and experienced the life of women there. Additionally Lady Florentia Sale is someone who gives a different picture of Afghans after explaining of being good behaved during imprisonment. Alike Arthur Connolly, she also had some orientalist picture of Afghans. For instance in her account she says, "The Afghans of the capital are a little more civilized, but the country

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<sup>13</sup> Those accounts are mentioned in bibliography section.

gentlemen and their retainers are, I fancy, much the same kind of people as those Alexander encountered.”<sup>14</sup>

**Mountstuart Elphinstone** was a Scottish statesman and historian who was appointed as first British envoy to the court of Kabul-Afghanistan in 1808.<sup>15</sup> In his narrative *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and its Dependencies, in Persia, Tartary, and India* (1842) is an important narrative of British involvement in Afghanistan and carry on to emphasize a deep sway on the field taking the race, autonomy and masculinity into the consideration with the appointment of Orientalist discourse. His situation was very different than other travel writers since he was a doctor and was able to see more women than others (since the country was conservative at that period of time women were not much seen in public views).

**Isaac Nicholas Allen** was Assistant Chaplain at the East India Company’s Bombay Establishment, and accompanied Nott’s advance to Kandahar with the 40th Regiment of Foot in 1843. His book *Dairy of a March through Sinde and Affghanistan* (1843) deals with historic events in the Western Marches of India: the disasters of the First Afghan War, and the annexation of Sind.<sup>16</sup> His writing is giving us evidence that European women have been kept as captives as well as explains Afghan women being miserable objects. In spite of that he also gives information about women’s outfit and how Afghan men were behaving to their female members of their family. He gives

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<sup>14</sup> Florentia Wynch, Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan: An Indomitable Victorian Lady's Account of the Retreat from Kabul during the First Afghan War*. S.l.: Leonaur/Oakpast, 2009. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Mountstuart Elphinstone," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mountstuart\\_Elphinstone&oldid=665696851](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mountstuart_Elphinstone&oldid=665696851) (accessed September 1, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.indoislamica.com/stock\\_detail.php?ref=BK000273](http://www.indoislamica.com/stock_detail.php?ref=BK000273)

example of a Royal woman too. Over all we can say that we can get useful information about the perspective of foreign soldiers about nineteenth century Afghan women.

**Rollo Gillespie Burslem's** account *A Peep into Turkistan*,(1846) explains Afghan women who have been seized or members of their family member were seized and came to British soldiers to ask for help. He explains about women in northern parts of Afghanistan and the seclusion of women on those areas.

**Sir Alexander Burnes:** a great diplomatic talent, colonial agent and adventurer who was sent in Afghanistan in 1831. As he was an adventurer he went there to seek for pleasant adventures. He wrote two narratives of his travels to Afghanistan, *Travels into Bokhara; Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, and Persia: Also a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus*, and *Cabool : a personal narrative of a journey to, and residence in that city in the years 1836, 7, and 8* –. His writing was criticized by Lunt and Charles Masson for miss judging Afghans. His account is a good source about the nineteenth-century Afghan women taking the ethnicity into the consideration but he mostly talks about the women lived in central Afghanistan (specifically Hazarah ethnic) than others. However he gives data about other ethnicity's women too. He also gives evidence about the marriage custom and the position of the women in this custom.

**Vincent Eyre** was a British officer in the Indian army who later was appointed Commissary of Ordnance to the Kabul field force who was among those westerns who have been kept as hostages for nine months during first Anglo-Afghan wars along with

his family and Lady Sale<sup>17</sup>. Alike Lady Sale he kept a diary of what he lived in Afghanistan. His dairy *The Kabul insurrection of 1841-42* and *The Military operations at Cabul, which ended in the retread and destruction of the British army, January 1842* with *A Journal of Imprisonment in Afghanistan* are also among the source which helped me to write this thesis a lot for the reason that he gives though less but cleared and detailed information both about Afghan women of that time and western women. Comparable to Lady Sale, he also talks positively about Afghans in his writing by showing Akbar khan's kindness toward women and his captives.

**Charles Edward Yate's** *Northern Afghanistan; or, Letters from the Afghan boundary commission* (1888) gives data that Afghan women were involved in socio-economic matters of the country as they produce one of the most important export material (Afghan Carpets). Very little but he gives information about royal women as well. Besides he is talking about the appearance of women with the concern of their ethnicities, and marriage customs.

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<sup>17</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Vincent Eyre," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vincent\\_Eyre&oldid=669061017](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vincent_Eyre&oldid=669061017) (accessed August 28, 2015).

The above accounts are my main sources. Other books have been used once or twice, and we listed them in bibliography.

## **1.4 Thesis Summary**

In chapter two, I will be giving a literature review which will describe the detailed and chronological description about Social Status of Afghan women in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The research will be based on the accounts of the soldiers and I will be trying to evaluate social life of women according to their differences in ethnicity, region, religion and class. I will be giving comparative evaluation providing examples from these sources and the writer's point of view. The problem with this research is that very little have been said about women in these documents and one should have detailed and careful reading of these all in order to not escape the info given about this matter. For the reason that, there is not specific title in any of these accounts except that one or two are given about women. That was the reason for me to continue this research working on 70 primary documents of that period.

In chapter three I will be trying to focus on the life of women inside the royal families. The first half of Chapter three will be focused on the life notable women, since the life of a royal woman was much more different than an ordinary woman. Although Afghanistan like most of the Middle Eastern countries is a patriarchal country, still there have been women who ruled the men and I will be discussing from the viewpoint of foreigners in the country. In the second half of the chapter my main focus will be on the

women heroines, who fought for the independence of the country and who have been motivation to their male soldiers in Anglo-Afghan wars. Although there have been many of these women but they were not lucky to be mentioned in any of historical sources except than one or two. The critical point is that even later than 19<sup>th</sup> century historians did not trouble themselves to search about the other women heroines that had participated in these wars. As an example, there are women who are in people' folk and whose graves is there in the country and much said about their bravery in tales but there is nothing about them in historical sources. In this chapter I will attempt to find even a very little information if given about these women in any of these documents.

Chapter four is talking about Western women's life that came to Afghanistan during Anglo-Afghan wars. There female characters are the family members of soldiers and other British army officials who came to Afghanistan, some had good life, some were impassioned and some even died. Since there has not been a lot of women travel writing, as a primary document for this chapter I only have Lady Sale's account in hand. I will be looking to life of Western women life that have been mentioned in the documents of men travel writers however with the correspondence to life of Lady Sale, her experiences in prison but her point of view about Afghan women will be mentioned in chapter II where I will be talking about social life of Afghan women.

I will conclude my thesis in Chapter Five with the analysis and summing up the discourse. Despite very little written about Afghan women in these documents by giving the evidence from all these documents along with examples and comparisons the aim of this study is to grant some approach into to the status of Afghan women indoor and outdoor in the nineteenth-century Afghanistan. The evaluation from these documents

give one point of view that women did not have the right to raise her voice and have always been second position in the society where she was supposed to do what the male characters of her family order her. With the analysis of these primary sources my attempt is to give a clear picture of position of Afghan women in 19<sup>th</sup> century Afghanistan with the consideration of all the differences they had according being multi-ethnic.

The next chapter will be an evaluation of social status of Afghan women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan taking all the points into the consideration.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **SOCIAL STATUS OF AFGHAN WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFGHANISTAN**

In this chapter I will explain the core of my thesis which is the Social Status of Afghan women during the Anglo-Afghan wars in the nineteenth century as described solemnly from the perspective of foreign eyes. I will be trying to evaluate the issue using the major documents (accounts by members of British Army authorities) that the research employs.

Afghanistan has been and still is a country where people are distinguished by different ethnic and linguistic groups. The life of the women in Afghanistan varies from each other in every aspect of life such as language, ethnicity, religion, national and tribal clothing, and socio-cultural behaviors. Within these various groups, there are the dominant ethnicities such as Uzbeks (mostly residence of the northern Afghanistan and speak Uzbaki), Tajiks (mostly residence of the central parts, western, northeastern parts of Afghanistan and they speak Dari), Pashtuns (mostly residence of southern Afghanistan and they speak Pashto), Hazarachs (residence of central Afghanistan, and speak a dialect of Persian known as Hazaragi), Turkomans (traditionally a nomadic people in northern Afghanistan and they speak Turkmani), and minor ones such as Nuristanis, Baluchis, Hindus and other minorities. The travel writers wrote about those particular places that they went or were assigned to work. Therefore, their thoughts and

what they saw about Afghan women are different from each other. However, sometimes their thoughts about the same regions also have a huge difference. The research attempts to give a comparative examination of how different women are portrayed in these texts in all parts of the country.

In general most of the times these documents talk about the death and injuries of women and children but among them some also wrote in detail about how women were living and were treated on that period of time including their status inside and outside the home, their education, marriage, their impact in socio economic status of Afghanistan and their clothing. Reading these writings one can see controversial views. For instance, while most of authors regarded Afghan women as a weak layer of the society and mention how the birth of a girl as an unfortunate for some of the tribes specially the nomads, writers such as Alexander Burners picture some of the Afghan women as very strong and influential character over men. I will be evaluating the content of this chapter sequentially taking the class (royal women, ordinary women), ethnicity, region and religion into consideration.

## **2.1. Social Status of Afghan Women in Nineteenth Century**

In Afghanistan the life of women was, and still is inferior to the men. The private and social life of Afghan women as shown in these documents was mostly based on what their men (fathers, husbands, father-in-laws, brothers and even sometime uncles and other male members of the family) wanted, except in some cases when men were under control of women (mostly their mothers) that I will give an example later. Women

were punished and killed even sometimes if they had committed adultery as the men of the family wanted (the clear examples of this can be seen in Marriage section). Male and female roles were strongly differentiated that even these days this applies to most of the regions of the country. In other words the concept created for the women shows that the domestic sphere was the domain of women such as keeping household, taking care of children etc, while the public sphere was for the men. In very rare cases, women of the royal families had an outdoor sphere which I will talk in detail in chapter III when I will be evaluation about notable women in the nineteenth-century Afghanistan. According to some of the accounts even though women's life in all around the world was based on what the male characters of the family wanted, but nineteenth-century Afghanistan was completely a male sphere for women aside from few exceptions.

I will start with the housing style in Afghanistan and then will give clear and detailed example about the social status of women in the country. The houses of Afghans in most parts of the country consists of two parts; an inner and outer part. The inner part is belonged to female members of the family and there the bedrooms are included and no men, except than the men of the family (father, husband, and brother) can enter that part. The outer part is used for the male members and the male guests of the family. Women are not allowed to go to outdoor part of the house.<sup>18</sup>This has been continued from old times and about this issue we can see the examples in account of Elphinstone while he is talking about tribes in Afghanistan. A clear example can be seen while he is describing the Yusufzai tribe.

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<sup>18</sup> They only go there when there is no man and clean and organize the room.

The houses in the Eusofzye country have generally flat, terraced roofs. They consist of two rooms and an open porch. The inner room belongs to the women; the outer one is used for the men to sit in, and for the reception of visitors, but in hot weather the porch is used for these purposes.<sup>19</sup>

Not only in the house but when a ceremony like wedding or other family entertainments took place men and women were attending separately; however, women took part in all ceremonies. Since seeing a female member of the family by other men was a big shame for Afghan men, the women had to close their face from a ‘*Namahram*’.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, there always were exceptions. For instance, during the war periods of time in the nineteenth century, there also were women who took over male duties. Especially when the men were in war, women were supposed to cultivate the lands, do all agricultural stuffs, and take care of home and children. As I mentioned before these texts give very controversial ideas about women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan. For example in contrast to what I said in above paragraph and in accordance to what Elphinstone said Henry Walter Bellow gives a picture of women’s life being ‘guarded religiously in Haram.’<sup>21</sup> In most parts of his writing he shows that the women did not have the right and opportunity to go out which I will give examples concerning their section (according to ethnicity or region). Men were and still are very sensitive about the women in their families and tribes, uses all his power to protect them which were considered good from the prospective of some of these travel writers such as N. Allen

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<sup>19</sup> Mountstuart , Elphinstone. *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India: Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy*. New and Revised ed. 1839. 31

<sup>20</sup> Unmarriageable kin.

<sup>21</sup> H. W, Bellew. *Journal of a Political Mission to Afghanistan, in 1857, under Major (now Colonel) Lumsden; with an Account of the Country and People*. London: Smith, Elder and, 1862. 37.

where in his account he says: “I am satisfied that all means were used for the protection of the women and children...”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the example of this sensitivity can be seen in John Mill Ayde’s account about the southern tribes too where he mentions that at the frontier tribes<sup>23</sup> men were very sensitive about their women, “The hill-men are sensitive in regard to their women,....”<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes this being sensitive about their women created problem for the women because Afghan men, as mentioned in Bellew’s account were jealous to their women and this was the reason behind the seclusion of a women.<sup>25</sup> This is pointed out in Joshua Duke’s account too where he argues that Afghan men were jealous of their women.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned before, Afghanistan is A multi-national country. Every single aspect of the life differs from each other according to the location and nation. Some are very similar though having many miles between each other and some have very different though living in the same region. The behavior of Afghan men toward their women also varied or was the same. Having all these social concerns, inside their family men respected women and women had influence over their husbands and children. For instance the men in Dooranee tribe of Eastern Afghanistan behaved very kindly to their women.<sup>27</sup> While most of the documents gave us the idea that men were ill-treating their

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<sup>22</sup> Isaac Nicholson Allen. *Diary of a March through Sindh and Afghanistan*. London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1843. 318.

<sup>23</sup> In this part by frontier tribes he means of those regions in southern Afghanistan which was in border with India.

<sup>24</sup> John Adye, *Sitana: A Mountain Campaign on the Borders of Afghanistan in 1863*. London: R. Bentley, 1867. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 350.

<sup>26</sup> Joshua, Duke. *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign, 1879 & 1880*. London: W.H. Allen &, 1883. 199.

<sup>27</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*. 123.

women reading the account of Arthur Connolly surprisingly has witnessed this opposing perspective of a foreign writer about the behavior of Afghan men toward their women.

Neither would I have it inferred from the anecdote that the Affghauns ill-treat their women; on the contrary, they are both proud and fond of them. Those who dwell in the country have such confidence in their women, that if they absent themselves from their homes, they leave their wives in charge of their establishments; and a married woman may without a shadow of scandal entertain a traveler who happens to arrive at her husband's tent during his absence for by these, as by most other nomade people a stranger would be thought to slight the inmates of a tent which he passed to take rest in another.<sup>28</sup>

He thinks that Afghan women are the most satisfied women in the world from their man of life. This idea is of course very odd. Not all but even half of them don't say such things about the behavior of men toward women. In contrast, Burnes after his travel to Afghanistan and visiting many tribes argues that the Afghan women in general had the least influence over men.<sup>29</sup> In another example, if one is reading Elphinstone's account can see that when he is explaining the Waziry tribe of the southern Afghanistan he admires that Afghan men never molest a woman and if they see a woman is wounded vice versa they care a lot about them.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand there has been slight information has been given about the behavior of British soldiers toward Afghan women too but not enough to understand much. I will be focusing to this matter taking Rollo Gillespie Burslem's account *A Peep into Turkistan* as an example since he is the only one giving evidence about this subject. In his account he talks about women who came to British soldiers seeking for the help to

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<sup>28</sup> Connolly, *Journey to the North of India*, . 120.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: Being a Personal Narrative of a Journey to and Residence in That City, in the Years 1836, 7, and 8 ; with Numerous Illustrations*. Philadelphia: Carey And Hart, 1843. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 80.

rescue the sized members of their families. The example he gives is peculiarly describing Hazarachs. In many places of his book he explains about this as he states:

Before we reached Uart a poor woman of the Huzareh tribe (the most persecuted and enslaved throughout these regions) came and complained to us that her child had been seized by a band of plunderers, as she supposed, to be sold into slavery. Sturt immediately despatched a couple of the guard to recover her child if possible, and the poor woman went off with the two soldiers in the full confidence that her escort would be successful ..... The mother's hopes were realized, and in the course of the day the child was recovered ....<sup>31</sup>

In other part of his writing he talks about a girl who came to seek for help to British Army in order not to be sold as slave. She was from Bamyān a Hazara Province, the army took her to the Kabul but they did leave her there and later Rollo say I heard that she has been killed<sup>32</sup>. By explaining this Rollo wants to show that they helped Afghan women in some circumstances.

In few cases which will be discussed in chapter III of this thesis we can see that only the women from the royal families or specific tribes had more influence than a man in the area but is of course a very rare case.

## **2.2 Marital Status, Blood Price and Honor Killing of Afghan Women in the nineteenth-century Afghanistan**

To enlarge the social assets of a family, marriage was an important element (which still it is in most of the regions). It has been considered as an obligation and for Afghans, and marriage was/is a lifetime commitment for them. They applied the Islamic

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<sup>31</sup> Rollo Gillespie Burslem. *A Peep into Toorkisthān*. London: P. Richardson, 1846. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Burslem. *A Peep into Toorkisthān*, 28.

rules and regulations if they wanted to marry.<sup>33</sup> Even today it is the same for Afghans if they are to marry. Though divorce was very rare and stigmatized for a woman, but was an easy thing for a man. Simply meaning the women could not ask for divorce, for it was a big '*nang*' (slur) to both of the families.

The age of marriage varied from region to region. In some regions the age of marriage was when a girl got to the stage of puberty despite the fact that the age of the man did not matter. Very young girls were married to old men and those who already had one or two or even three other wives. In the eastern parts of the country the usual age of marriage was twenty for boy and fifteen for a girl but in case they were rich and could pay the price of a marriage, age of marriage was for men fifteen or sixteen and for the girl twelve. If the man could not afford a marriage economically the age of marriage was forty for men and twenty five for women.<sup>34</sup> Though under age marriages were common between all tribes but the brightest examples of that could be seen in nomadic tribes. For instance the marriage age for the Dooranee tribe of Eastern Afghanistan was eighteen to twenty for boys and fourteen to sixteen for girls according to Elphinstone. In contrast with that in some of other region the age of the marriage was late. As an example of that we can refer to Elphinstone's account while he is talking about Eastern Tribe of Sheeranunees (possibly Sherkhani). According to him this tribe married late. While in most areas of the country father of the daughter takes money as '*toyana*' in this tribe when a girl marries, in this tribe the father gives a dowry.<sup>35</sup> That is the reason to

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<sup>33</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Countries Adjacent to India on the North-west including Sindh, Afghanistan, Beloochistan, the Punjab and the Neighbouring States : Compiled by the Authority of the Hon. Court of Directors of the East-India Company and Chiefly from Docum*, London: W.H. Allen, 1844. 39.

<sup>35</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul...*, 238.



take time for a girl's marriage. Most of the marriages had happened between the kinship. Mostly this was confined to keep the land and other belongings of a tribe among itself.

Furthermore, these documents show that women of the Turkoman tribes similar to other tribes married in young ages. Even though there is no specific chapter about this matter in these historical sources but there is some small examples still can be found in them while the travel writers talk about the marriage of men. Yate Charles in his travel to Afghanistan have witnessed this costume about Turkoman tribe while he is talking with an old man where he proudly is telling him that he had his third marriage with a teenage girl.<sup>36</sup>

Inter-marriages happened between the same ethnic groups and they did not prefer to give their daughter to men of other group apart from some exceptions.<sup>37</sup> Afghan girls did not have the right to choose their husbands. The father or the head of the family would choose the guy for the girl who wants to marry. As the women were always under the control of the men, the male characters of the family could take any decision about the marriage of a female character in the family. However in some areas of the country, there has been the custom of *Namzadi*<sup>38</sup>. This let the girl and the boy to meet in presence of the girl's mother which Arthur Connolly thinks was similar Scottish trysting<sup>39</sup>. According to John Miller Adye it's not considered to be good for the society as he says: "but their customs in regard to marriage and betrothal are very prejudicial to social advancement."<sup>40</sup> Sometimes, the fear of women's being captive by an enemy,

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<sup>36</sup> Yate, Charles Edward. *Northern Afghanistan: Or, Letters from the Afghan Boundary Commission*. Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1888. 122.

<sup>37</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 27-60.

<sup>38</sup> The period of the time while a boy and a girl stayed engaged.

<sup>39</sup> Connolly, *Journal of Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 130.

<sup>40</sup> Adye . *Sitana: A Mountain Campaign* ,5.

marrying someone in higher position than them made most of the men of the Royal authorities nervous and they made the females of their family to marry unexpectedly and unwontedly. For instance Amir Dost Mohammad Khan, the Amir of Kabul, did do something like this to his sister-in-law which is mentioned in account of Alexander Burnes.

Dost Mahomed, after he had allied himself to the family of Shah Zada Ablas, was afraid lest his wife's sister should marry any of his nobles, and determined that the lady should be united to a holy man: he accordingly sent for the Syud to his haram, whither he had already summoned the Cazee, and without previously informing either party, forthwith proceeded to join them in holy wedlock....<sup>41</sup>

Between the nomadic Pashtun tribes if a women's husband dies the brother of the husband was incumbent to marry the widow.<sup>42</sup> Once the women was married, she did not have the right to complain about the man she married and did not have the right to choose any other man and get divorced. An Afghan woman in case she preferred someone else to her husband or committed infidelity would were punished harshly or would were killed.<sup>43</sup> Gray gives an example of this in his account from the sayings of an Afghan to him: "People of my race," he continued, "calmly, do differently. When a woman prefers another to her husband-they kill her."<sup>44</sup>

However, the couple who were accused of Adultery, both was assigned to immediate death but the men had power and money and used it to rescue themselves more often and the punishment has been given only to women.<sup>45</sup> In rare cases there was

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<sup>41</sup> Burnes, *Cabool*, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Connolly, *Journal of Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 27.

<sup>43</sup> John Alfred, Gray, *At the Court of Amîr: A Narrative*. London: Richard Bentley, 1895. 271.

<sup>44</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 271.

<sup>45</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 350.

the punishment of shaving the head of a women, blacken her face and make her set face back on a donkey and given a tour to the city to punish her. This punishment was not only applied for women but for men too if they are guilty of something such as robbery, in some regions. H. W. Bellew in his account gives an obvious example of this event. He witnessed punishment of Adultery when he was in western province of Heart.<sup>46</sup> The case is as I mentioned before is the case of punishment by shaving head:

On the 11th instant the city witnessed the punishment of a woman for infidelity towards her husband, by whom she was accused of having carried on an intrigue with one of the heir-apparent's sipahis. The case was tried by the chief Kazi, who, being satisfied of the woman's guilt by the circumstances adduced in evidence, pronounced her worthy of death; but, as there were no eyewitnesses to the alleged crime, the law provided another punishment for such cases, which the Kazi ordered to be carried out at once. The woman's veil was accordingly torn from her face, and her head was then shaved. Her face was next blackened with a mixture of soot and oil, and she was then made to ride astride on a donkey, with her face to the animal's tail. In this manner she was led through the bazars and principal streets of the city, amidst the jeers of the populace, who, as the procession passed along, heaped on her the most abominably foul abuse, such as could only proceed from the mouth of an Oriental.<sup>47</sup>

Quite the opposite of this, Elphinstone's account gives the example of a tribe where the females were lucky to have the choice to choose their husbands:

A most Extra ordinary custom is said to prevail among them, which gives the women the choice of their husbands. If a woman is pleased with a man, she sends the drummer of the camp to pin a handkerchief on his cap with a pin which she has used to fasten her hair. The drummer watches his opportunity, and does this in public, naming the women, and the man is immediately obliged to marry her, if he can pay her price to her father.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 350.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 350.

<sup>48</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 81.

Religion had its most important impact in the case of marriage in an Afghan women's marriage. An Afghan woman was not (and still is not allowed mostly) to marry a non-Muslim boy, conversely Afghan boy are allowed to marry non-Muslim girls.

Among most of the tribes of Afghans polygamy was and is allowed if the man could treat all of his wives the same. Most of the times, polygamy applied to Afghan rulers. Since they had both the money and power, they thought they will be able to maintain many wives and they were not punished or got any reaction since they said they are applying Islamic rules and it is allowed in Islam. "As was Islamic custom, Afghan rulers often took more than one wife."<sup>49</sup> The account of E. Thornton also gives information about this matter when he writes, "According to the well-known tenet of Mahomedan law, those who can afford it espouse four wives, adding to the number several other females, whose claim to the title is not recognized by either legal or social authority."<sup>50</sup>

The other example of this could be seen in Lady Sale's account while she explains about an Afghan Jan Fishan khan and that she has been to Mahommad Shah khan's house on her anniversary and visited his four wives<sup>51</sup>.

If we look at the writers' point of view, they have different ideas. These thoughts are different from region to region. Considering the documents by regions one can see that the women in northern Afghanistan (mostly Uzbek and Turkoma women) were in better condition than the other parts of the country. In regard to marriage if you look at

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<sup>49</sup> R.B, Holme. *Pathan women*, From Kabul to Kandahar 1833-1933 (Part One), Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). (2006), 3. Retrieved from: <http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/E282F655-A241-4D7C-A5A8-19B5E089C580/0/FromKabultoKandaharPartOnefinal.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*, 39.

<sup>51</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 96 & 220.

these documents they have very different things said. For example John Miller Adye, says that at the frontier tribes<sup>52</sup> (southern parts of the county) men were very sensitive about their women.

One another issue about the marriage of a girl in nineteenth-century Afghanistan was that the male members of the family, without concerning the happiness of women give them to marry for the sake of peace or getting power. This happened mostly among the rulers to make a peace or to get more authority.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, to this, if a man wanted a girl and had the power and money, even though the girl did not want him, used his power and married her.<sup>54</sup>

Among the very serious and big social concerns Afghan women had in the nineteenth century, one was being used as price of blood for the crimes of male members of their family, called blood feud ('*bad*' in Dari language). Yet, this custom is still applied in some far districts of Afghanistan. When a male member of the family was in debt to someone or had committed a murder, as the payment of debt they gave the girl to the person they were indebted or if a male member of the family murdered someone as a price of that blood a girl from the family of murderer has been given to the family of murdered. The purpose of this is to deliberately hurt the woman given as bride to the family of slain to be tortured until she is alive. This happened by the way the husband's family receives the pleasure of torturing the bride's family because this woman is the living example of their loved one being killed by someone. Among the travel writers of that time, the account of M. Elphinston gives a clear picture of this

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<sup>52</sup> In this part by frontier tribes he means of those regions in southern Afghanistan which was in border with India.

<sup>53</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 300 & 342.

<sup>54</sup> Burnes. *Cabool*., 67.

issue. While explaining about the Yusufzai tribe<sup>55</sup> in his account he gives example of this matter clearly.

A son of Siruudauz, and another of his partisans, were killed. As Anwur Khaun had killed the first man, he was considered to be in the wrong, and was obliged to fly with all his family. At last he was wearied with his exile and submitted to Sirndauz, giving him his sister and his niece (a sister of Mozirrib's) . Sirundauz behaved with courtesy; he said he considered Anwur's sister as his own, and restored her to her relations ; but kept the other without marrying her (for the Nailipeeklail never marry a woman given in price blood), and from that day Mozirrib saw his sister no more., The pursuit of blood had indeed been put an end to, but no intercourse took place among the families.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, Edward Thornton described the exceeding number of the women paid as the price of blood for the crime of a male member of the family.

In some cases of delinquency, the penalty is paid in a certain number of young women. Thus, for murder, twelve young women are paid; for cutting off a hand, knocking out a tooth, or destroying an eye. Six are paid; for breaking a tooth, the fine is three girls.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, according to Elphinstone women were one of the general causes of the bloody wars between the tribes. Being in relation with the women of another Ooloos<sup>58</sup> or running away with a girl from his own tribe and going to another tribe was among these causes. For the reason that the other tribes they went to ask for protection agreed to shelter them and it started the bloody conflicts between the Ooloos.<sup>59</sup> The example can be seen in his account:

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<sup>55</sup> "Eusofayes; Called Yusufzai today is a very different tribe from all Afghans are a brunch of Berdooraunes tribe ( the name was first given by Afghan king Ahmad Shah) who inhabit the north-eastern part of the Afghan country, the Indus, the salt Range, and the Range of Solimaun." (Elphinstone, Mountstuart, and Olaf Caroe. *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul.* )

<sup>56</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Tribe in Pashto Language.

<sup>59</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 2.

The wife of a Fakeer<sup>60</sup> of Naikpeekhail eloped into the land of Bauboozyes. The Fakeer followed with some of his relations to kill his wife; and as he was lurking about for this purpose in the night, he was set upon and killed, with one of his relations, by the person who had carried off the girl, and some of his new protectors. When the news reached the Naikpeekhail, their khan sent a drummer to summon the Mulliks of the six clans, and consulted with them on the propriety of war.<sup>61</sup>

Looking back to all these descriptions and illustrations we can realize that women were not important from the perspective of these foreign travel writers but we can also see that they are being somehow using an Occidental view toward Orientals. Because the idea of one, proves others wrong. Or in simple words, while one is for instance talking about northern women being nicely treated the other gives an opposing idea. Over all conclusion from what they say about the marital status of women is that in the nineteenth century is that, marriage of a women was depended to what the male members of the family wanted rather than her own wish and choice.

### **2.3 Educational Status of Women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan**

In most of the areas of the country no attention was paid to the education of the girls, except for some rare cases where some open minded families made the education of girls possible: “with few exceptions, they are illiterate.”<sup>62</sup>

Even in some regions was counted as bad thing if a family educated her daughter. The father spent as much as money needed for the education of his son but

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<sup>60</sup> This phrase is used among the Uzbeks for the peasantry. It is used here for the subjects of the tribe, who, in other parts of the Afghaun country, are called Ryots. In Persian they are termed Eel Ryots. (Elphinston, p.2). Example: Afghans who come from distant tribes, and whose connections are not known among the Eusofzyes, are obliged to settle as Fakeers. ( Elphinston, .29)

<sup>61</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 36.

this did not apply for the daughters in most of the regions. Not education but learning household works were counted them most important thing for a girl. Other than that silence and obedience toward their family especially male members were the best valued characteristics for them. Typically they were raised up to be a good mother, and a very good and obedient house wife. Joshua Duke also points out that even the women from the high classes of the society did not have education except than the ability to read the Quran.<sup>63</sup> There were nothing much said about the education of women in these travel writings.

In the nineteenth century not only in Afghanistan but all around the world, even in Britain, the education of girl was not concerned to be very important. The British men did not see it as necessary to educate their women,<sup>64</sup> and this may be the reason behind the lack of interest to write about women's education in Afghanistan by the British travel writers.

## **2.4 Appearance and Clothing of Afghan Women in the nineteenth century**

Similar to all other matters related to women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan, their appearance had also differences considering region and ethnicity. This difference can be seen through the eyes of strangers better than the people inside the country. The documents used for this research gives a lot of information about the outfit and

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<sup>63</sup> Duke, *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*, 199.

<sup>64</sup> Klein, Viola. *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians; an Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age*. London: Sylvan Press, 1949. 264.



appearance of women and one or two sources shows resemble of Afghans to that of Jewish people, both men and women. Example of this can be seen in Rev. J. Galson Gregson's account, where he argues that the appearance of women in Afghanistan was marked with Jewish features.<sup>65</sup> Later on doing my research on the all those 70 primary documents I have chosen, they never mention something about this matter.

Talking about the appearance of Afghan women we see many varied ideas and explanations and sometimes similar to each other. While some of these writers picture Afghan women as being beautiful creatures others talk the opposite. Taking ethnicity and region in to the concern my attempt is to give the picture of Afghan women's appearance through the foreign eyes. We can see the examples in Bellew's account that pictures Afghan women's appearance being very much of "self embellishment".<sup>66</sup> Vincent Eyre in his account talks about the beauty of the Afghan women and argues that she was one of the beautiful creatures while he says, "She was a beautiful creature, with fair complexion and large dark eyes, and, as she stood there with her garments swathed around her, leaving her limbs free, she was a picture full of life, spirit, and energy."<sup>67</sup> Charles Yate traveling to north of Afghanistan says that the men and women in some parts of these areas are handsome and ugly in other.<sup>68</sup>

Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan and the women there of course are more different than other parts of Afghanistan. Alaxender Burnes in his account talking about the Kabul Women says that "Their ghost-like figures when they walk abroad make one

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<sup>65</sup> Rev. J. Gelson Gregson, *Through the Khyber Pass to sherpore camp, Cabul. An account of Temperance work among our soldiers in the Cabul Field Froce*, (1883). 44.

<sup>66</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Missions in Afghanistan*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> Vincent, Eyre and G. B. Malleeson. *The Kabul Insurrection of 1841-42*. London: Wm. H. Allen, 1879. 325.

<sup>68</sup> Yate, *Northern Afghanistan*., 87.

melancholy; but if all be true of them that are reported, they make ample amends when within doors for all such somber exhibitions in public.”<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, E. Thornton in his book also stated about the women of Kabul having elegant body and attractive face.<sup>70</sup> These two different account with the same explanations gives the readers the idea of Kabul women being gorgeous than other parts. Later on we can see that other writers explain women of other parts more beautiful though. Appraising this issue according to the sources one can see that the appearance of married and unmarried women in Kabul were also different from each other. There are examples that the hair styles and the facial appearances of unmarried women in Kabul were much more different from those of a married woman. To prove this we can refer to work of Lady Sale which is an account of rich information about women in Afghanistan. She clearly mentions the difference in his daily writing that:

The unmarried women bend their hair in a flat braid across the forehead touching the eyebrows; which gives them a very heavy look. These said eyebrows, whilst they are maidens, remain as nature formed them: but when they marry, the hair of the centre is carefully picked out; and the arch, thus most unnaturally raised, is painted.<sup>71</sup>

Additionally we can see that the appearance of single and married and unmarried women, according to Edward Thornton were different too but he gives general information and doesn't give the name of Kabul specifically and mentions that “Unmarried women are distinguished from those married by wearing their hair loose, and by their trowsers being white”.<sup>72</sup> Another tribe who is mostly residents of the central Afghanistan is Hazara Tribe. As mentioned in these documents Hazara women were

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<sup>69</sup> Burnes, *Cabool*., 86.

<sup>70</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*, 313.

<sup>71</sup> Sale. *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 346.

<sup>72</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the* ,38.

being described being savage but handsome.<sup>73</sup> Rollo Gillespie in his account explaining a sized Hazarah woman gives details of being her very beautiful picturing her as “A maid with a face like the moon, scented like musk, a ravisher of hearts, delighting the soul, seducing the senses, and beautiful as the full moon”.<sup>74</sup> Withal Women in southern Afghanistan are being described as being tall and masculine in one of the accounts where it states “Afghan women are large, fair and handsome...”<sup>75</sup>

Elphinstone mentions that the women in Southern parts used to have indigo tattoos. “A few dots are usually punctured into the skin at the hollow on the chin, and on the forehead at the root of the nose. Frequently a few are marked on the skin between the breasts, and in the same manner rings are marked on the fingers, wrists, and arms”.<sup>76</sup>

Looking back to northern parts of Afghanistan, Charles Edward Yate, in his account gives description of Turkmen women as that they had flat faces and small eyes.<sup>77</sup>As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, there were writers such as Vincent who argued Afghan women as beautiful to the writers such as Yate who tell the opposite.

As in all societies, dress was an important element of Afghan society and Afghan women were much more restricted to their culture regarding this issue. Afghan nation were very different in clothing than the countries around them which of course applied to women too.<sup>78</sup> Among the major documents I have chosen for this thesis most of them talks about dressing but we can see clear portrayal and examples about dressing in the

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<sup>73</sup> Elphinstone *Cabool*.,209.

<sup>74</sup> Burslem. *A Peep into Toorkisthān*,165.

<sup>75</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> Bellew, *Journal of A Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Yate. *Northern Afghanistan*.,169.

<sup>78</sup> Bellew, *Journal of A Political Mission in Afghanistan*, 31.

accounts of Elphinstone, Gray, Allen, John Miller Ayde, Lady Sale, Gelson Gregson, and Edward Thornton.

If we look at the clothing of Afghan women in these writings by region and ethnicity we can distinguish that there were differences and similarities in dressing in different regions. Afghan women in the nineteenth century in most of the regions of the country they were encouraged to wear modest, long and loose cloths covering their heads by a scarf, even in the capital Kabul. I will be evaluating all in detail taking the elements such as society and states into the consideration. In addition the village women were dressed more colorful. This still is the same today in Afghanistan.

Although according to some photo galleries the women of the cities has been shown freer to wear modern cloths but according to account of Lady Sale even the idea of freedom in clothing for cities women is gone. For the reason that she mentions the women in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan were wearing Burka as well as she writes,

“The Cabul women are much addicted to the use of both white and red paint ; and they colour not only the nails, as in Hindostan, but the whole hand up to the wrist, which looks as though it had been plunged in blood, and to our ideas is very disgusting. A particular plant is often used for this purpose. The upper part of the leaf sparkles, and resembles the ice-plant; but the lower side is red, and, on being pressed, gives a fine dye. A chuddah is thrown over the head and shoulders in the house, as in Hindostan; and when they go out they wear the bourka, ru-i-bund, and legwraps: high-heeled iron-shod slippers complete the costume.”<sup>79</sup>

This idea is not got just from Lady Sale’s account but Vincent Eyre in his account addresses this too and states it being very strange as he says:

One of the strangest sights in Kabul is that of the ladies gliding about the crowded Streets enveloped from head to feet in white sheets, having a

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<sup>79</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale’s Afghanistan*, 346.

very small network in front of the eyes to peep through. This ghostly costume affords the most perfect concealment to both face and figure, and has a tendency to excite a feeling of curiosity in all foreign beholders. That is, under the circumstances, very excusable, their reputation for beauty being amply sustained by the handsome features and rosy complexions of their offspring. So impenetrable is the disguises of this out-door dress, the fashion of which is never varied, that it is impossible for a man to distinguish his own wife when he meets her abroad.<sup>80</sup>

Not only Lady Sale and Eyre but Gelson Gregson also gives an example of women being covered in Kabul while he talks about a group of women he saw were going to Peshawer from Kabul and they were fully veiled with the special cloths were made for them.<sup>81</sup> Although he does not give a clear description of the dresses that how they would look like. This can be an Occidental view, because from the photo documentary one can see that the women in the capital were wearing modern dresses and were not supposed to wear the Burka.

In this section I will be considering Elphinstone's work first, because he gives his evaluations about Afghan women in organized method and dividing them by ethnicity, region and class. Coming to the clothing in his book, he starts with the tribe of the Yusufzais where he explains how the women and men of the tribe were dressing. According to his work the women of this tribe was not allowed to go out unless being fully covered, "The women wear a gown close cover the breast, and very wide below."<sup>82</sup>

Whereas when he talks about another tribe from the same region of East mentions that the women in Waziry (Vizeerees) tribe 'wear long tick shift cotton, with

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<sup>80</sup> Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection*, 29.

<sup>81</sup> Rev, *Through the Khayber pass to Sherpore cam*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 31.

sandals like the men and have money gold and silver.’<sup>83</sup> These tribes were of the Pashtun ethnicity. Comparing with his explanations talking about the dressing of the eastern women in Afghanistan Edward Thornton says that:

In the eastern part of the country, the dress bears considerable resemblance to that of Hindostan. Afghan women are large, fair, and handsome ; they wear loose camisses like those of the men, but longer, and made of fine and highly- ornamented stuffs, when they can afford it, and a small hood of bright-coloured silk A large, long outer dress, in the form of a fine sheet.(it might be perhaps be called shroud.<sup>84</sup>

However, talking about Uzbek women’s clothing who were mostly residents of northern Afghanistan Elphinstone points that although their outfit was different but wearing silk and gold and silver is similar to other tribes in Afghanistan. Clear picture can be seen in the text that argues:

“Even the women wear boots. the rest of their dress is something like that of the men, but longer: they tie a silk handkerchief round their heads, throw a sheet of silk or cotton over all; wear golden and silver ornaments, and plait their hair into a long queue, which hangs down from the middle of the head like those of the Chinese.”<sup>85</sup>

Before going to more details about clothing of Afghan women in the nineteenth century, I would like to clear up the matter of being veiled and unveiled a bit. Throughout the primary and secondary sources written about dressing of Afghan women in the nineteenth century, being veiled/unveiled was one of the fundamental issues. In view of the fact that most of these documents argue that the women were supposed to cover themselves while going out some writers give descriptions of women not being covered. The examples of this can be seen in writings of Elphinstone, Gray, Alexander Burners, Lady Sale, Rev. J. Gelson Gregons and many more. other sources give

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>84</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*,38.

<sup>85</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 191.

information about this issue too but these are the ones that describe women's dress in very detail.

While most of these documents including N. Allen, John Miller Ayde and Gelsn's writings mention about women being fully covered, and gave us a picture of Afghan women veiled all over, J.A. Gray on his writings states that the women in the southern parts of Afghanistan where he traveled, neighboring with India (today's Pakistan) were not much covered. Though still they were covering their head by blue or white cotton scarf.<sup>86</sup>

The women, unlike the Mahomedan townswomen, are not closely veiled; the head is covered by a blue or white cotton shawl, which, when a stranger approaches, is drawn across the lower part of the face. They wear a long dark-blue robe reaching midway between knee and ankle, decorated on the breast and at the hem with designs in red. The feet are generally bare, and the loose trousers are drawn tight at the ankle. Their black hair hangs in two long plaits, the points being fastened with a knot of many-coloured silks.<sup>87</sup>

The reason why I concentrate of Gray's work much more than others is that he gives very clear picture of how women look like since he had travelled almost all the country. On the other hand he was much more in contact with the women than any other travel writers because he was a doctor and met women from different classes of the society. His description of women changes according region and ethnicity. For instance, when he traveled to northern Afghanistan he explains that the Turkmen women were also unveiled and had better life.<sup>88</sup> in accordance to Gray the description of clothing of Turkmen women in Charles Yate, account shows that like women in all other parts of

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<sup>86</sup> Gray, *At the Court of Amir*, 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

the country these women were also interested to wear silk as he point out that they wearing green silk mantles.”<sup>89</sup>

When he continued his travel he also faced other women in other parts of the country which he explains were unveiled, like he mentions about the women as nurses. One thing which is always mentioned is that they always had a shawl (head scarf) covering their head but when a man was supposed to enter she would down the shawl to her face. This was the most shown appearance of a woman in Gray’s writing. In a place he mentions of a nurse who wanted to unfasten the baby prince and he sees her shawl coming down and explains the women’s outfit as below:

She was really a very pretty girl. She had a little crimson jacket, a long white camise reaching to the knee, loose oriental trousers, and a little gold-embroidered cap, like a polo cap, put coquet tishly on one side: the embroidered cashmere shawl draped from the head over the shoulders.<sup>90</sup>

On the other part of his writing he gives an example of woman who came to him as a patient and he says she was completely unveiled.<sup>91</sup>

Besides mentioning about Afghan women clothing, Gray mentions about their jewelry and shoes too. According to this document women’s shoes were generally green colored high heeled slippers of sandals with only an upper.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand regarding Afghan women’s outfit, he mentions in his book that men were designing women’s cloths. Except than Gray N. Allen in his writings mostly talks about women being fully covered or veiled and states that “Here and there might be seen a woman, but

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<sup>89</sup> Yate, *Northern Afghanistan*., 169.

<sup>90</sup> Gray, *At the Court of Amir*, 266.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.



very closely veiled ; their dress is a long garment of white, ....”<sup>93</sup> (This description he gives is about women in southern province of Kandahar). In compliance to this When Gray was in central Afghanistan he was witness of Hazara women being unveiled and explains them as: “a gang of Hazara women, with their unveiled faces their dingy blue dresses.”<sup>94</sup>

Not only Gray and Allen but General Elphinstion’s account is also giving details about Hazara women and make a clarification that “The women wear long frocks of woollen stuff, and boots of soft deer-skin, which reach to their knees. Their cap sides close to their head, and a slip of cloth hangs down from it behind as far as their middle.”<sup>95</sup>

Opposite to what he said about Hazarah women, he gives quite a contradictory description about women in Kandahar says: “...and veiled women having gone to view the show;...”<sup>96</sup>

Clothing of the women has also been different considering their class in society as well. About the dress of Afghan women according to their class in society we can see clear and evaluated example in H. W. Bellew’s account as he mentions:

“The dress of the poorer class of women much resembles that of the men, and consists of a loose-fitting shirt of cotton cloth, usually dyed blue, and trousers of the same material and colour, which are gathered into folds and fit close at the ankle. Besides these they wear a sheet, termed " chadar," which is either dyed blue or stamped with some particoloured pattern, or is white. This is thrown loosely over the head, and hangs down the back, or on one side, and serves as a covering with which to veil the face on the approach or in the presence of strangers of the opposite sex.

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<sup>93</sup> Allen, *Dairy of a March*, 187.

<sup>94</sup> Gray, *At the Court of Amir*, 213.

<sup>95</sup> Elphinstione, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 208.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*,364.

As a rule, however, and more especially among the peasantry, the women of this class seldom veil themselves from their own countrymen; nor are they shut up and secluded, like the women of the higher classes, unless they be very young, or newly married.”<sup>97</sup>

(I will be talking about the dressing of higher class family on other chapter while I will be evaluating the life of Notable women in Afghanistan in nineteenth century.)

Evaluating the clothing of Afghan women in the nineteenth century regarding nationality, in common the point of view we get about this issue is that; Uzbek women who mostly lived in northern Afghanistan wore very different than Pashtun women who lived in southern part of the country. Rollo Gillespie writing about northern Afghanistan evaluates dress of Women as: “On the head of the Affghan female is worn a small skull cap, keeping in place the hair in front which is parted, laid flat, and sniffled with gum, while the rest hangs in long plaits down the back”.<sup>98</sup>

As well as clothing, Afghan women had a big wish to wear golden and silver jewelry, which is the case even today. The examples of this interest of Afghan women can be seen in the writings of the British soldiers who visited Afghanistan. When earlier I gave examples of clothing of tribes in Elphinstone’s work this interest to gold and silver can be seen obvious. As he mentions this matter about the Eusofzye tribe where he pictures their women as, “They wear many gold and silver ornaments.”<sup>99</sup>

This interest to gold and silver of Afghan women has been compared to Indian women in the primary documents this thesis uses. For example the women’s ‘Pathan women’ dressing and jewelry in southern parts according to photo documentary of some to soldiers of British army who traveled to Afghanistan from 1830’s onward, was much

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<sup>97</sup> Bellew, *Journal of A Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 32.

<sup>98</sup> Burslem, *A Peep to Turkistan*, 66.

<sup>99</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 31.

more similar to Indians.<sup>100</sup> This Indian look like jewelry is mentioned the same case in Elphinston's account about the Eastern tribes too when he describes "They wear many gold and silver ornaments, like those in India"<sup>101</sup> In conformity to them Regarding the jewelry issue J. A. Gray also mentions the same prospective in his book that the Gold and silver jewelry of Afghans was made the same as of Indians.<sup>102</sup> Beside all these Edward Thornton also talks about the jewelry of the women in the eastern part of Afghanistan as ,”Their ornaments are in general cumbrous and inelegant chains of gold and of silver, or strings of coins of either of these metals ; rings for the fingers and thumbs, bracelets, earrings, and pendants for the nose”.<sup>103</sup>

To sum up we can say that every region and every ethnicity had its own style of different clothing. I do not think, (except than the case of Kabul women in dressing) the writers of these accounts behaved with the Occident view toward the Orient. Similar of what they said can be seen in Afghan accounts as well.

## **2.5 Outdoor Status of Afghan Women in the nineteenth century**

From the centuries, Afghan women have always been quintessential victims of war, society, illogical honor matters made by men and much other stuff. They were oppressed for ages and did not have rights of virtual freedom. This was again the case in the nineteenth century. From one side there was a big war going on between the

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<sup>100</sup> R.B, Holme, *From Kabul to Kandahar 1833-1933 (Part One)*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 31.

<sup>102</sup> Gray, *At the Court of Amir*, 82.

<sup>103</sup> Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the*, 39.

Afghans and British Empire, that already caused a huge problem for both genders but on the other hand they were betrayed by the society and society's men too. Apart from some exceptions Afghan women were not allowed to work outdoors<sup>104</sup> until they are not very poor and helpless. Working was something very difficult but they do not had the even the right to go out and be viewed in public. Looking back to the documents of nineteenth century one can get a very confusing idea about Afghan women if he/she is not careful enough to take all the matter such as ethnicity, tribes, classes, regions and languages in to the concern. As I said before women were not allowed in Eastern part of Afghanistan to work and go outdoor much but this was not the case about all the tribes. For instance, Elphinstone while talking about the eastern Afghan tribes gives very different example of each tribe. At the same time while he argues about eastern Afghanistan and that of the Yusufzai tribe's women did not have the right to go out, he is giving opposite idea of that about another eastern tribe called Damaun he says: "...and allowing their women to appear in public without the least restraint."<sup>105</sup> in addition about the Dooranees he gives explanation that the women were allowed to work<sup>106</sup> and again talking about the same region (East Afghanistan) but another tribe he says that the women of Waziry (Vizeerees) do not work outside. These examples are a clear description that the matter of going out and having an outdoor life also as all other matters varies according to ethnicity, region and class.

Another possibility for women to go out was to search for ways to rescue the male members of her family if they are in a problem or imprisoned and mostly were betrayed even by governmental authorities when the poor ladies went to them to ask for

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<sup>104</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 39.

<sup>105</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 73.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*,122.

help. This was also explained on the part of the writings which I am doing my research on them. Since it was the period of time that wars happened, many of the Afghan men were imprisoned. Trying to rescue the men of their families Afghan women used to come to governmental authorities by the all money they have earned and giving it in return of their husbands freedom from the jail. The authorities took their money telling them they will do their best to take their husbands out of the prison. However, they would not do anything to help these poor women but instead used to lie to them that their husbands, sons or any other male relatives that the women have appealed for their freedom have died from a sickness of natural plague.<sup>107</sup> Let me be clearer pointing out an example from Alfred Gray's book where he explains about the governor and police chief of Kabul at that period of time who was one of the persons who did betray women telling her he will rescue her husband, taking all her money and doing nothing. Gray states that:

An anxious woman would come to him with perhaps a thousand rupees, and implore his intercession on behalf of her husband who was in jail. The Naib who say, "Yes, he would do what he could , he knew the case was coming on directly, but it was an expensive business; if she could bring another thousand perhaps the thing could be done." And he would keep her dangling on some time, squeezing out of her all the money he could get, and then she would be informed officially that her husband had died in jail of an illness!<sup>108</sup>

This was not only the case, but also Afghan women were the constituted the ultimate victims of the Amir for killing their husbands too. How it happened is cleared in Gray's account where he witnessed that some of the prisoners were taken away from

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<sup>107</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 100.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

the prison and were beheaded and left out so that when the families of those victims find them and come to Amir, the Amir used to say that he don't know anything and her husband were killed by his enemies maybe.<sup>109</sup>

Taking these examples into the consideration we can see that life of Afghan women in the nineteenth century was full of difficulties from every side. In a country if someone is the victim of some bad incidents they apply for their authorities but here in Afghanistan women were even victimized by the administrative system itself.

## **2.6 Socio- Economical Activities of Afghan Women in the nineteenth century**

In nineteenth-century Afghanistan most of the women had total dependence to their men (fathers, brothers, husbands), and did not owe as much as the men. However there were women who had a huge impact on socio- economic of their country. Among them the Uzbek and Turkmen women of northern Afghanistan have always played an important role in socio-economy of the country. Afghan rugs and carpets which takes a very high position in the world's market was woven and still is being woven by the Uzbek and Turkmen women in Afghanistan especially in northern parts. While having a female baby was counted as an unfortunate for the other tribes it was something to be very happy for the Uzbeks and especially for Turkmens. We can see the clear example of this in the account of British writers who visited Afghanistan in the nineteenth century too. As I mentioned many times Gray's account is a very rich source to talk

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<sup>109</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 101.

about women in Afghanistan in the nineteenth century. Gray in his account gives example of Turkoman women being part of socio-economy of the country and state that “The Turkoman women are unveiled, and work in camp and field, and weave the beautiful rugs that are so much in demand in Afghanistan and India”.<sup>110</sup>

Not only him but other writers also wrote about the women of northern Afghanistan and their contribution to socio-economy of Afghanistan. Charles Yate on of other travel writers of that time also argues that the best features the Afghan carpet was made by women of Northern provinces of Afghanistan.<sup>111</sup> Continuing to this he mentions that “Every girl is supposed to make the carpets for her husband's kilitkas before she marries...,”<sup>112</sup>

In eastern Afghanistan according to Elphinstone, the cloths were made by the women. These women used to wave blankets as well.<sup>113</sup> The women of Dooranee tribe in East Afghanistan was among those women who made cloths of men as well as waving Guleems,<sup>114</sup> small rugs used for horses and the camlet for their tents according to this account.

Hazarah women who were mostly residents of central parts of the country worked and helped in agriculture. Besides that they worked in animal husbandry and produced dairies. Not only Hazarah women but Kochi (nomad) women did also take part in producing dairies according to Bellew: “In the hollows between the ridges we passed several "kochi," or nomad encampments, in which we found only women, who

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<sup>110</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 208.

<sup>111</sup> Yate, *Northern Afghanistan*., 192.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>113</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 108.

<sup>114</sup> Short rapped coarse carpets.

were occupied in their usual domestic duties, either making cheese and "krut," or weaving the coarse goats' or camels' hair cloth, of which their black tents are composed".<sup>115</sup> Although women were working but they did not owe as much as the men and still had complete economic dependence on their husbands.

Concluding this I want to say that the aim of this chapter was to show some of the characteristics, social status and the role of women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan in the light of the manuscripts of those travel writers who came to Afghanistan during the invasion of British to Afghanistan. The source used for this chapter shows that in the nineteenth century women hardly had the right to live their life but all the decisions in their life was taken by the male characters of their family. Despite this fact we can see that Afghan women were a conceptual, rhetorical and practical example of Orientalism for the reason that most of these travel writers had the stereotype view of Afghan women before they came to Afghanistan and it was very surprising for them to see what they think actually did not applied mostly. For instance, they always imagined Afghan women being veiled and when they see women unveiled they surprisingly point them out which we can see this in the writings of most of them.

In the next chapter I will focusing on the life of notable women in the nineteenth century using these travel writings as the main source of research.

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<sup>115</sup> Bellew, *A Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 203.



## CHAPTER III

### AFGHAN NOTABLE WOMEN

In the history of Afghanistan, even though it's a patriarchal society, there have been women of great personalities and bravery, who had played influential role throughout the history, but unfortunately were not much mentioned in historical sources. There have been notable women who had influential role in the administration of the country, women who participated in war and women who had been working outside of home to look after their families. Of all these you can see very less written about, very rare mentioned in account of travel writers, little said on Afghan sources, and some only it's mentioned in public folk tales or else some of the place's name has been given after them. After the research I have done for this thesis I have realized that even the western writers wrote very less about women and most of their works are explaining the men in Afghanistan.

Being patriarchal and very much conservative society the country had women such as Gohar Shad Begum, who even ruled a strong and big empire of Timurid and who played an important role among her brothers (She was a strong politician and a great intellectual who with the help of her husband led a renaissance and opened school for girls in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Afghanistan), Rabia Balkhi, Mahjoba Herawi, Makhfi Badakhshi, Aisha-i-Durani, till the women such as Malalai of Maiwand who gave motivation and power to Afghan army during the Anglo-Afghan wars and has been

killed in that war, Wafa Begum the queen of king Shah Shuja (Shah Shooja)<sup>116</sup> whose loyalty and struggle to rescue her husband is point to be mentioned. Of course there has been a lot more women like this, which has shown great bravery and talent that are not mentioned in the sources unfortunately. This chapter is going to be an evaluation of these notable women and the differences they had with the ordinary women of Afghanistan during the nineteenth century from the perspective of foreign eyes.

### **3.1 Afghan Notable women in the nineteenth century**

In spite of all the gender inequality and hardship women had in Afghanistan in the nineteenth century there have been some women who enjoyed the political and social power in their life. Very rare but it has been mentioned in the primary and secondary sources concerned for this thesis. Even there have been women whom after them a tribe was named. Everything in their life was different than a common woman. The opportunities of life had left positive impacts in their life; such as leaving positive impact on their appearance; give them the biggest right to choose the man whom they want to marry while an ordinary woman did not have such a chance and to have education. In this chapter I will be giving as much of the examples as given in these documents. I will be comparing the point of view of the travels writers visiting

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<sup>116</sup> Shuja Shah Durrani (also known as *Shāh Shujā'*, *Shah Shujah*, *Shoja Shah*, *Shujah al-Mulk*) (c. November 4, 1785 – April 5, 1842) was ruler of the Durrani Empire from 1803 to 1809. He then ruled from 1839 until his death in 1842. Shuja Shah was of the Sadozai line of the Abdali group of Pashtuns. He became the fifth Emir of Afghanistan. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shah\\_Shujah\\_Durrani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shah_Shujah_Durrani)

Afghanistan at the same period of times and some of them even the same places. There has not been much mentioned about them much in these documents though, but only the accounts of Mountstuart Elphinstone and J.A. Gray's gives detailed information about some of these women.

I will start my work with the impact of the royal life left on women and then I will go toward explaining some of the Notable female characters mentioned in these sources. As I mentioned in previous chapter, life of Afghans had a big difference between the classes of notable and ordinary women. I want to start this difference by the affect this classification left on the appearance of the women. The women who lived in the royal families (higher class) had more luxurious life. As well as affecting all areas their life, it left its clear impact on appearance of those women too. They looked more fresh and good-looking. Writers such as W.H, Bellew, Lady Sale, Elphinstone and many others prove what has been said above.

I will start my work by an example from Bellew's *Journal Of A Political Mission To Afghanistan* where he gives very clear Example about this matter.

The complexion of the women of the better classes is very fair, and some- times even rosy, though more usually a pale sallow colour prevails. The features are generally handsome, and, like those of the men, have a Jewish cast, and their fascinating glances are enhanced by the use of the "surma" and "kohl" above mentioned. These sub- stances impart to the eyes a peculiar charm and captivat- ing lustre, mixed with a spark of " diablerie " when their owner is animated, which are considered essentials in the qualities of a beautiful woman, and objects of admiration to the sex generally.<sup>117</sup>

In another part of this text he is talking about the women's hair style. Although he doesn't give a clear explanation that whether he is talking about single women or

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<sup>117</sup> Bellew, *Journal of Political Mission to Afghanistan in 1857*, 36.

married women, but the description he gives is much more similar to those of the examples given by Lady Sale about the hair style of Afghan unmarried women in the Kabul city. Comparing these two examples (Lady Sale's example is given in chapter two in Marriage section) we can presume that Bellew is talking about single ladies rather than married when he states:

The hair is worn long and parted in the centre, and the locks on either side are plaited into broad bands. These, passing over the ears, are joined to the back hair, which is plaited into two long tails, that hang down the back, and terminate in silken tassels, intertwined with the terminal plaits to prolong their length. The hair is kept off the forehead by a thick paste of gum tragacanth, called by the natives "katlra." It is a kind of bandoline, which stiffens the hair and glues it close to the skin.<sup>118</sup>

Lady Sale who have visited the women of the royal family during her captivity in her account though doesn't give clear picture of appearance of the women living in king's family but her writing can be evaluated as an example of royal women's dressing according to region too. Since there Royal women did live in Kabul the capital of Afghanistan so obviously they did have the nicer style of clothing. She has been with the family of the king at her wedding anniversary and explaining the dress of the women in king's house as below:

Three of Mahommed Shah Khan's wives, and some or Dost Mahommed's, with the mother of the chiefs, and two of their unmarried sisters, were present. They were, generally speaking, inclined to embonpoint, largely formed, and coarsely featured; their dress inelegant, and of the coarsest materials.<sup>119</sup>

In the explanations of the dressing of women in nineteenth-century, we can see that the most of the women who were from the higher class family used to wear silk.

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<sup>118</sup> Bellew, *Journal of A Political Mission to Afghanistan in 1857*, 36.

<sup>119</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 345.

The accounts of the travel writers give evidence about this issue taking the region and ethnicity in concern. For instance Lady Sale talking about the wives of Amir gives an explanation of that by stating that, “The favourite wife, and the best dressed, was attired in a common Cabul silk, with a coarse piece of chintz inserted behind, evidently for economy’s sake.”<sup>120</sup> Later she continues with the explanation of how the dress looked like where she pictures the style of the dress as,

The dress, which covers the whole person, nearly resembles a common night-dress; and has tacked on to it coins, or other pieces of silver or gold, such as crescents, &c., all over the sleeves, the front and sides, from the shoulders to the feet. A breastplate is worn, commencing at the throat, of coins strung together: this descends far below the waist; and when they sit down, it hangs in festoons on the lap. Only the favourite wore gold coins; those of the other ladies being of silver. They had nothing in the way of jewels, properly so called. About seven common-sized pearls, surrounding an emerald full of flaws, the whole set as a nose ornament, was the handsomest thing I saw in the trinket way. Some of them had very inferior ear-rings of gold and silver.<sup>121</sup>

In the second chapter talking about women’s clothing I have mentioned that Afghan women had very much of interest in gold and silver. Besides being an example of the royal class women’s dressing this can give more accuracy to what I said about the love of Afghan women about Gold too.

Not only Lady Sale but Bellew also gives almost the same example about the dressing of women in higher class of the society. The difference is in wearing the scarf, by women and this is obvious that the women mentioned by Lady Sale were inside the home but Bellew talks more in general that includes the women’s dressing outside of the home too. Hence we cannot claim that they did not wear scarf inside the home. For some tribes and family it was and is the case to cover their head even inside the home.

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<sup>120</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*; 345.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

The example above gives a detailed information about the dressing of Afghan women in the nineteenth century from perspective of a foreigner specially a lady which can be great point for this dissertation. In accordance to Lady Sale, Henry Walter Bellew, also gives a detailed explanation of clothing of Afghan women as he states:

The dress of the women of the higher classes consists of a fine muslin or silk shirt, worn over a short and close-fitting under-shirt, resembling a banian or vest. The outer shirt is very loose about the body, and has wide sleeves, like those worn by the men. It is worn outside the trousers, which are of silk and of very ample proportion, and almost out vie crinoline in the amplitude of their folds.<sup>122</sup>

As I mentioned previously, the difference between the explanation of Lady Sale and Bellew is in covering their head. The other parts consist of similar ideas. For instance Sale is talking about the dress's being one piece long dress resembling to night gown where Bellew explaining similar thing. This can be evaluated this way that, women whom Sale met were wearing for the sake of reception of Lady Sale because she was celebrating her wedding anniversary but the women Bellew saw, though from the higher class, but were with daily outfit and that is why he is mentioning that they use to cover their head, "Generally, a silk handkerchief is worn over the head and fastened under the chin, and some- times a Kashmir shawl is thrown over the shoulders and back."<sup>123</sup>

However, Lady Sale did not mention anything about the outdoor outfit of notable women, but Bellew gives description about it and states,

Out of doors, a large sheet, which is sewn by one border round a small circular head-piece, is thrown over the body, which it envelopes from head to foot, and effectually conceals the entire person of the wearer; who, however, can see all around through a couple of holes or eyelets

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<sup>122</sup> Bellew, *Journal of a Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 345.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

covered with fine muslin. This dress is called "burka," and is generally made of white cotton cloth, which is sometimes dyed blue. Besides the "burka," the better class of women, on leaving the house, wear loose cotton-cloth leggings, with a foot-piece or stocking attached, and these are worn inside the boots, which are of soft leather, usually of a red or yellow colour, and are put on over the slippers that are worn in the house. Such is the usual dress of the Afghan people."<sup>124</sup>

What seems different here is that the dressing of women from higher family is much more of those great quality materials like silk which makes the difference of it opposing to an ordinary women. This explanation proves the information about being veiled and unveiled matter of women in Afghanistan too, because the women of both classes were supposed to cover themselves fully while going out. But of course with a difference in quality.

Continuing to this point he goes on with the discussion that the females of rich families is religiously silent and most of the times they were not allowed to go out as stated by Bellew,

As usual amongst Mohammadans, the Afghan women of the richer and higher classes are religiously shut up, and in many instances are seldom allowed to venture outside the courts of their own dwellings, except on occasions of public fairs and festivals. With few exceptions they are very illiterate, being perfectly ignorant of reading and writing ; but, on the other hand, they are adepts in the culinary art, and this is almost all that can be said for them.<sup>125</sup>

This means that the women of urban areas were covered more than the women who were in the rural areas. Rollo Gillespie in his account makes the argument that Afghan women of higher class always covered themselves fully from head to foot.<sup>126</sup>

Among the royal women mentioned in these documents Bibi Matto daughter of an Afghan influential authority was an example of having power. The first thing she

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<sup>124</sup> Bellew, *Journal of a Political Mission to Afghanistan*, 345.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>126</sup> Burslem. *A Peep into Toorkisthān*. 64.

could do was to go against the rules, fall in love and married a man of other race, a Persian prince named Shah Husain. (Afghan women cannot marry a man of other race).<sup>127</sup> She is a woman that a tribe was named after her.<sup>128</sup> The story is so that since her husband was a stranger the decedents of her heirs were named after her own name 'Matti-khil or Matti- zai'. Not only her but the same case happened for the heirs of the second wife of Shah Hussain Bibi-Mahi. Her tribe was called 'Mahi-khil or Mahi-Zai'.<sup>129</sup>

The other example of this can be the life of Wufa Begum the queen of Shah Shuja. She is known for her great cleverness, richness and loyalty to her husband.<sup>130</sup> In addition to that, there have been things mentioned about Wafa Begum, Queen of Shah Shuja one of Afghan kings in the nineteenth century in Gray's account too. As I mentioned above Wafa Begum in A.J. Gray's account was explained as being ingenuity, rich and loyal. Gray did not meet her personally since his visit was after the reign of Shah Shuja but heard about this great lady. Just a single time he mentions about this lady as follows:

Talking one day with Jubar Khan, the name of Hufa<sup>(sic)</sup> Begum, the celebrated queen of Shah Shoojah, who had just died, was mentioned, and a remark was made that she was a very clever woman, and had left a good deal of money behind her. "That," said the Nuwab, with grave emphasis, "is the clearest possible proof of her ability." I fear this is a standard by which the ladies of (he western world have no wish to be tried.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Elphinstone. *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 237?

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>130</sup> Burnes, 'A Personal Narrative', 85.

<sup>131</sup> Gray, *At the Court of Amûr*, 85.



The next description I am giving about this is from the article of *Shah Shuja's 'Hidden History' and its Implications for the Historiography of Afghanistan*, by Shah Mahmoud Hanifi. He explains Wafa begum's loyalty toward her husband in this Article and her effort to rescue her imprisoned husband. According to this Article and many other sources, Shah Shuja was imprisoned in Kashmir and his wife Wafa Begum, was scared that her husband will be killed soon. This feel of fear make her to go into touch with British officials in India (East India Company) to ask for help for her husband's freedom. Besides that she gets into touch with Panjab's king Ranjis sing too. She promised Ranjit Sing to give the diamond of *Kuh-i-Noor*<sup>132</sup> if he rescues Shah Shuja from being in prison.<sup>133</sup> Ranjit Sing agreed to help her, and took Shah Shuja to panjab, but both Shah Shuja and his wife were scared that Ranjit Sing will kill them and hesitate to give the diamond to him. For return to that Ranjit Sing kept them in captive for years and finally after not getting the diamond he cut the food and water and by this punishment he was able to get the diamond and freed Shah Shuja and his wife and they went to Ludhiana and left their under the role of British East India company. The loyalty of Wafa Begum made her to tolerate all this difficult times. She struggled to go to india many times and opposite to other Afghan women that do not have the right to talk with other men she was in contact and meetings with men of another race.

In addition to this issue, Wafa Begum, later was involved in other political matters as well. In a country such as Afghanistan where isolation of women from the

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<sup>132</sup> see about Koh-i-noor in : <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koh-i-Noor>

<sup>133</sup> Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, « Shah Shuja's 'Hidden History' and its Implications for the Historiography of Afghanistan », *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Free-Standing Articles, Online since 14 May 2012, connection on 29 June 2014.  
URL : <http://samaj.revues.org/3384>.

men's sphere was a common thing and men were proud to do that, Shah Shuja's allowing his wife to be involved in political affairs was a surprising matter. Even the historians are surprised of this issue. Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, in his document shows his surprise about this issue too and expresses it that "Instead of practicing *purdah* or female seclusion, Shuja put his wife Wafa Begum metaphorically and literally ahead of himself in relation to the wider public that was not limited to just British colonial officials."<sup>134</sup>

History of Afghanistan (the period during nineteenth century) has one of the other of these royal women. The mother of Mohammad Yaqub Khan<sup>135</sup> an Amir of Afghanistan who had here interference to the administrative affairs and was a strong character who stood in front of British Army and tried all the ways to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan.

The mother of Yakoob has shown great shrewdness and force of character in planning and carrying out the rising of the tribes. She provided the money, and gave orders to the Moollahs, and promised Mnhomed Jan's troops lacs of rupees and tons of gunpowder for a reward, if they would drive the English army out of Cabul.<sup>136</sup>

In a very short paragraph in account of N, Allen there has been mentioned a women whom he compares to Joan of Arc and states that: "and the mother of Akram Khan (an Afghan army commander), who was blown from a gun in October, 1841, at Kandahar, This lady pretended to a vision of the prophet, and was playing Joan of Arc among the Affghans",<sup>137</sup> but no further information is given about her in any of other

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<sup>134</sup> Hanifi, Shah Shuja's 'Hidden History', 39.

<sup>135</sup> See about Mohammad Yaqub Khan in: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammad\\_Yaqub\\_Khan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammad_Yaqub_Khan)

<sup>136</sup> Gelson, *Through the Khyber Pass to sherpore camp*, 73.

<sup>137</sup> Allen, *Dairy of a March...*, 198.

documents. Among the 70 primary documents I have read for this thesis just this much has been written about this notable women, however I am sure there is a lot more she has done but since the writings of nineteenth century especially those of travel writings were mostly written by men, nothing is mentioned about her.

The next notable lady I am going to talk about is Amir Abdurrahman Khan's<sup>138</sup> wife, whom A. J. Gray explains in his account. Previously I mentioned that Gray was a doctor and that is why he was able to see female characters more than any other travelers in the country. In his account he talks about the favorite Wife of Amir whom he calls Sultana.<sup>139</sup> Since Gray was a doctor has been invited to cure the prince who was sick and Sultana asked the Amir that a western doctor should cure her son.<sup>140</sup> This shows how easily she can express her desires while other women did not dare to ask for it. That is how Gray gets the way to Haram Sarai<sup>141</sup>. despite the fact that Afghan women were not allowed to meet, Sultana called Gray to meet easily. It is an example that the royal women who had power and money could have this freedom. She even was able to gift Gray as he mentions in his account.<sup>142</sup> This wife of Amir was Royal from both sides. It means her father and mother both were from the royal families as Gray argues. About the life of Sultana inside the palace Gray says that she had servants and did not nurse her

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<sup>138</sup> “Abdur Rahman Khan (between 1830 to 1844 – October 1, 1901) was Emir of Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901. He was the third son of Mohammad Afzal Khan, and grandson of Dost Mohammad Khan. Abdur Rahman Khan was considered a strong ruler who re-established the writ of the Afghan government after the disarray that followed the second Anglo-Afghan war. He became known as *The Iron Amir* after defeating a number of rebellions by various tribes who were led by his relatives.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdur\\_Rahman\\_Khan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdur_Rahman_Khan)

<sup>139</sup> The Afghan word for Queen.

<sup>140</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 227.

<sup>141</sup> Private room or Ladies Apartment.

<sup>142</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 220.

child but kept women to nurse the prince. When Gray entered the room the Sultana was behind the curtain. Since she was a Muslim woman she did not give audience to all.<sup>143</sup>

Unlike the ordinary women who did not had the right to even talk with the strangers, the women in the royal families were free to be in this case and talk to men. For instance, while Gray was curing the little prince, knowing about his painting ability the Sultana asked him to paint her son's portrait. This means she could express her wants herself with out asking any men from the family. Gray has been a long time going to King's palace to cure the little prince and although he tried a lot but he could not save the prince and he died.

Later on the sultana herself got ill and the Amir asked Gray to attend her.<sup>144</sup> Gray was not allowed to see the sultana but to communicate with her a curtain in between. While trying to examine her, he asks sultana to raise her hands from behind the curtain and for examining her chest sound he had to put his stethoscope from behind the curtain where he made mistakes to find the place.<sup>145</sup> This point proves one thing that being free to talk with a men still the Afghan women in any case, being ordinary or from Royal family should have take the *pardah*<sup>146</sup> into the consideration.

The visit of Gray has continued to palace because both Amir and Sultana were sick. It was hard for Gray to cure her because the sultana did not apply what he advised, that even he mentions in his account that:" The Sultana, on the other hand, was anything

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., .390.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., P392

<sup>146</sup> "Purdah or pardah is a religious and social practice of female seclusion prevalent among some Muslim communities in Afghanistan." (Wikipedia).

but a good patient. She would not do as I advised, and she wished me to give her just what medicines she thought best.”<sup>147</sup>

But about her character Gray argues that Sultana was very kind and used to read poetry to him and at the same time tried to teach him Persian.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless this behavior of Sultana was because of Gray’s being western since the guy who accompanied him once told him this. While sultana was teaching Gray Persian, for the mistake he made the Sultana and all people around her laughed loud but the guy with Gray was staying silent there and Gray was curious about his being this in a bad temper and once after they have left the Haram sarai he asked him about this and replied that, “Sir, you European, and, perhaps, no harm come for you-but for *me*, Amir Sahib blow me from gun if Her Highness laugh while I there.”<sup>149</sup>

Meanwhile, visiting Sultana continued because of her sickness. Sultana used to behave very nice to Gray. For instance she showed him her crown of made from gold, hats and bonnets which mostly were classic shaped English accessories, and her photo album.<sup>150</sup> Not only this, but Sultana used to give presents to Gray. Once while he was curing prince she gave him a Kataghani horse, once as cashmere shawl and at last asked Gray to take a photo from her album where he preferred to take a photo of her with Amir on the wall and later sweets and cashmere shawls again for painting the portrait of prince.<sup>151</sup> This matter of painting happened while Gray was curing the Sultana herself, and she knowing the talent of Gray asked him to paint a portrait of little prince and Gray

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<sup>147</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 394.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 385, 393, 401, 488.

accepted. When he finished the paintings he was rewarded with a lot of gifts from sultana and even she promised him to give 1000 rupees after the collection of the taxes but Gray left Kabul before that was collected.<sup>152</sup>

Not only the Sultana but Gray also gives her gifts and he mentions this in his account.<sup>153</sup> The reason behind the explanation of all these are to show the difference of life of a royal women was form an ordinary women.

As I mentioned many times, these Royal women had the life outdoor but except that they had much of bravery and courage. Among them on is this Sultana the queen of Amir. While she was showing Gray her personal belongings and a sword that has been given to her from Amir's side and tells the story of this sword to Gray which he mentions in his account about:

She showed me a star and a sword His Highness the Amir had given her. The Amir was away fighting, and a rebellion arose in Kabul; the young Sultana at once issued from the Harem, veiled, took command of the troops in Kabul, and quelled the rebellion.<sup>154</sup>

This show how diverse was the life of women in Afghanistan. Looking back to all these documents and status of women we can see that the social status of Afghan women were for an ordinary women were different from all perspectives but for Royal women easy.

### **3.2 Afghan Heroines**

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 499.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>154</sup> Gray, *At the Court Of Amir*, 402.

Like Afghan men, Afghan women also loved their country very much and indeed there have been many heroic Women during this Anglo-Afghan wars in Afghanistan who by their bravery, had influence on mobilization of men during hardships, but unfortunately there has been nothing written about them in the accounts of the travel writers. Not only travel writers but most of the times like women in all around the world their contribution has not been documented. Just slight information (few words) has been given about one of them in Lady Sale's account and some in Elphinstone's account. This participation in war has happened between women of those tribes who never appeared in public in normal circumstances. Among the accounts have been writing at that time by Britains, a clear example of this has been given by Elphinston concerning Eusofzeys where he points out that "Even the women of the Fakeers (for those of the Eusofzyes could not appear in public) stood behind the line, beating drums, and distributing water to refresh the weary."<sup>155</sup>

They carried supplies for soldiers, removing the bodies, helping the injured warriors and many more. Not only this but sometimes they fought against the enemies of the country and have been killed.

Many women died defending their land in Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars and among them one is the legendary Malalai of Maiwand, whose bravery prevented Afghan army from losing the war. Although the evidence has been shown about these women in Afghan sources but strangely none of the British sources wrote about them. For this reason I cannot include them in this thesis unfortunately.

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<sup>155</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 24.

I would like to mention the only one mentioned in Lady Sale's account but with a huge difference. According to Afghan sources<sup>156</sup> about the place called Behmaru in Kabul there has been said that a girl (named Bibi Mahro) from a district during the second Anglo-Afghan wars have been in love with a boy and after the hardships the families get ready to marry her. On the marriage day the groom came and saw that all the male characters were the old and children. There has not been a single young person of the groom's friends and family. He asks about where are they and in return the answer he gets is that the youth have gone to fight again the invaders who tried to capture their land. The groom said that he cannot stay in ceremony while all his friends are in war. He promises his bride that they will marry after he comes back. He changes his dress, took his gun and wrote a letter to his fiancée that he is going to fight against the invaders. He did the same. He attended the war, fought but unfortunately been injured by a gun shot in the war and his friends send him back to Kabul. Unfortunately he couldn't reach Kabul alive. Bibi Mahro wears men cloths, takes a gun and attends Afghan army to fight the British army. She was killed too and was buried as martyrs of the war. Another women become the victim of the war. A bride who was about to marry and was going to have her best day of life. The place she is buried is called after her name and there is schools named after her in Kabul. This matter about the name of this district is told by Lady Sale but in very different way. She in her account says that:

I believe I have indifferently written the name of a village as Dehmaru and Behmaru ; it is called both, but Behmaru is the correct name, signifying the husbandless : Dehmaru would be the Husband's Village. It takes its name from a romantic legend of a girl of rank betrothed to a chief who was said to have been slain in combat, and she consequently pined away and died also; but the lover recovered from his wounds, and

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<sup>156</sup> Social Science Academy of Afghanistan, *Ariana Dairatul Ma'arif Ariana Encyclopedia*. Kabul. Nebraska Printing Press, 2004, 287.



placed a stone, said to be one of those white ones that look like women in Bourkhor, over her grave on the Behmaru hill ; and when he died he was buried beside her, with a similar stone to mark the spot.<sup>157</sup>

Though the text gives a different definition but the good point is that at least it has been mentioned in one of the sources and we have a reference about.

While being explained a very conservative society, these primary documents show that there have been some women who had the opportunity to live their life in better condition and had the public sphere and good social status.

The next chapter is going to be the life of Western women in Afghanistan, their experiences and difficulties in accordance with the account of Lady Sale who had lived in Afghanistan.

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<sup>157</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*.11.

## CHAPTER IV

### STATUS OF WESTERN WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFGHANISTAN

In the nineteenth century Afghan women were not only the ones suffering, but also some western women, from the families of the soldiers and other officials of British army who came to Afghanistan, experienced hard times.<sup>158</sup> The primary sources used for this research besides explaining the misery of Afghan women in the nineteenth century, argue that the life of western women who visited Afghanistan was not easy too. There have been western women who had captives, injured and even been killed during this period of time.<sup>159</sup> However, the cases were very rare comparing to Afghan women. Hence this chapter is an attempt to evaluate, describe, compare and illustrate life and experiences of western women in Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars. Additionally, this chapter tries to look at western women's point view about Afghan women. Although the examples of their life experience can be seen in accounts of other British Army members such as Vincent Eyre's and Alexander Burners's too but as the primary source of this chapter I will be focusing on account of Lady Florentia Sale together for the reason that she was a women who lived all those experiences and

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<sup>158</sup> The list of names of Western women in Afghanistan during Anglo- Afghan wars according to Lady Florentia Sale's and some other travel writers Accounts Lady Macnaghten, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Blaze, Mrs. Bourke, Mrs. Boyd, Mrs. Burnes, Mrs. Cunningham, Mrs. Eyre, Mrs. Jameson, Mrs. Lumsden, Mrs. Mainwaring, Mrs. Ryley, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Sturt, Mrs. Trevor, Mrs. Wade, Mrs. Waller.

<sup>159</sup> Allen, "Diary of a march through Sindh and Afghanistan, 297.

<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/Afghanuno/22>

conversely she wrote in very much detail. The other writers just slightly gave information about the women both Afghan and western in their writings. On the other hand, Sale's account is been known as one of the accurate document from the Anglo-Afghan war period for being very detailed and original writing. Of course I will be evaluation with the examples from these and some other writers. However, the accounts of Vincent Eyre's and Alexander Burners's is a good source to picture Afghan women's life, are appropriate and well detailed for understanding life western women too.

N. Allen in his account gives evidences that during the Anglo-Afghan wars apart from the British soldiers there have been women who were imprisoned by Afghan army including Florentia Lady Sale. He states that, "There were some European women imprisoned in Kabul."<sup>160</sup> During this captivity Lady Sale wrote the events daily on her account *Journal of Disasters in Account*. Later when she returned to England and published her work, it became as one of the greatest sources for the westerns to know about experiences of British Army in Afghanistan. Some of the writers argue that her account, her reports and letters made Lady Sale a celebrity in the nineteenth century Britain.<sup>161</sup>

Before I go to Lady Sale's life experience in Afghanistan I would like mention the suffering of other western female characters during this war time in agreement with the writings of the other travelers in to the country. As I mentioned before European women in Afghanistan sometimes have been killed during the wars. Of them on women who suffered in Afghanistan one was Mrs. Smith wife of a British conductor who was

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<sup>160</sup> Allen, *Dairy of a March*, 397.

<sup>161</sup> Shane Malhotra, "If She Escapes She Will Publish Everything!: Lady Sale and the Media Frenzy of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842)." *Book History*, 17(1) (2014): 272-297.(accessed August 31, 2015).

traveling from Kandahar to Kabul. The Afghan soldier there saw her, and she run away but she has been shot in her head and killed.<sup>162</sup>

A poor woman, a Mrs. Smith, the wife of a conductor, was travelling up the Bolan pass to Kandahar, with a few suwars<sup>163</sup> as a guard. She was attacked by the Belooches ; the suwars fled, Mrs. Smith got out of her palkee and ran a short distance, but was soon overtaken and killed ; the body was not plundered, and her rings were found on her fingers, and her earrings in her ears; not that they committed the act from hatred to the Feringhees<sup>164</sup> and disdain of plunder, but that, according to the superstition of these tribes, it is a most unlucky circumstance to kill a woman and finding their victim of the gentle sex, they fled, and left her as she fell.<sup>165</sup>

The text above illustrates that the Afghans knowingly never kill a women, unless they miss understand if she is a man, as it has been stated in Elphinstone's account too where he elaborates that Afghans never killed a women knowingly and even if they founded a women injured they would look after her very kindheartedly and send her back to her family.<sup>166</sup>

Besides revealing the hard times of western women in the sources, some writers like Alexander Burner talks about how some of these western women created disaster for their own army. For instance, in his account he gives illustration about a western woman who betrayed her husband and became a mistress to an Afghan.<sup>167</sup> Not only in his account but it has been mentioned in account of Eyre Vincent too. Mrs. Wade was the wife of a British official who came to Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars. She has been known as an evil woman who betrayed not only her husband, but also her

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<sup>162</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 17.

<sup>163</sup> Someone going somewhere riding a horse or a vehicle.

<sup>164</sup> Foreigners.

<sup>165</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 17.

<sup>166</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, 80.

<sup>167</sup> Burnes, *Cabool*, 73.

country and religion. Wade just for the sake of some gold and other wealth turned to Mahommadan and lived with an Afghan as his mistress. Not only this but she used any kind of torture for the British captives and took whatever they had.<sup>168</sup> Regarding this matter Lady Sale in her account states that,

The day after our departure, Mrs. Wade (wife of a sergeant) changed her attire, threw off the European dress, and adopted the costume of the Mussulmans ; and, professing to have changed her creed also, consorted with the *nazir* of our inveterate enemy, Mahommed Shah Khan : and gave information of some plans laid by the men for their escape ; which nearly caused them all to have their throats cut.<sup>169</sup>

There has not been said much about her in the sources that what happened to her later. About the life of western women in Afghanistan one of a very a good example can be Lady Sale. There are many reason that I think she is good enough example. As I mentioned before too, She is a western woman who lived and experienced eleven month of her life in Afghanistan inside the royal houses as well as outside in the very cold days of winter with out food and bedding. Secondly, in the nineteenth century there have been very few women travel writers and she is among those few.

Florentia Lady Sale was born in Madras India in 1787. Her family was civil servants of East India Company.<sup>170</sup> She was wife of Sir Robert Henry Sale (a British army officer who played important rule during the invasion of Afghanistan) was one of those western women who travelled to Afghanistan with her husband during the Anglo-Afghan wars. She gives birth to twelve children, 4 died in infancy.<sup>171</sup> According to her account *A Journal of Disaster in Afghanistan*, later names Lady Sale's Afghanistan, she

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<sup>168</sup> Eyre, *The Military Operations at Cabul*, 313-314.

<sup>169</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 238.

<sup>170</sup> Bijan Omrani, "'Will we make it to Jalalabad?' 19th Century travels in Afghanistan." *Asian Affairs* no. 2: 161. *General One File*, 37(2) (2006), 169-174 (accessed August 27, 2015), 169.

<sup>171</sup> Omrani, *Will we make it to Jalalabad?*, 170.

came to Afghanistan in 1841 while Omrani Bijain in his article gives the date as 1840. This account is a narrative of eleven months she lived in Afghanistan which the nine months she spent in captivity. She came to Kabul at the age of 53. She had only one of her children with herself, Alexandra Sale whose husband was one of the known names of the British Army during the invasion. Lieutenant Sturt an engineer but army officer who has been died in Afghanistan during the war, one of the only people who got Christian buries. One more contrast which can be seen is that her book starts with date September, 1841, while Omrani in his article states the starting date of the Journal as 9 October, 1840.<sup>172</sup> Of course one will look at the original source but might possible that there has been some changes made while printing since the author is absent and we cannot clear this but I mentioned both dates in order to give the contrast seen in documents.

She is one of the people who survived the humiliating defeat of British army. Her life in Afghanistan was full of difficulties which she wrote in her daily journal with this hope that this one day will be published. Her account is been counted as one of the best sources of that period because of being very much detailed. As she herself mentions, not only daily but most of the times she wrote hourly.<sup>173</sup> She points out these two things about her account at the very beginning: First she tells that almost all of the British army soldiers were noting their daily activity but most of them lost it. According to Sale the reason why her account is more accurate is that she kept it saves and did not lose any information. She kept her dairy more safe than all other of her belongings:

I lost everything except the cloths I wore, and therefore it may appear strange that I should have saved these papers. The mystery is, however,

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<sup>172</sup> Omrani, Will we make it to Jalalabad?',170.

<sup>173</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 9.

easily solved. After everything was packed on the night before we left Cabul, I sat up to my add a few lines to the events of the day, and the next morning I put them in a small bag and tied them around my west.<sup>174</sup>

Secondly, she argues that after she returned to England she could make it a good source of narrative but she has preferred to keep her writing original as she mentions herself, “I am not attempting to shine in rounded periods, but give everything that occurs as it comes to my knowledge.”<sup>175</sup> In her account mostly she gave report of what other soldiers did and so other official events because she was not only writing her daily life but were sending reports to Britain from Bala Hesar by telegraph.<sup>176</sup> This account was published in 1843 by John Murray.<sup>177</sup> Her account as Omrani also points out is a good source if one is looking for an account of Afghanistan in mode of war since she looked at the matters with a military eye and gives a very clear picture from the war scenes<sup>178</sup>, but I will be only focusing on her personal experiences as a woman in Afghanistan plus her point of view about Afghan women.

Lady Sale at first when she was going to Kabul thought she will live a life but there difficulties have been waiting for her. At the beginning everything was good. She had a nice house where she used to cultivate sweet peas, potatoes and much other stuff,<sup>179</sup> but later she witnessed many hardships like being left without food on the snowy cold days of winter, getting injured as well as being captive for a long time of nine months that I will focus in detail in this chapter. She was a fearless woman who

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>176</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 9.

Note: “Bala Hissar is an ancient fortress located in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan. The estimated date of construction is around the 5th century A.D. Bala Hissar was the site of some of the bloodiest fighting in Afghanistan during the 19th century when Afghanistan came into conflict with the invading British during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838–1842) and Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880).” (Wikipedia).

<sup>177</sup> Omrani. 2006. Will we make it to Jalalabad?, 170.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>179</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 27.

stood on the battlements not fearing from bullets and watched the fight outside.<sup>180</sup> She has seen many of her mates to die and injured in the scene and even her son-in-law was injured badly that for a long life she was nursing him.<sup>181</sup> She explains how shocked she was by seeing his son-in-law in that bad and horrible condition being covered with blood and explained that she and Mrs. Sturt was caring for her very carefully until he got better.<sup>182</sup> Taking these circumstances into consideration one can see that how much of hard times the western women had in Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars. For instance, in one other sad report which has been given to Lady Sale there has been said that Mrs. Trevor was killed with her seven children and some said she escaped but children were killed.<sup>183</sup> There have been times that because of the fear of their houses being bombard they were obliged to leave their houses.<sup>184</sup> These incidents can show that it was not only Afghan women who have been victim of the war but also European women too.

The disaster starts in January 1842, while the British army has been faced with lack of food and other equipments and the weather was cold and snowy. The British army was retreating from Kabul taking their families with themselves and there have been other ladies than Lady Sale and Mrs. Sturt her daughter. They had a great stress and the progress was very slow, they faced many difficulties and suffering.<sup>185</sup> They lost all their baggage, food, tents and blankets in that cold weather and many of the men, women and children died of cold and were laid down on the streets (they were the

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<sup>180</sup> Omrani, *Will we make it to Jalalabad?*, 171.

<sup>181</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 29.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.



Indian servants of the army who was not used to that cold weather).<sup>186</sup> However, Lady Sale and her daughter were lucky to save a bedding at least. Alas the little supplies had left in their hand was also plundered later as Lady Sale mentions in her journal. This is still the beginning of the journey and one can see that how hard the life of European women were during Britain's invasion. They neither had enough food nor place to sleep on that cold weather as Lady Sale herself states in her account; "In a very small *pall* of Jonson's we slept nine, all touching each other."<sup>187</sup> Not only the place to sleep but they were supposed to share very little food they had. Lady Sale says that the Johnson's also shared their little meal they had with them: "we were also indebted to Johnson and Troup for food. They had a few Cabul cake and some tea, which they kindly shared with us."<sup>188</sup>

They continued their journey and still the weather was cold. Lady Sale explains herself to be lucky to have some sherry that helped her keep warm but without any effects. She states that even children of three or four have been given cups full of sherry but they did not faced any reaction because on the weather such cold it only could keep them warm.<sup>189</sup> Ongoing to their march, Lady Sale got a wound in her arm after many bullets passed from her side.<sup>190</sup> passing Khoord Kabul during the retreat from Kabul the army faced a very dreadful attack where many has been died and Lady Sale is explaining how other women were suffering then in that time as she states that during the time of captivity when they were carried to Amir, they experienced deadly

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 145; Omrani, Will we make it to Jalalabad?, 172.

<sup>187</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan* 149.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 153.

situations. Besides her own experience, she talks about the harsh times of other women too as she describes,

The ladies were mostly travelling in *kajavas*, and were mixed up with the baggage and column in the pass : here they were heavily fired on. Many camels were killed. On one camel were, in one *kajava*, Mrs. Boyd and her youngest boy Hugh; and in the other Mrs. Mainwaring and her infant, scarcely three months old, and Mrs. Anderson's eldest child. This camel was shot. Mrs. Boyd got a horse to ride; and her child was put on another behind a man, who being shortly after unfortunately killed, the child was carried off by the Affghans.<sup>191</sup>

These women who are named in Lady Sale's book have experienced the same disasters as her but unfortunately, except than Lady Sale we do not have accounts in hand talking about them. Life was so difficult for them and even their children as Sale mentions about Mrs. Mainwaring,

Mrs. Mainwaring, less fortunate, took her own baby in her arms. Mary Anderson was carried off in the confusion. Meeting with a pony laden with treasure, Mrs. Mainwaring endeavored to mount and sit on the boxes, but they upset ; and in the hurry pony and treasure were left behind ; and the unfortunate lady perused her way on foot, until after a time an Affghan asked her if she was wounded, and told her to mount behind him. This apparently kind offer she declined, being fearful of treachery; alleging as an excuse that she could not sit behind him on account of the difficulty of holding her child when so mounted. This man shortly after snatched her shawl off her shoulders, and left her to her fate.<sup>192</sup>

Lady Sale after seeing how Mrs. Maingwaring suffered says that she had to get credits for her bravery that gone through all this disaster but still was able to save her child she explains the scene as,

Mrs. Mainwaring's sufferings were very great; and she deserves much credit for having preserved her child through these difficult scenes. She not only had to walk a considerable distance with her child in her arms through the deep snow, but had also to pick her way over the bodies of

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.,153.

the dead, dying, and wounded, both men and cattle, and constantly to cross the streams of water, wet up to the knees, pushed and shoved about by men and animals, the enemy keeping up a sharp fire, and several persons being killed close to her.<sup>193</sup>

Not only her but according to the Sale's account there have been other women too. For instance Mrs. Burke, the mother of their stoker and Mrs. Cunningham along with the wives of other British soldiers have been among those who suffered in this retreat but was carried off.<sup>194</sup> Continuing toward Jalalabad, they have got an offer from Afghan ruler Akbar Khan and regarding this matter the historians argue that the account of Vincent Eyre and Lady Sale give a different view of Afghans from the others by showing Afghans kind and manly. These accounts show that though being very sensitive toward their country and not letting any power to invade their country they behaved kind and nice toward the captives of their enemies. For instance in one of the conflicts of Afghans with British army, Daughter of Captain Anderson fell into the hands of Afghans. She was imprisoned but as it is mentioned in the sources she was treated very nicely as examples can be seen in Eyre's account: "She was recovered on the 10th of May following, having been meanwhile most kindly treated in the family of Nawib Zaman Khan at Kabul."<sup>195</sup>

In another matter Eyre gives example of Kindness of Afghan army leader Akbar Khan did them a favor to take all the women and families of the British Army to his protection. The text below is the explanation of the matter:

Towards noon Captain Skinner arrived in camp with a proposition from Muhammad Akbar Khan that all the widowed ladies and married

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>195</sup> Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection*, 270.

families, whose destitute situation in camp rendered them objects of universal pity and sympathy, should at once be made over to his protection, to preserve them from further hardships and dangers; in this case he promised to escort them down safely, keeping them one days march in rear of the army. The General, though not himself disposed to place much confidence in Muhammad Akbar's friendly professions, was strongly recommended by Captain Skinner to trust him on the present occasion, as he felt assured that such a mark of confidence would be attended with happy results to the whole force. Anxious at all events to save the ladies and children from further suffering, the General gave his consent to the arrangement, and told Captain Skinner to prepare all the married of officers and ladies to depart immediately with a party of Afghan horse, who were in waiting to receive them.<sup>196</sup>

In another part of his writing he says: "The reader will observe that the extract begins with the incidents immediately preceding the surrender of Eyre, his wife, and thirty-seven others as hostages to Muhammad Akbar".<sup>197</sup> in accordance to Eyre's evidences about this issue Later in her account Lady Sale gives explanation the matter as:

Shortly after Pottinger, Mackenzie, and Lawrence arrived at the Khoord Cabul fort with the Sirdar, he turned to Lawrence and said that he had a proposal to make, but that he did not like to do so lest his motives might be misconstrued but that, as it concerned us more than himself, he would mention it ; and that it was, that all the married men, with their families, should come over and put themselves under his protection, he guaranteeing them honorable treatment, and safe escort to Peshawer. He added, that Lawrence must have seen from the events of the day previous—the loss of Capt. Boyd's and Capt. Anderson's children, &c. — that our camp was no place of safety for the ladies and children. Lawrence replied, that he considered the proposition a most admirable one ; and. Skinner coming in just then, he repeated what had passed to him, who replied, " This is just what I was thinking of suggestions-." <sup>198</sup>

She says that although they had doubt about the reality of this promise but they did not have any other option and accepted this in order to take out the women and

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<sup>196</sup> Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection*, 273-4.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>198</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 157.

children from the danger of starving and dying from the cold. They felt to be safe only when they reached Khoord Kabul and saw that the hostages under Mahommad Akbar Khan which included the son of Mrs. Boyad, Mrs. Burnes, and Anderson's little girl were saved.<sup>199</sup> Although later in her account she talks about being kept nicely in this part Sale explains the place that they were supposed to stay as dark and unclean and as previously mentioned there have been eight women who have been captive under Akbar Khan and we can see its example in Lady Sale's account when she is giving detail about the hostages as below:

Three rooms were cleared out for us, having no outlets except a small door to each; and of course they were dark and dirty. The party to which I belonged consisted of Mrs. Trevor and seven children, Lieutenant, and Mrs. Waller and child, Mrs. Sturt, Mr. Mein, and myself, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Burnes, two soldiers' wives, and young Stoker, child of a soldier of the 13th, who was saved from people who were carrying him off to the hills, and came in covered, we fear, with his mother's blood: of her we have no account, nor of Mrs. Cunningham, both of the 13th.<sup>200</sup>

After this part as Lady Sale herself mentions: "Here I must divide the account. I shall go on with my own personal adventures,"<sup>201</sup> starts explaining about her life, life of other captive women and we can see her perspective toward Afghans especially Afghan women.

In this part of this thesis we will witness the sufferings of western women in Afghanistan although sometimes they have been treated very well. Akbar Khan escorted them and Sale explains the disaster of feeling fear of the scene and the awaited miseries for them in the same section. She explains other difficulties of the women stating that all

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 159.

the women had to stay in the same room with the men.<sup>202</sup> Their march being hostage under Akbar khan continued and having all the difficulties Sale explains that she admired the romantic circuitous ways though they were fearful.<sup>203</sup>

One of the good things happened to these women were that they have been treated very well by Afghan men. While giving evidence about the goodness of Akbar khan Sale mentions that even he carried one of the western women, Mrs. Waller in the back of his own horse<sup>204</sup> and that they behaved nice to them and told personally to Lady Sale that none of them were prisoners and give the assured them that they will be soon escorted to Jalalabad safely.<sup>205</sup> Now this evidence can prove what have been said about Afghan's reaction toward women while I mentioned that Afghan men take care of women a lot.

Looking back to these descriptions we can say that what all have been said about behavior of Afghan men toward women may sometimes be just a misinformation not reality. About the number of the ladies being captive later Lady Sale gives the amount; "We numbered nine ladies, ...."<sup>206</sup>In explaining her suffering Sale mentions that the cold of snow and light of the sun has peeled her face.<sup>207</sup>

After reaching to Akbar khan's brother's house they had more pleasant time since they were able to be dressed luxurious eat well after being left without food long time and though namely they have been captives but were behaved in the nicest manner.<sup>208</sup> She explains her luck that could send letter to her husband by the approval of

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 184.

Akbar khan and that Mr. Sale send her cloths ,her drawing chest, books and other stuffs which been useful to her and getting the opportunity to be in contact she knew before.<sup>209</sup> During all the time she has been kept as captive, Akbar Khan provided this opportunity to Sale to write to her husband.

Explaining life inside the house of Akbar khan, Lady Sale talks about the experiences they had in earthquakes where the roof and walls of their home been down and repeated many times.

After few months pass, all the ladies and other hostages were going toward Jalalabad but not always they were lucky. On the half way they had to return back because the British Army was beaten in Khaybar. Other disasters started. Unfortunately when they went back to the house they used the stay, all the possessions were taken away and the home was destroyed. Once more, they were witness of Afghan's good behavior as Sale explains these nice behaviors meant a lot to her ;

We went back and found that the mat houses, and other little comforts we had put up, were mostly demolished; our scraps of setringees<sup>210</sup> taken away, as also our mats, &c.: but the soldiers were very civil to us: one brought back my charpoy, and busied himself in stringing it for me; another brought me a chiragh ; and a soldier's wife brought Mrs. Sturt and me each a stool to sit on. These little kindnesses make a deep impression at such times.<sup>211</sup>

They started the march the next day leaving two European women and soldiers there but she doesn't tells why and started to suffer again as she says that they saw water just twice in a day and the horses were not able to even drink it because it was shallow

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>210</sup> It is a kind of matting.

<sup>211</sup> Sale, *Lady Sale's Afghanistan*, 204.

and they were in a place like a desert where there was no water no cultivation.<sup>212</sup>

Sometimes they were faced with difficult situation and harsh sufferings because of the badness of the way as she mentions;

Made a march of about twelve miles: the country sterile and rocky; the road rather better than yesterday; only one very awkward ascent, when all the ladies got out of their kujavas. I always ride ; and have my own saddle : but some of the laches are obliged to ride gentleman fashion, sitting on their beddings instead of saddles.<sup>213</sup>

The ladies who were included in this march were Lady Sale herself, Mrs Trevor with her children, Mrs. Sturt, Mrs. Boyd with her 3 child, Lady Macnaghten, Mrs. Mainwaring and her child and Mrs. Anderson with her two children.<sup>214</sup> Taking all the problems in mind like lack of food, bedding, cold weather and bad way, we can see that how suffered the western women during the nineteenth century in Afghanistan. They had a miserable day the next day but as always they faced with the kindness of Afghan men when *serdar* gave his own *palkee* to Lady Macnaghten. And they arrived to Mahommad Shah Khan's house where they have been received with a very much of kindness.<sup>215</sup>

Continuing to this march, Lady Sale became very weak as much as she was even not able to ride.<sup>216</sup> The ladies in this group carried small babies as well and the ladies who carried babies were suffering more than other European women. Soon they got the good news to be released after months of being in captive. These western Ladies were to

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 210.



be exchanged with the same number of Afghan women who were captives in Loodianah.<sup>217</sup> (Loodianah is a place in India)

Lady Sale was able to ride horse and was lucky enough to have the chance to select her own horse when they were about to go to Jalalabad and had the news that they will be released soon.<sup>218</sup>

In this stage of her account she gives an example of a woman who has been suffering from the injustice of men and bad habits of the society while she talks about a Persian woman who has been a victim of the matter of forced marriage. The example given in this section pictures a different situation. In here not a girl was married forcefully by the agreement of her father or other male characters of the family but a married woman have been abducted by someone who had money and power. This matter of eloping is cleared in chapter II in the section of marital status of women though but here I want to give the example as Lady Sale witnessed and described;

Serjeant. Deane's wife, a Persian woman, has been taken by force and married to a younger brother of Mahommed Shah Khan. Whenever this man enters her presence, she salutes him with her slipper. It is only within a few days that she has been told of Deane's death: she appears to have been sincerely attached to him ; and is represented as a very pretty young woman.<sup>219</sup>

Many of the western women including lady Macnaghten , Lady Sale herself and litter girl of Captain Anderson was enduring sickness, which finally they got the good news that captain Anderson's daughter has recovered.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 217.

Lady Sale was lucky and got a chance to celebrate her wedding anniversary with the wives of Shah Mahommad khan.<sup>221</sup> While meeting them she talks about the outfit of these royal women and I already mentioned in clothing section as well as Shah's having four wives that is a prove of polygamy in Afghanistan which also I mentioned in marriage section in chapter II.

These Western women in the name were captives but was treated as nice that were able to have breakfast with Dost Mahommad Khan as Lady Sale gives the evidence of this matter in her account; "Lady Macnaghten and a part of the ladies breakfasted with Dost Mahommed khan and his ladies. They were told that, if the Sirdar gains the Bala Hissar, we shall all go there; if not, we go to Jellalabad."<sup>222</sup>

Not only with Dost Mahommad khan but these ladies did have breakfast with families of other high position authorities too. In another example Sale illustrates that; "Lady Macnaghten and two other ladies breakfasted with Khojeh Mahommed Khan's family and on this occasion two men were present. The rest of us were not invited."<sup>223</sup>

They were still the captives of Akbar khan and Lady Sale explains that her arm which has been wounded did not recovered and she is not able to sleep all night from the pain.<sup>224</sup> After Akbar Khan took Bala Hisar these ladies have been transferred to better place as seen in Sale's illustration:

The females were removed from this fort, and we all got excellent quarters. In addition to the two rooms apportioned to our party, we have permission to sit, in the daytime, in a room in a bourj, a small octagon with oorsees or openwork lattices. There are two flights of steep steps to mount to it from our apartments, which are upstairs ; but the view from it is so refreshing, looking over all the forts and highly, cultivated grounds ;

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 219-20.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 226.

it has the advantage of being always cool ; and which compensates for the trouble in getting there.<sup>225</sup>

Its known from this paragraph that they thought about the comfort of these women which as soon as they get Bala Hisar they provided them with a better place. Not only this but they had the opportunities to be in contact with their husbands and get stuffs from them. Among them Lady Sale was the luckiest. As mentioned previously, she got packets containing her need from her husband Robert sale continuously. In fourth June of 1842 she got another packet from her husband which she gives the explanation that;

Capt. Troup came to us; and brought me two parcels from Sale; one of which was for distribution amongst the ladies. Also letters enclosing copies of Lord Ellenborough's and Sir Jasper Nicholls' letters to him. Their contents were so gratifying that I shook off all my feverish feelings and concomitant weakness; and in the gladness of my heart felt quite well again.<sup>226</sup>

The *sirdar* was also considering their needs and was sending them “The Sirdar sent us some coarse cloth, soap, an Affghan chillumchee, and some tallow candles: others received sundry donations of the like kind.”<sup>227</sup> Among all these problems they had, Lady Sale got the happiness of becoming a grandmother while her daughter Mrs. Sturt give birth to a baby girl which she calls her as another female captive in her account.<sup>228</sup> Unfortunately with the hope to return to their country some unlucky women such as Mrs. Smith (Trevor’s Servant) died of fever and water on chest.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.,226.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 228-9.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.,229.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 251.

Besides all these miserable time Lady Sale was experiencing in Afghanistan, there has been propagandas about her in Britain specially among the news paper editors telling Lady Sale talks in support of Mahommed Akbar khan, they used to say she writes because she is prisoner, she shouldn't even write and so many other stuffs that have been talked behind him as she states in her account:

The late newspapers have not a little amused me. They show that the editors catch at every expression, used in any letters they have read; or on any comments they hear on news from Afghanistan. A regular controversy has arisen between one, who asserts that Lady Sale in her letters evinces a strong prepossession in favor of Mahommed Akbar Khan, and another, who thinks Lady Sale wrote, as she did, because she was a prisoner : to which the first rejoins, that he does not think Lady S. would, under any circumstances, write that which was false. There he is right : but I would not have written on the subject at all, unless I wrote as I thought : if people misunderstand, it is then-fault and not mine. Again, they say it were better I had never written at all....<sup>230</sup>

In answer to these entire she thinks that the detail was needed and she gave it and if people have problem with that then it's their fault thinking. She claims that she was not writing on favor of Akbar khan but was writing because she saw it essential. Although she is upset of Akbar's destroying the British Army but she says that they gave them comforts that an Afghan woman never had as she herself explains it better saying:

It is true that we have not common comforts; but what we denominate such are unknown to Affghan females: they always sleep on the floor, sit on the floor, &c. —hardships to us. We have bought common charpoys at two rupees each; that is, a bed formed by four poles and ropes tied across and across them. Had we tables and chairs, we have not space for them; so many inhabit the same apartment.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 255-6.

What she means to say here is an answer to those who say she is talking in favor of Akbar Khan. She says He told he will destroy the army and did it to not let his county be invaded but at least while these British men, women and children were his hostages he behaved well and treated them in a good manner. Even they used to call them as honored guests not captives.<sup>232</sup>

Continuing to write her journal, she gives the explanations of their march toward rescue. They have suffered great difficulties such as staying in the same room with men, staying in the basements of the houses; Lady Sale's being sick and having fever and many more. After marching miles and miles they got news that Robert Sale is close to them and this news gave Lady Sale more energy and strength.<sup>233</sup> Finally Robert Sale came and all the captives were freed. Lady Sale says that there have been no words to show her and her daughter's happiness seeing Sale, guns were fired in salute to their freedom and finally this disaster had an end.<sup>234</sup>

The reason behind my explanation from Lady Sale's account is to show the status of the western women having been created by war and the behavior of Afghan toward them which was much more of the opposite. Although they have been enemy but were treated as well as it was possible. The good perspective of Lady Sale toward Afghans are just a result of the good behaviors of the authorities. After seeing this entire one can question the reliability of all other sources where the writers gave detail that Afghan men were not treating the women well.

Mentioning it many times that the Lady Sale's account is a rich source about the descriptions of Afghans , this thesis shows that in spite of explaining about her own and

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. 275-6.

other western women life, their suffering and experiences, Florentia Lady Sale, give descriptions about both Royal and Ordinary Afghan women too. Regarding to their sections I used all those information about Afghan women in previous chapters. She has talked about the wives of Akbar khan and other female characters of his family, and some other women which taking region, tribes and class into the consideration I explained in the specific parts of this thesis.

To sum up we can get to the point that not only the Afghan women were the victim of the miserable sphere made by women but also some of the western women experienced to it too. As it explained in the account of Lady Sale, they had the worst of suffering by being left without food health facilities and cloths in the coldest weather of winter. Also one can see that how Afghan nation were tolerance toward women even if they are from their enemies.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

In the nineteenth century there were huge and critical differences between the genders in all around the world according to historical sources. Women were counted inferior to men and were subjected to stereotypes, such as being weak and lacking the physical ability of men, and they have been convicted for being obedience (in case they were not, they would get punishments), and more than that they did not have the right to make decisions of their own life. Even in Britain the women did not have the right to divorce till the first half of the century. They got the right of legal divorce in 1857 for instance.

Thus Afghanistan being a country fighting toward invasions and experiencing poor education was no exception. In contrast to the western world, Afghanistan was in a much more controversial and complicated situation, because the country was experiencing wars and was much more conservative that created a big sphere difference between the sexes. In the nineteenth-century Afghanistan passed a harsh period of invasion from one of the super powers of the world, the British Empire for a whole decade, and as it is obvious war had intentionally or unintentionally its negative and divesting impact on the life of people. Being very religious, conservative and being left with a shortage of education made the men in Afghanistan ignorant of the rights of their

women. Therefore, these problems placed women as the primary victims of war in the county. They did not have a good life and good education, even not good health facilities and other primary needs. They had to ask permission from the male members of their family for everything they wanted to do. The big and important decisions of their life such as marriage was taken by their men (fathers, brothers and even in some cases uncles and other close relatives).

All the outdoor sphere was dominated to male layer of the society and women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan were restricted by the domestic sphere such as cooking, taking care of husbands and children and looking after the household stuffs, which limited all their outdoor freedom. Female seclusion was another problem they faced. In order to go out they have to cover all from head to feet. (In rare cases women were allowed to go out without covering all body but only their head with a shawl or scarf). The tradition of blood feud that still continues in some rural areas was one of the most serious matters in nineteenth-century Afghanistan. Women not being counted as important members of family were given as a price for the crimes committed their male relatives, and were tortured by the victim's family.

The attempt of this thesis and the research has been done for it is to evaluate, illustrate and understand the life of Afghan women in the nineteenth century during the Anglo-Afghan wars taking all the life style differences applied to their life by regional, tribal and classification in the society into the concentration with the help of the primary documents and secondary literature in orientalist and travel writing discourse with accordance to Edward Said's fundamental work *Orientalism*. It can be seen that *Orientalism* has explored the argument of the gender and sexuality and opened a way for



other scholars to go further in this discourse. The primary documents of this thesis are accounts of those British soldiers who have visited the country during the war and some of them have written all daily actions they witnessed there. There is one critical problem with most of these accounts: that they were written by men who had a vision of the nineteenth century toward women where he sees men superior to women and did not see it necessary to talk much about the female characters during that period of time. However, there have been writers such as Alexander Burnes, J.A. Gray, Vincent Eyre and a few others that a detailed information about women in the nineteenth-century Afghanistan. Fortunately among those all 70 primary documents I read for this dissertation there was one female writer, called Lady Florentia Sale, whose account is not only a rich source about women but also about the military activities of British army. Despite being female, her account had taken the attention of newspaper and media at her time.

As illustrated in the primary and secondary documents applied for this thesis, one can see that Afghan women during the nineteenth century were the most miserable objects of their society who had no right to go out, marry the man she wanted, wear cloths she desired and no rights at all with the exception of few. According to these sources, it is cleared that in nineteenth-century Afghanistan, with the exception of few women in the royal families, the status of women was inferior to that of man due to some circumstances including of Afghans being highly conservative and religious who applied strict religious rules (but just for women), and an ongoing war which destroyed everything and men, being involved in war did not have the opportunity and time to get a good education to behave good toward women. Some other problems of women in the

nineteenth-century Afghanistan were culture bound which was hard to be solved. For instance, the tradition of force marriages, 'Bad' blood feud, dowry (in some regions), polygamy (both religious bound and cultural bound) and child marriage were among those which has been followed for decades and decades which was very hard to solve quickly.

The primary documents (a few among all) which give information about women, give details on the social status of women, marital status, blood feud, polygamy, royal women, education of women, economical contribution of women ,,etc but with a little detail. More than half of the documents if they mention about women, it's just the exact sentence: "many women and children died", and except than that they do not bother themselves to talk about women.

But this was not always the case. Still there have been men who treated the women as well as they could. There have been women who had equal rights as the men of their family as mentioned in previous chapters and women who had the control over men ( as Akram Khan's mother) who is mentioned previously in this research, as well as women who fought against enemies of the country. There have been women like Wafa Begum who rescued the Amir of the country and was involved in politics of the country and many more who are even not mentioned in the sources.

In spite all these discriminations toward women in Afghanistan, women had a huge and considerable contribution to the socio-economy of the country by producing the important substances that could help the economy of family and region. For instance, Afghan carpets which had and have a great place in business trade in world even still was waved by Afghan women. Besides they were able to make men's cloths,

taking part in agriculture and doing animal husbandry which all was a part of their contribution to economy of their family and region. All these contributions remained hidden.

According to the Orientalist discourse if we look at these sources, Afghanistan demonstrates an obvious and practical example in this regard. Some of the writers of the sources I have chosen for this thesis described Afghanistan and its people with the Orientalist view but of course not all. Although most of them were talking about the beauty of the country but they were Orientalist about the inhabitants of this land. For instance, Alexander Burnes who was criticized for being misjudge about the people of Afghanistan explaining the country nice calls its people ‘a race of men so turbulent and vindictive.’<sup>235</sup> Lady Florentia Sale who wrote many good things about Afghans in her account, sometimes looked at the country from an orientalist view by using the phrase ‘little more civilized’. George Forster<sup>236</sup> one of the other authors of my primary sources in his account, *A Journal From Bengal to England through the Northern Part of India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia, and into Russian by the Caspian- Sea*, makes derogatory expressions such as “Afghans are a rude, unlettered people.....” We can see that his view about Afghanistan is pretty much of the Orientalism.

In nineteenth-century Afghanistan not only did Afghan women suffer from the impact of the wars but western women who came to Afghanistan (to accompany their husbands who were in British army) had experience a harsh period of suffering. They have left without food that many of them have been lost starving, left without bedding and enough cloths in the coldest weather of winter where it was snowing that cause

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<sup>235</sup> . Burnes, 149.

<sup>236</sup> He was one of the employees of East India Company who traveled in Afghanistan in 1784.

again many of them to die of the cold and a period of captivity. Although in the period of captivity as mentioned in the primary documents, and account of Lady Sale, a women who lived each one of this misery, was not harsh but opposite they were treated very kindly and well from the Afghan side.

With the examples from the description of the travel writers in their accounts, the aim of this thesis was to provide evidence and evaluate the status of Afghan women in nineteenth-century Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars.

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