

I. Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers* and Rebellion against Patriarchal Oppression

This research entitled "Female Resistance in Anita Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers*" is an attempt to probe into the issues of women, especially focusing on the problems and difficulties faced by Muslim women in the name of cultural practices. The whole project revolves around an unnamed narrator, a fourteen years old girl's story who has a talent of making carpet and also has a dream of becoming best carpet designer. By using her own talent, she wants to get economically strong position which helps her to create her own distinct identity in a male dominated Iranian Muslim society during seventeenth century. The potentiality of becoming a successful carpet designer provides her financially strong position because of which she ends the *sigheh*, a three months marriage contract that is a part of Muslim culture during seventeenth century and still, is in practice in some Muslim community. Regardless of constant difficulties faced by a young girl in her quest of achieving economic independence, identity, self- reliance in the time and place where social rules are against her, reflects her awareness about male dominated cultural practices and perceptions regarding female. Her constant efforts and acts of going beyond the so called cultural practices show her strong determination of gaining equal position and rights like that of male as a whole.

Anita Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers* deals with the perception of male regarding female especially in Muslim society. In Muslim community females are not free even to wear the dresses according to their interest or choices. They should cover their faces under their veil. They are not allowed to wear colourful dress, cannot go alone outside the house. Women should confine themselves within their homes and one of their most important duties is to make husband happy and satisfied. In other words, society denies their agency and treats them as an object without having any

emotions and feelings. Through this novel, Anita is trying to explain the ideologies of the Muslim society which are formed to dominate the females only on the basis of biological differences they have without paying any attention to the talent and capacity they have. This research investigates into the issues of how domination leads female to revolt against so called cultural practices which are male centered. Muslim culture, especially Qur'an, a holy book never discriminates between male and female, rather it is the biological differences that they both have. It treats both male and female with equal importance but it is male who constructs the rules for the society in the name of culture to control over the female.

This novel is about a story of an unnamed narrator, a fourteen years old girl who lives with her mother in Isfahan in half uncle Gustaham's house after the death of her father and she has a talent of carpet making that she has learned from her father. It shows that it is not only the male who has talent of doing something and earns money to help his family but also a female. There is not any religion or culture that discriminates male and female.

Moreover, the Muslim religion does not treat women as an object and there is not any strict rules or regulations for dressing, way of life, particularly for female. But, it is patriarchal thinking that constructs roles to the women there by denying their subjectivity even in the case of marriage and taking responsibility of their own family. In the story, the protagonist forced by her uncle who belongs to sophisticated family and well educated to accept the *sigheh*. He describes it as a source of income and legal union of both. Gostaham views that "A sigheh is a legal union, yes legal, but some people consider it beneath them" (139). Her whole family is in favour of *sigheh* specially her uncle and aunt. Her aunt says "There is much causes for celebrating. It would be best if you accepted the offer and used it as another source of income"(140).

The unnamed narrator is conscious about the rights of female but she does not have any option to reject it because she is living in uncle's house with the dream of becoming best carpet designer in the society by learning this from uncle and for this she needs money which she does not have and if she accepts it, the person with whom temporary marriage was fixed would give her money in return of it. So, she becomes ready to get married with Fereydoon, a son of Horse trader. But, inwardly she is not happy which is clearly seen in her dialogue: "I feel as if he wants to buy me cheaply" (144). She also says that "My wedding seems more like a matter of tread than celebration" (147). This shows her consciousness about her rights. She is well known about the intention of Fereydoon behind the marriage but she accepts because of compulsion.

Despite the difficulties she faces, she never gives up her hope. Secretly she goes to her friend named Naheed to learn the skill of writing which is not allowed in her society, especially for a girl. Then she is able to write a letter to inform him that she is ending the marriage contract and also asks for forgiveness from Naheed. After this very act her uncle comes to meet her and says with surprise that "Mash Allah" 'My own daughter can't even hold a pen. Gostaham raised his eyebrows in wonder. You always surprising me" (383).

In addition to this, she lives in her uncle and aunt's house as a slave even after having the talent and he said with a sigh and exclaimed "if you had only been a boy" (267). It means he is giving emphasis on son, the symbol of conservative mentality that boy is everything. Her aunt forces her to cover her face while going outside and says that "you should wear it (picheh) when you're outside" (51). Here, the unnamed narrator's half uncle and aunt are the representative of the whole Muslim society, norms and values, rules that are constructed partially privileging males and

downgrading females.

To sum up, the major character of this story, who has learned the skill of carpet making, reading and writing, raises her voice against the perception towards *sigheh* that her parents have. She ends the contract even after knowing that this act may throw her from uncle's house. She lifts off her *picheh* in an open market place, or denies feminine duties and codes of dress determined by patriarchy in the name of culture. All she does is for gaining economic independence to create her own identity, to take responsibility of her family even after being a lady.

In order to justify the claim, this research mobilizes the theoretical concepts of Muslim feminism, particularly that of Margot Badran's and Haidhed Moghissi's *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* and *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism* respectively. Muslim feminism is a form of feminism concerned with the role of women in Islam. Like other feminisms, it also focuses on the equality of all women regardless of gender in public and private life. In other words, it is concerned with the issues of equal participation of females both in public and private sphere of life. Islamic feminism speaks on the behalf of Muslim women's rights, specially gender equality and social justice. By bringing the Qur'an/holy book, and *hadith* (saying of Muhammad), it seeks to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality of religion and encourages the questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of those religious texts that dominate women.

Similarly, the rules, norms and values that are in practice in Muslim society in the name of culture or religion is just male centered. Otherwise Qur'an affirms the equality to all human beings. It is a patriarchal ideology which constructs rules for women and imposes it upon them just to deprive them of achieving financially stable life themselves even by misinterpreting the religious scriptures. These kinds of

practices create identity crisis in females' life because according to social rules, women's desires and interests are nothing in comparison to males. Their only duty is to make their husband happy and satisfied.

In the novel, the main character becomes the victim of male ego because she is forced by her uncle to accept temporary marriage contract which she does not like to do so. In the same way, *Sharia*, an Islamic law, is also not in the favour of female, but it was said that it is based on Muslim religion. So we should accept it and follow the rules that are written in it. In reality, *Sharia* is not based on religion if it is, it does not allow Fereydoon to marry Naheed even before ending the *sighah* that he had with narrator. He never said that "A man can marry the way he likes" (242) when Qur'an affirms the principle of equality.

The narrator accepts the contract and shares the bed with Fereydoon with the expectation that he would take care of her. But in return of her sacrifices, Fereydoon turns his deaf ears towards her pain and dissatisfactions which is clearly seen in her words: "I winced but he was not looking at me, although I ached" (172). It means Fereydoon is indifferent towards her expectation of love with respect. In this context, it is relevant to quote Margot Badran who writes in her book *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* that it is true that Allah granted beauty to women and strength to male more than female but it does not mean that male used it to overpower female without concerning about her interest or pain and treat them as a sex object who does not have any emotions and feelings. And here Fereydoon is doing the same and he says that "From the day I saw you shed your coverings, I wanted to have you" (157). So, the very word "wanted" and "have" are connoting negative meaning or shows that he does not have respect to her. His only intention is to play with her body.

Under Islamic law, marriage was no longer status, but rather a contract in which the women's consent was imperative if it is based on religion. So, Badron raises the question against these types of practices which are male centered which are not related to the Muslim religion in reality. That is why, she brings Qur'an into discussion and states that "Qur'an affirms the principle of equality of all human beings, and the practice of equality between women and men has been impeded or subverted by patriarchal ideas (ideologies) and practices" (247).

Furthermore, in most of the Islamic countries, women are the victim of "sharia" based rules and fundamentalism. So, Muslim feminism questioned the "sharia" (Islamic law) also known as Muslim personal law (MPL) or Muslim family law, marriage law, divorce law, and abortion law. Muslim feminism also raises the questions about the family support bill in the parliament that would have allowed men to marry a second wife without his first wife's permission. The same things happened in the novel too. Fereydoon marries with Neheed even in the period of having *sighesh* with the protagonist. When the protagonist shows her dissatisfaction about his decision or act of marriage, he says "that does not matter either" (242). He is showing his male chauvinism here. Indirectly he is saying that he is male so free to do anything and she does not have any authority to interfere in his matters. It shows the male centeredness. The whole society or rules are in favour of Fereydoon which means males.

So, Muslim feminism argues that Islamism has gendered equality but these texts like Qu'an, *hadith* are misread by misogynists. In other words, the cultural practices, dress code, marriage law which are in practice in Muslim society are just male centered. These practices are not Islamic because Qur'an, a holy book never discriminates or dominates on the basis of gender rather it focuses on the equality. So

the Islamic law also needs to be reformed according to the religious text.

Anita Amirrezvani, an Iranian writer born in Tehran who currently lives in northern California, is pursuing an MFA in fiction at San Francisco state university. She has received fellowship from the Hedge Brook Foundation for women writers. This is her first novel written in English. She has written so many books and articles in her own language. She is especially concerned about the issues of women from Muslim communities and also presents the history of Iranian society as she does it in this novel *The Blood of Flowers*. She has also written the novel *Equal of Sun* by following the same trend. Women's problems, sufferings and their place in the Muslim society, their revolt against conservative social perceptions regarding female and their capacity or talent of doing the things like that of males are some of the major issues she foregrounds in her writings.

Amirrezvani illuminates the inner lives of women in a society where their roles are highly restricted. In the surface level her almost all novels seem to be historical fiction but in deeper level they are mainly concerned with the gender issues, issues of women and their revolt against social rules constructed by patriarchy. Through her novel, she opens a hidden world to the reader, the life of women hidden behind veils and walls enjoyed either in brutal poverty or pampered luxury.

Though the novel is about fourteen years old Muslim girl, her pang and talent of rug making and exploration of Iranian history, arts, architecture, and customs to great extent, it is mainly about the journey of unnamed narrator and her struggle for economic independence and identity by resisting against the norms determined by male in the name of culture through her skill. It is not only the story of a protagonist rather of many possible young girls living in seventeenth century Persia. The talent of rug making is a perfect vehicle for the narrator through which she is able to escape

poverty from her life and from her mother too. Parissa Ebrahimzadeh also illustrates in her review stating that: “Her story depicts a struggle for economic independence and Identity in the time and place where odds are against her. But, Narrator’s passion and talent for making carpet provides with the means and the opportunity to find both sexual and financial Independence” (195-196). In the novel, the narrator chooses the carpet making as her occupation which is supposed to be the males’ forte. But, the protagonist crosses the boundary set by Muslim culture. She subverts the patriarchal ideologies that are prevailed in Muslim society. As a result, she becomes best carpet designer at the end of the novel. So, the narrator’s passion and talent for making carpet helps her to find both sexual and financial independence.

The protagonist has faced so many obstacles in her way of achieving all these things which are mentioned above but she is headstrong heroine. She is devoid of love, friendship and even after having the talent she is always followed by hunger, illness and beggary. Not only this, she is also the victim of Islamic law *Sharia* that is not in the favour of females and is under the control of male during seventeenth century. Fereydoon is indifferent to the Narrator’s pain and desire of love with respect and marries Naheed before ending *sigheh*. The whole society raises the voice against his act. Her own parents are not dear to do so. It is also clarified in the review by Donna Rifkind published in Washington Post which state that: “The contract cedes almost all power to the man, who reminds free to marry another more permanent wife, living the temporary bride burdened with the shame of legally acceptable but socially unsavory arrangement” (1).

The Blood of Flowers is interpreted by different critics in different time by different perspectives. The review by Back Bay Books states: “the novel provides a wide – ranging view of life as lived by different social classes” (1-368). In the same

way, San Francisco Chronicle, a newspaper writes that: “*The Blood of Flowers* tells an unforgettable story: a tale of sensuality, of the treachery of friendship, of the power of love. Plot and characters inspired by Iranian tales. It is tribute to the anonymous artisans of Iran” (1). Moreover, some other critics have interpreted the text as a historical fiction or as an exploration of seventeenth century Iranian history and peoples’ occupation specially that of carpet making. In spite of the fact that these all issues are interpreted by the writers from different perspectives, the issues of Muslim women, their denied subjectivity and agency in the text is ignored. So, the researcher attempts to fill the gap that is left untouched by other researchers.

To justify the issues of female, especially Muslim women’s resistance against the so called cultural values or rules with reference to Amirrezvani’s *Blood of Flowers*, this research mobilizes the theoretical concepts developed on the Muslim feminism by different critics and their insights of Muslim cultural practices. Muslim feminism has its own relevance and in the text there are some evidences to prove the above mentioned claims. Moreover, the focus of this researcher is to probe in to the issues of why major character of this novel has learned the skill of rug making? Why did she go to Naheed’s house to learn reading and writing? How are the norms and values that are in practices as a part of Muslim culture become meaningless and obstacles in her way even though she has belongingness to it? Why does she raise her voice against her own parents’ decision about *sigheh* and end it although it has been legal in Iran for hundreds of years? The researcher argues that the unnamed narrator is denying feminine duties, codes of dress, cultural practices determined by society and all she is doing are for gaining financially sustainable position to make her own identity, to take responsibilities of her family herself.

In order to justify the issues of the protagonist’s revolt against Muslim social

and cultural practices, norms and values, rules and regulations Anita Kynsiletho's *Islamic Feminism: current perspectives* is relevant. She talks about Muslim feminism, its definitions, tools, major arguments raised by Muslim feminism in this book. While talking about Muslim feminism she writes that: "Islamic feminism is widely discussed phenomenon. It is embedded in the wider discourses concerning women's rights and Islam, and the position of women in Muslim majority societies as well as of Muslim women in societies where Muslim populations constitute a minority" (9). It gives emphasis on Muslim women's issues, their problems, rights, and position in Muslim society. It focuses how the so called Muslim cultural practices subvert women. She further writes that "it challenges the patriarchal interpretations of Qur'an and "Hadith". The Qur'an contains principles of gender equality and wider issues of social justice, thus laying grounds for challenging patriarchal traditions" (10). That is why, religion and religious texts itself do not treat women unfavourably. It is a male who treats women with prejudices that he is superior and cultured, whereas woman is inferior and wild.

Fereydoon, in the novel does the same. When the narrator comes in his home for the first time, he teaches her how to eat the foods. He examines her behaviours. He teaches even how to sit on the cushion. He treats her as an object of beauty. He compares his fingers with her. His hands are soft whereas the narrator's are rough because of rug making and hard works. So he suggests her to go in hammam (a public bath house). There she is treated as a vessel made of glass by female servants of Fereydoon which the narrator does not like to be. It is clearly seen in her monologue:

They removed my clothes gently and folded them with care, although they were just the simple cotton garments I wore at home. When I was naked, they guided me into the hottest tub, as if I couldn't get there on

my own. Because I had cared for myself in many ways since I was small, it felt peculiar to be treated like a vessel made of glass. (169)

It shows her dissatisfactions about the tradition that denies her existence and capability of doing something. She was treated as an object in public bath house which she does not like. She is a matured girl not a vessel made of glass. The tenderness they are showing towards her is meaningless. She can do the things herself.

In the same way, Margot Badran advocates on behalf of Muslim women's rights. She gives priority on deeply rooted teachings of equality in religious texts. She brings Qur'an and "Hadith" into discussion. She highlights the misunderstandings and misconceptions of Qur'anic verses and "Hadith" which were applied by misogynists for women with negative consequences. But in reality, Muslim religious text never subjugates women rather it focuses on mutual help. In other words, "Hadith" says that both male and female are friends and help-mates. According to Badran "Muslim feminism is a feminist discourse and practices articulated within an Islamic paradigm. Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeks rights and justice for women and for men in the totality of their existence" (242). It focuses on the principle of equality that embedded in Quran. Therefore, methodologies of Islamic feminism are *ijtihad* (independent investigation of religious sources) and *tafsir* (interpretation of Qur'an).

In the novel, the narrator suffers a lot and even after having the talent of carpet making has to live as a servant in her uncle house. Like her uncle, she also has capacity of rug making. That is why, she goes to uncle's workshop and requests him to teach how to make designs in the carpet. Instead of being happy he looked surprised and says "What more do you want to know? Everything" (72). The narrator

lives in his house, takes foods from his kitchen which is enough according to her uncle for her. There is nothing to worry and nothing more she needs. But, the protagonist being deterministic shows her talent for making carpet to Gustaham and when he sees her carpet became happy and consider for a moment and says that “I never had a son that I could train to carry on my work”, he said. ‘Neither of my daughters ever needed to learn. What a pity you are not a boy! You’re the right age to apprentice in workshop” (72). It exposes his conservative thinking that only being a boy is sufficient to learn whether that is carpet or anything else. He forgets the principle of equality that is embedded in religious texts.

The research is divided in to three parts. The first chapter entitled “Amirrezvani’s *Blood of Flowers* and Rebellion against Patriarchal Oppression”, deals with the brief introduction of the writer. It also tries to clarify the main problem that the researcher has tried to investigate through the research. It also gives general ideas about Muslim feminism that the researcher has applied. The second chapter entitled “Female Resistance in Amirrezvani’s *Blood of Flowers*”, foregrounds the unnamed narrator’s acts of resistance against social values, rules, which are taken as a part of Islamic religion and was in practice during seventeenth century with the belief that these are related to the holy book “Qur’an” and saying of Muhammad known as “hadith”. Moreover, the chapter is a textual analysis and also deals with the different tools to be applied in the text. Finally, the last part entitled “Subversion of Patriarchal Normativity in Amirrezvani’s *Blood of Flowers*”, deals with the conclusion, specially focusing on the finding of the researcher.

II. Passion for Art as a Means of Resistance in Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers*

Anita Amerrezvani's *Blood of flowers* foregrounds the female resistance against Muslim cultural practices and laws which are male centered. In other words, laws and social cultural values are constructed by males, especially Islamic fundamentalists, according to their interest in order to dominate female. But, the protagonist is aware about this and raises her voice against it and subverts them through her different acts which are focused in the text. The different acts that are exposed in the text to valorize female resistance are: her act of carpet making, reading and writing, eating meat in the open market place by showing face (unveiling), ending the temporary marriage contract known as *sigheh* by herself even, when Fereydoon with whom she had a marriage contract, wants to continue this. In spite of the fact that those all acts are restricted for women in the Muslim society, the protagonist is rebellious enough to dismantle them.

In Muslim society, women do not have any authority to make decision. They do not have permission to work outside the house or work as a paid labor. They are not given any agency. Their only duty is to confine themselves within the four walls of their house and do domestic unpaid works. They should cover their face under the veil and they cannot even go outside the house for visit alone and without the permission of their male guardians. Before marriage women have to follow the order of their fathers and brothers and after marriage of their husbands because in Muslim society there is a belief that male is superior; female is inferior; man is cultural being whereas woman is wild being; man has power of decision making whereas woman has the home making. To justify these above mentioned things, the believer takes the help of religious text and they claim that "The Qur'an makes man 'the managers of the affairs of women'" (223). But Muslim feminism argues that this is just the

conservative reading and interpretation of religious texts by males. These types of interpretations are made to support male domination.

In the same way, Haideh Moghissi also expresses the same kind of opinion regarding Muslim cultural values and social rules in her book *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism*. She argues that these are just “misogynist interpretations of the Qur’an and the male serving fabrication of the *hadith*” (127). Here, she talks about the sex segregation and the gender-based restriction that has been imposed on the Muslim women. Otherwise both male and females are creation of the God and equal in his eyes.

Similarly, Margot Badran focuses on the misinterpretation of religious texts by males. By giving emphasis on new Qur’anic interpretation which is known as a methodology or tool of Muslim feminism, Badran elaborates the principle of gender equality. So, she states: “patriarchal ideas articulated in the language of Islam subverted the practice of gender equality and social justice which the Qur’an puts forward” (284). The equality of women and man as “*insan*” across the public private spectrum which is grounded in Qur’an but previously its verses were read through the male perspective. That is why, rereading of the Qur’an is necessary. In other words, Qur’an articulates the equality of all human beings irrespective of sex, race or ethnicity.

The novel revolves around the story of a fourteen years old Muslim girl whose life has been changed after the untimed death of her father that brings so many changes and sufferings in her and her mother’s life. After this incident they go to Isfahan and start living there in half uncle’s house and also she requests him to teach how to make the design in the carpet because she has a talent of rug making. Her uncle Gustaham teaches her and she learns very fast. Gustaham becomes happy and

also serious and says “what a pity you’re not a boy!” (72). Gustaham’s words foreground the deeply rooted gender biased mentality and conservative thinking of the Muslim society during that period.

But the unnamed narrator keeps on doing practices that she has learned from his uncle and at last she got what she wants. She becomes best carpet designer and also is able to open her own workshop where she hires two lady workers and pay them. This is her great achievement in male dominated Muslim society. She is well conscious about her rights of working as paid labor to make the life better by gaining financially strong position in the society. But her aunt and uncle do not give permission to work outside the house because according to the holy book Qur’an, man is made to provide her material support which is indicated in *sura, 4:34* “men are responsible for (*qawwamuna ‘ala*) women because God has given the one more than the other (*bimafaddala*), and because they support them from their means” (249). It means that men have God given rights to work outside the house for gaining economic independence and provide supports to his wife, taking responsibilities of the family is his duty.

But in the novel, the protagonist, even after being a girl works outside the house and takes care of her mother which is not allowed in the Muslim community (*umma*) because Muslim society has male-headed family structure. Muslim society only gives this authority to man. Indirectly, protagonist’s act of rug making and of taking responsibility of her mother shows her revolutionary attribute. What she does is to resist against such conservative practices and interpretation of Qur’anic verses. Margot Badron in her book *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* also focuses on this fact. In her book, she writes that “only in some particular contexts and circumstances will males and females assume particular roles and functions.

Woman alone can give birth and nurse, and thus, in this particular circumstance, a husband is enjoined by the Qur'an to provide material supports, as indicated in *sura 4 aya 34*" (249). She further explains it by stating that the term *qawwamuna'ala* (men are responsible for women) is not an unconditional statement of male authority and superiority over all women for all time" (249). Badran also cites *sura 9, aya 71* Qur'anic verse which unequivocally enunciates the equality of men and women. According to this, "The believers, male and female, are protectors (*'awliyya*) of one another" (249).

It clearly affirms the mutuality of responsibilities of men and women. The term "qawwamuna 'ala" (men are responsible for women) is universalized by the classical male interpreter. In fact, it is contingent and specific. It simply indicates that men ought to provide for women in the context of child-bearing and rearing. It does not necessarily mean that for all the time. Males and females are equal and biologically different. The Qur'an addresses this biological difference where it is significant- that is, in the domain of procreation. In the context of conjugal relationship when a woman is involved in childbearing and nursing(which only woman can do), the husband is given responsibility to provide material supports, which is seen as a balancing of labor.

In addition to this, the Qur'an does not lay out specific roles, but instead affirms the notion of the mutuality of the conjugal relationship; that spouses are protector of each other, or mutual helpers. It is patriarchal thinking that specifies and imposes roles, and does so in a social order that places males above female in complex hierarchical power grid, justifying in the name of Islam. The designation of the specific role in the society and family is simply the product of social or cultural construction. So, to use biology as pivot for human inequality in family and society is

absurd. That is why, the protagonist of the novel takes the responsibility of her mother according to the context. She has authority to work outside the house if she wants for gaining financial support like that of her father and half uncle.

Moreover, the narrator in the novel goes to Naheed's house, her neighbor and friend to learn the skill of writing and reading even her own uncle's two daughters do not know how to hold a pen. She frequently goes to Naheed's house and learns. But in the Muslim society, education is male prerogative. Women are banned from gaining scholarly education. Only few number of women from upper class get chance to be educated but they are also not allowed to utilize their knowledge or skill in the field. Furthermore, Naheed is from upper class whereas unnamed narrator is from village where people have problem to join hand to mouth. So, she is deprived of gaining any formal education: "I had asked Naheed to teach me to write. She gave me lessons in her workroom whenever I visited. If anybody comes to talk with us, I was to pretend I was just drawing. It was not common for a village girl to learn to write" (77). In this dialogue, the unnamed narrator is exposing her inner desire of reading and writing.

Although she is from village, she learns to write secretly going to Naheed's house because this very act of learning is not allowed in her society, especially for the girl from village. But after revolution, educational opportunities were given, at least for urban, upper class women. And despite these opportunities, they do not have permission to use their skill in any field that may help them to come out from bitter dominated position. Naheed is its example because she has education or knowledge but she does not have permission to utilize it to make her life better. Because of this, she lives as a dependent one before and after marriage. In other words, women do not get any chance to utilize their talent for gaining economically strong position like that of man. Similarly, Haideh Moghissi advocates on behalf of Muslim women by saying

that “these are the Islamists’ manipulative use of gender issues” (133). She further explains it by citing the Qur’anic verse *sura 4:34,124* which states that “Qur’an makes men and women equal in the eyes of God” (140).

It concludes that gender discrimination is not of Islamic origin, but is the result, instead, of historically rooted misconceptions. If one is true follower of the Islamic religion, why does one not pay any attention to the issues of equality for all human beings except biological differences that both male and female have? Just because of the “male ego” the principle of equality is forgotten. If really, in Qur’an, there are some verses which focus on gender discrimination or gives unilateral emphasis on male rights why are not that changed? Moghissi by focusing on above questions says that “Islam, like other religions and ideologies, has a contingent character” (140). So, in the novel, what the protagonist does is not against the socio-cultural rules and values, rather it is for change and justice. Otherwise, Qur’an affirms the principle of equality. It is just gender biased misreading of the Qur’an, not the text itself.

In addition to this, Kynsileth also talks about the female education in her book *Islamic Feminism: current perspectives*. She writes that we need to be aware about “pure Islam”, “custom”, or “traditions” because the “Hadith” puts forwards the ideas about female education. She further focuses on the saying of “Hadith” and writes “there is a Hadith that says that searching for knowledge is an obligation for men and women” (74). So, both have equal rights to get better education in their life. Only on the basis of biological differences, no one can deprive female from gaining scholarly education. Moreover, she states:

[...] if she [the mother] hasn’t acquired the necessary knowledge, how will she accomplish her role appropriately? This is why in Islam it is

an obligation to study. There is a hadith that says that searching for knowledge is an obligation for men and women, thus, for men and for women [emphasis put in by the woman], and a woman with enough knowledge can educate her children suitably, and can contribute to the positive evolution of society. (74)

This emphasizes on female education which is focused by the "Hadith" itself. A well-educated female can bring the positive changes in the society. She can also encourage other to read and write. She can teach her children because a mother is 'a first teacher of the child'. In the novel, the narrator also thinks about it while holding newly born Malekh's daughter in her arms and says in her monologue that "I thought about how I'd like to teach her every things I know" (421). It shows that she likes to teach every things to Malekh's daughter about carpet making which helps her to be a best carpet designer in future. So, education is no more male prerogative and by learning reading and writing she is not violating socio cultural norms and values rather it is her rights.

Furthermore, Muslim feminism speaks against the *sharia* (Islamic law) and its rigid interpretation, bad *hijabi*, civil code, Family Protection Acts (FPA) and criminal law that includes stoning of women to death, a punishment taken from orthodox Islamic texts and *sharia* for adultery. According to *sharia*, "hijab" is compulsory for women. But for Muslim feminism, these are just male centered and *sharia* was rigidly interpreted by fundamentalists which specially gives emphasis on gender relation, sex segregation because of it women are forcefully pushed under the veil. A fourteen years old Muslim girl also becomes the victim of male dominated social values. She is forced to wear black color veil while going outside the house. Her family especially aunt, forces her to wear it. But when she comes outside the house, she goes to watch polo game with Naheed and they lift off their veil while watching. Their revolt against

so called male dominated cultural values is clearly seen in this act and in Naheed dialogue: “I flipped up my picheh” (79). It shows they are raising their voices against these kinds of conservative practices, prejudiced social values, and dress code determined by male biased archaic legislation.

According to the law, women’s clothing should meet these criteria: women must cover their entire body except their faces and hands, the cloth should be thick enough to conceal what is underneath, and loose fitting, and women should not wear bright color clothes that are adorned so that they may attract men’s attention whereas main character of this novel is not following all these rules mentioned in *sharia*. She goes alone in the market and eats the meat which is restricted in her society. This is her revolutionary act and that she clearly expresses: “I lifted my “picheh” and bit into the dripping meat. Passer-by stared, surprised to see a veiled women revealing her face, but I was too hungry to care” (377). This shows her dissatisfaction regarding the perception of veil and a woman’s limitation that the Muslim society imposes.

In the same way, Haideh Moghissi also claims that “Islamic rules are male-biased, and a culturally distorted interpretation of the Qur’an. The Qur’an never meant men to be superior to women, or to force the *hijab* on women which prevented them from taking the same social roles as men” (130). These lines indicate for the modification of *sharia* and Qur’anic interpretations. These are the practices held by the conservative, including Islamic clerics and jurists, who manipulate public sentiments to block changes and to present modern values and practices as un-Islamic and anti-Qur’an.

Similarly, Badran also talks about the *hijab* (veil). She says that a woman can use *hijab* as a symbol of their own Islamic religion but it is not necessary only for women when both are equal: why are only women used it? While going outside.

These are the misogynists' constructions. They do not want to see women's participation in both public and private sphere of life. That is why, they create these types of rules and norms in the society. Otherwise, there is not any religion that discriminates on the basis of gender or sex. It shows male chauvinism. It symbolizes the marginality of women. So, she writes that "face covering was not an Islamic requirement but a patriarchal practice justified in the name of Islam" (230).

In the novel, protagonist is forced by her aunt to wear veil while going outside the house. At first she wears it but when she reaches at open market place she lifts off her veil. She does not like to follow such tradition that deprives women from participating in public sphere of life. So, without wearing veil, the narrator and her friend Naheed goes to watch polo game where only man can go. Her acts of watching polo game and lifting off the veil show her revolutionary or rebellious nature. On the surface level, she denies her aunt's saying, but in deeper level she dismantles the patriarchal norms and values that forgets women's agency. But, it does not mean that she does not respect her Muslim culture and its social values. She respects her social traditions but does not like to follow it blindly even if these are male biased. She does not accept the veil as proper attire for women because face covering is not an Islamic requirement as indicated by Badran. That is why, she eats the meat in an open market place by unveiling herself. It means she uses veil as a head scarf on the ground of tradition but not as a visible symbol of the subjugation of women.

The Qur'an does not state that both men and women should be dressed modestly. It however does not use the words veil, hijab, burka, or chador. It uses the word *jilbad* meaning "cloak" and *khumur* meaning shawl. These do not cover the face, hand or feet. The whole body is covered with burka, chador, and other items of clothing is a traditional and conservative reading of the Qur'an by Mullahs' men. It is

not what Qur'an itself states. Qur'an states (*in sura 2:256*): "let there be no compulsion in religion" (53-55). So, no one can force them to wear veil while going outside by taking the help of conservative, male biased reading of Qur'an and *hijab* cannot be prescribed as proper attire for women.

Sharia also prescribes the punishment for "bad hijab", which means improper veiling. It is considered as a cultural crime. "Bad hijab" means uncovered head, showing make-up, uncovered arms and legs, light clothes. The punishment of "bad hijab" was 74 lashes according to the penal law. Later, somehow, the penal law was reformed and the punishment of "bad hijab" was reduced to prison. Because of these kinds of rules determined by Islamic legislation, women suffer the most. It is discriminatory as claimed by Haideh Moghissi. She states:

shari'a distinguishes between the rights of human beings on the basis of sex/and religion. The *shari'a* unapologetically discriminates against women and religious minorities. If the principles of the *shari'a* are to be maintained, women cannot be treated any better. The *Shari'a* is not compatible with the principles of human beings. (141)

It means *shari'a* is not democratic in the case of veil or dress code. The rules regarding veil or "bad hijab" symbolically represent their gender discrimination and women become the victim of such rules determined by fundamentalist in the name of culture without paying any attention to the principle of equality that is embedded in Qur'an or in religious texts. They even claim that unveiling appearance may arouse sexual desires in the male which is not true. It is just the conservative interpretation of consequences of "bad hijabi", nothing more than this.

In Iranian Muslim society, there are so many customs which represent male domination clearly in practice and have been legal for hundreds of years. Among

them “sigheh” is one. “sigheh” means a temporary marriage contract or three month marriage contract. It can be renewed if the man wishes it, otherwise not. Women neither have any authority to end it nor begin or women do not prefer these relation but they are forced by their parents or family to accept it. “Shari’a” also gives full rights to the man whether to renew or end it.

The narrator is also forced by her uncle and aunt to accept the temporary marriage contract with a man, named Fereydoon. They described it as a source of income and compare it with her luck and said that because of her good luck or fortune she was looked by such a good and wealthy man, a son of horse trader. Unwillingly, she accepts it and gets married with him with the expectation of love with respect like that of her father did with the mother and Gostaham is doing with Gordiyeh. But her expectation goes in vain when he treats her as a sex object. His only one desire is to get sexual pleasure by using her body or playing with her body. He does not show any respect towards her. This very act shown by Fereydoon makes her unhappy that we can see in her words: “I felt a hollowness inside as if something were missing, something I could not name” (160). This provides evidence for her dissatisfaction, unhappiness regarding his behaviours. She further says that “this was nothing like what I had expected of my marriage. It didn’t remind me at all of how my father had adored my mother, or how Gostaham treated Gordiyeh” (173). She expects affection, sexual pleasure which is natural and respect too, but Fereydoon does not paying any attention towards her desires and feelings.

According to Muslim religion, there is a paradisaal female model known as “huri”, the ideal female. The “huri” is created to be consumed as a sexual partner; her value comes from her physical beauty which God gives as a gift to the believer for his good deeds, piety, and self-control in life in the paradise. This myth was applied in the

state legislation or was incorporated into the family law and male started to treat female as a sex object. In the novel *Fereydoon* is doing the same by taking the help of this male center myth. He thought that protagonist was created by God for him as his reward. He does not have any love or affection towards her. So, *Fereydoon* is representative of the strict follower of conservative Islamic religion that is male centered. Islamic conservative religion treats female as sex object and believes that man has God given rights to exploit her for procreation as *Fereydoon* is doing in this novel with protagonist. He is gaining sexual pleasure from unnamed narrator and always talks about child bearing because his first wife died and he needs child specially son. That is why he hires the protagonist, otherwise he would not do it.

In the same way, in Islamic society, there is also another concept about women which takes woman as weak in moral judgment and deficient in cognitive capacity, yet sexually forceful and irresistibly seductive. These types of misconception hinder woman from gaining their dreams. It is focused on the guardianship of male directly. Haideh Moghissi also states: “it justifies surveillance of woman by family, community, and state” (20). It means this is just a misconception or belief which is constructed by the male to prove that male is superior whereas female is inferior.

Furthermore, sex is natural desire but Islamic orthodox view develops a law to justify this sexual hierarchy, with women as sexual objects at the service of men. Muslim believers interpret Qur’an according to their desires. So in Muslim community there is a belief that Qur’an makes men the manager of the affairs of women’, requiring righteous women to be ‘obedient, guarding the secret for God’s guarding’, advising women to cast down their eyes, guard their private parts and reveal not their adornment... save to their husband’ (22). But Moghissi said that this is

a sexual hierarchy and these instructions are not Qur'anic and should not be used in laws. Fundamentalists construct laws and they incorporate Qur'anic instructions and verses to justify their male ego. They used *sura 2: 223* to justify wife beating in *sharia* which states that "women are 'tillage' for the male believer, to go to when he wishes. If a wife refuses her husband's sexual demands she is to be punished" (23). These Fundamentalists jurisdiction in Iran, lays down the rights and obligation of women, based on the view that is the women's religious duty is to submit to all sexual demands for her husband. But this is not true Qur'an as it is interpreted inappropriately and used it in the law especially in family law. Fereydoon with the help of this law hires protagonist and at the same time also get married with Naheed. Because of the male centered law, women cannot enjoy the full legal status.

According to Islamic law *sharia*, young virgin women need the permission of their father or guardians to enter a marriage contract; fathers can legally marry off their underage daughters for a set of price and a man can end the marriage contract without the consent or even the knowledge of his wife. So, Gustaham made a decision about the temporary marriage contract of the protagonist. But she ends it by herself. Because of her act her half uncle and aunt become furious and requests her not to do so. Protagonist is not ready to continue it any more. She does not like to be treated as a sex object in the bed of Fereydoon. For this act, she was beaten by her uncle even though being a deterministic she states that "I could not bear it any longer! I cried, although the pain when I opened my lips was fierce. 'How would you feel if every three months you had to worry about whether your husband still wanted you?" (337). This shows her strong reaction against such social practices followed by Muslim community in the name of Islam.

In the same way, her mother also supports her to revolt against *sigheh*. She

knows that once her daughter's virginity was lost she never gains back throughout her life. So it is better to marry a man for life instead of marrying for three months which explains in her words:

Daughter of mine, spring of my heart', cried my mother, opening her arms towards me. A *sigheh*? said my mother, looking puzzled. I know that pilgrims to Qom may contract a *sigheh* for an hour or a night, but these are arrangements for pleasure. You want my daughter to marry for that?' a fierce expression entered her eyes. (137)

Her mother also does not like to accept this temporary marriage contract for the sake of money because self-worth is more precious property than money. But at that time the narrator has no option and accepts it but when Fereydoon gets married to Naheed she ends it by herself, even though the Islamic law *sharia* gives full right only to a man in case of beginning and ending it.

Here, it is relevant to talk about the Kynsiletho's insights about Islam. She criticizes the practices of forced marriages, insisting that "Islam prohibits marriages against the will of the women. Islam provided rights like divorcing or choosing husband on the basis of the principle of mutual respect-rights" (75). So, Islamic law is not based on religion. It was constructed by male to supports their "male ego". That is why, the protagonist has full rights to end *sigheh*. Her aunt and uncle cannot force her to continue it. In the novel, the narrator ends the temporary marriage contract and gives priority to her talent of carpet making instead of mute adoptions. She questions and criticizes the practices that lead her to the way of becoming best lady carpet maker among all in the society. Whereas, her friend Naheed accepts the marriage proposal of her parents without questioning it. She does not dear to raise her voice against it even though she is educated and aware about her rights and most important

thing is that she loves Iskandar not Fereydoon.

In the same way Haided Moghissi talks about these cultural practices which prevail in Muslim communities in the name of Islamic culture and she argues that these are un-Islamic. The holy book Qur'an introduced the equality of all human being (insan). Similarly, Margot Badran also cites the words of Ebadi, an Iranian judge and activist to advocate on the behalf of Muslim women and raises her voice against so called cultural practices which claimed that these practices are instructed by the Hadith (saying and deeds of Prophet Muhammad). According to Ebadi:

[The] divine book [the Qur'an] sees the mission of all prophets as that of inviting all human beings of uphold justice...the discriminatory plight of women in Islamic societies, whether in the sphere of civil law or in the realm of social, political and cultural justice, has its roots in male dominated culture prevailing in these societies, not in Islam.

(317)

The protagonist is deprived of gaining special position in the society just because of male dominated cultural practices, gender discriminatory norms and values.

Similarly, when protagonist ends the marriage contract that she had with Fereydoon, her parents lost the money because Fereydoon became ready to buy the carpet made by Gustaham only because protagonist accept the *sigheh*. The unnamed narrator's uncle and aunt become furious and threatened: "Don't forget we have lost money because of you" (328). Now, protagonist is not in the condition of listening what her parents said. She raises her voice against these socio-cultural practices and beliefs which we can clearly see in her dialogue that she delivered as an answer to her parents' perception, "I have lost my virginity because of you', you can always make another carpet; I said coldly, My virginity is something I can never restore" (328).

Her parents compare her acts with loss of money but she compares it with her loss of virginity which is very precious property for her. There is not softness in her voice. Rather, it is rebellious. Haideh Moghissi also talks about the *sharia* and gives emphasis to modify it according to time. *Sharia* gives total rights to the male not the female. She gives an example of civil code which gives the husband unilateral rights to divorce by ruling that a “man can divorce his wife if and when he so wishes” (105). She further talks about the *sharia* and states “it did not include, for example, the prohibition of polygamy and temporary marriage; nor did it ensure women’ equality of rights in inheritance or women’ rights” (104).

Sharia is male centered. It gives unilateral emphasis on male rights, male superiority. It does not consider about the female rights and their position in the society. Because of this Islamic law (*sharia*) females are in the bitter position, they are deprived of being active participant in both public and private sphere of life. So the divorce law, civil code, family protection act should be modified and rigid interpretation of *sharia* never provides equal justice to the female.

Moreover, *sharia* also talks about the legal marriage age for girls. According to the *sharia*, the legal marriage age for girls is thirteen and even later lowered to nine. Because of this law the unnamed narrator’s father requests her to marry in her age of fourteen. Dowry was also given to the bridegroom as a gift but not according to how much bride’s parents can afford rather according to the demand of bridegroom. After the untimed death of unnamed narrator’s father her marriage process stops because they cannot afford the dowry. During such critical period she never gives up her hopes and being deterministic, she ends temporary marriage contract and leaves her half uncle’s house where they live as slave after her father untimely death. She gives continuity to her work and becomes a successful carpet designer. Her works has

been praised everywhere. She has money now and she is in her age of nineteenth and still unmarried. But it does not mean that as a lady she does not have natural desires or feelings of motherhood, she has it which we can feel in her act of holding the newly born Malekeh's daughter. When she holds her for the first time her monologue clearly explains it: "The first time I held her in my arms, I was intoxicated by her sweet body smell, the dark hair sticking up on her head, her tiny feathery eyebrows, and her close to my breast, and I thought about how I'd like to teach her everything I know" (421).

It means she has this natural desire. She would also like to hold her own child in her arms and likes to feel the softness of that very child's skin. At last she also thinks about how she could teach Malekeh's daughter that she knows. It means she would like to give the continuity of her carpet making tradition. It does not matter much whether the child would be a daughter or son. It shows that she is against the gender discrimination and sexual hierarchy. Unknowingly her eyes are filled with the tears but she controls it by herself.

Now, she is in her age of nineteenth and still unmarried. But her almost all friends already got married and now they become the mother of one or two children. But protagonist does not like to spend her life as a slave whereas she wants to live her life as a successful lady both economically and educationally. So, she states that "I had already entered my nineteenth year, and I was unmarried and childless" (421).

It means if she likes to spend her life like that of her village friend. She will never end the *sigheh* that she has with Fereydoon. She would never be able to gain the position that she has now. She wants to create her own identity for what she had left the Gustaham's house and ends the temporary marriage contract. She remains unmarried even the legal marriage age for a girl was nine as determined by *sharia*. That is why, in a Muslim community, there is a belief that a girl reached at her

womanhood after the age of nine.

The narrator also thinks about the Naheed position who is a well-educated girl from city although spending her life as a slave in the Fereydoon house. She has money, child, wealth, husband but not happy inwardly whereas the narrator is unmarried and childless, loses her virginity but is happy because she is independent and economically successful and even she is from village. So, she said in her monologue that “Naheed has been forced to marry a man she loathed; and must content herself with dream of what might have been with Iskandar, whom she would most likely never possess” (424).

Unnamed narrator is not like the Naheed who never dear to raise her voice against the parents’ decision. She is different from her and have distinct own identity. She is deterministic. She is happy with her life which is clarified in her words:

I was unlike all of them, for I had my carpet and my adopted family to think of. Even if I contracted a marriage, it was my duty and my desires to keep working with Malekeh’s family and developing my craft. Each passing month confirmed that my work compared favorably to that of other designers. It also afforded the novelty of being the work of women and was popular with the harem ladies. I should never want to give up designing, even if my husband were as rich as the shah”.

(424)

She is neither like that of Naheed, a girl from city, well-educated and living dependent life by forgetting her dream and love nor that of her village friend Goli who is not educated and thinks that her only duty is to make her husband happy and satisfied and to bear the children. She has her own mission, dream, and responsibility. She takes care of her mother even after being a girl and also takes care of Malekeh’s family.

Malekeh is also helping her to make the carpets.

The narrator, when looking back to her past becomes so sad and goes to Homa who works in the hamman (a public bath place). She shares her feelings that she had her expectations and loss of virginity. But Homa encourages her to be bold and strong and tells her to forget her bitter past. Homa says: “you have made yourself valuable- even more valuable than you were as virgin” (425). She has lost her virginity. It is true but she has to learn so many things in her life. She gets the chance to understand the life both in suffering and difficulties and in comfort. This is a real life. Only to give birth to a baby, making the husband happy, live as a sex object, a puppet or slave under the husband is not life. She has lived the life in a real sense. Homa is also conscious about the rights and position of women in Muslim society. She is not educated but knows that both male and female are equal. Both of them have rights to make their life better than yesterday by utilizing their talent. Homa is also earning money by working in hamman. She takes care of her uncle too. It means Homa is working as a paid labour. Homa’s words encourage the narrator to continue her carpet making occupation.

In Muslim community where women do not have any special rights and position in case of decision making, take responsibility of family, where is prevalence of sexual hierarchy or gender discrimination, even the Islamic laws is itself male centered. Social values and cultural practices are also constructed and designed by male and fundamentalist to support their superiority in the name of culture or in the name of Islam. They misread the Qur’anic verses to justify their “male superiority” or “male ego”. Otherwise Islamic religious texts never discriminate on the basis of gender because gender is biological construct. Qur’an follows the principle of equality to all human beings. Margot Badran also talks about it “The Qur’an as the words of

God-introduced a message of the fundamental equality of women and men as human beings (insan), women' rights, and social justice, yet this message was subverted in the name of Islam itself" (323). We all are human beings and equal except the biological differences that we both male and female have. Otherwise we have equal rights to make decision regarding marriage, taking responsibility of family. It is not the Qur'an which distinguishes between male and female but the conservative thinking of the male dominated Muslim society and culture.

In the novel, what protagonist realizes that She has every right to work outside the house for creating her own identity and make her own decision and choose the guy to marry, no one can force her to accept their decision not even her parents. She gets success and now she can marry with a man she wants if she would like. She has built up a kind of confidence inside her. Now, she is strong and bold enough to make decision, economically stable which is emphasized in her words: "I was older, unmarried, and had some money; I could make my own choices. I need not be pickled, for I had plenty to offer a suitor. But I would never want another man like Fereydoon, even though he was rich, for he saw in me only a mirror of his own pleasure" (425).

She does not like to marry a guy who has lots of money, who can give her each and everything that she wants specially comfort by spending money and treated her as a motionless, emotionless object of beauty. She does not like to be treated as a saleable commodity and sex object.

The protagonist also rejects the proposal of a butcher. He proposed her to spend one night with him. For this, he was ready to pay as much money as she needs. He praises her physical beauty. In Muslim society, women are compared with "huri", a paradisaal model created by God to fulfill sexual desires of male believer as a reward

for his good deeds but it was used by male conservatives to abuse women sexually. It creates a kind of misconception that women are sex object. These types of misconceptions also prevail in butcher's mind. That is why, he proposes the protagonist. But she rejects it. This offer as known as Islamic custom and this is used to justify the outside relationship between man and women after marriage. So, on the basis of Muslim culture, it is acceptable but she rejects it and said "I would be slave to God, to carpets, but I did not want to be a slave to someone else's pleasure ever again" (386).

She can be slave to her occupation or talent by using it. She can make her future bright and colorful. She also puts God in special position that never discriminates, gives equal emphasis for all human beings. For the money she was not ready to accept it.

Moghissi also argues that these instructions or myths help to foster the outrageous conception of women as disposable commodities which can be used and then discarded, after consumption. This practice violates the basic human rights of both sexes. So these male centered cultural practices and laws should be reformed. In addition to this, she brings the example of *Zena* (extra marital relations) and *Hudud*, an Islamic law of crime and punishments under these laws Sex outside marriage or *zena* was criminalized and for the guilty could bring the ultimate penalty of death by stoning or hundred lashes. The same provision also applies to the case of rape. It means women are to blame for sexual crimes even committed against them. It blurs the lines between *zena* and rape. In *zena* both male and female equally participate. In rape women lost their self-respect, their worth and confidence, that is why she writes:

These practices and laws constitute an assault on the dignity of women; they negatively affect social perceptions about women and

women' own sense of self-worth and confidence, forcing them to live under constant fear. Fear is a dangerously potent instrument in cementing men's power to make it look unbreakable and to coerce into submission. (111)

The unnamed narrator is bold enough to reject the butcher's proposal. Moreover, she is also able to reject the male dominated social practices which lowers the women' position and social dignity and worth. The butcher also offers the unnamed narrator for extra marital relation with full of boastfulness and boldness in his voice because law known as *sharia* is in favor of male not in of female. These extra marital relations are culturally accepted. Society favors these relations. The "Hudud" also blurs the lines between rape and "zena".

In addition to this, Kynsiletho talks about the marriage life on the basis of Islamic religion. She writes that "Islam has granted men and women equal rights, and therefore women are not men's enemies, but rather their friends and helpmates" (53). Thus, it emphasizes peace and harmony in gender relations. It explains that no one is superior and inferior. She raises the question about the ideal image of family where the man is only economic agent and the woman is the unpaid domestic worker. As a whole she talks about the teachings and principles of equality and social justice articulated in Qur'an and in saying of Mohammed to advocates for mutuality in case of married life.

Moreover, she emphasizes the deeds of Prophet Mohammed while focusing on equality. She writes that "the Prophet Mohammed too helped his wives in the house and used to play with his children" (75). So it blurs the hierarchy about the misconception that is prevailed in Muslim society that "man is economic agent" and "women is unpaid domestic worker". Women also have rights to work outside the

house and earn money as the narrator is doing in the novel. She also expects help and respect from Fereydoon which is clarified by her words “Was this the way it was to be with us? This was nothing like what I had expected of marriage” (173). She feels unhappy. She decides to end this temporary married life before the time because she knows that the idea of marriages based on choice and mutual respect is also articulated by Prophet Mohammed.

III. Conclusion: Anita Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers* and Subversion of Patriarchal Normativity

After the discussion and analysis of Anita Amirrezvani's *Blood of Flowers*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the resistance against patriarchal ideology is the major focus of the novel. The writer presents different rebellious acts of fourteen years old unnamed narrator, the protagonist such as carpet making, reading and writing. Moreover, she takes responsibility of her mother and of Malekeh's family. She ends *sigheh* by herself which is restricted in Muslim Iranian society.

There are different laws in Muslim society such as *sharia*, Family Protection Acts (FPA) and criminal law. These laws are in favour of males. In the Muslim society during that period women should cover their face under the veil, confine themselves within the four walls of the house and do the unpaid domestic work. Carpet making is a prestigious occupation during that period but only for men. Women do not get chance to read and write. Education is male prerogative. Only some girls from city get chance to read but do not get opportunity to utilize their knowledge. If any woman crosses the boundaries set by society guided by patriarchal norms and values, rules and regulations, some in the name of culture and some in the name of traditions she gets punishment. There is a belief that males are the managers of women's affairs and women's only duty is to make husband happy and satisfied.

In the novel, the unnamed narrator's act of ending *sigheh*, a three month marriage contract with Fereydoon is a symbol of her resistance against so called cultural practices which treats women as sex object and machine of child bearing. *Sigheh* is a part of Muslim culture during that period and has been in practice since hundreds of years. Her act of ending *sigheh* herself leads her towards the way of achieving self-worth and dignity in her life. Through this act, she also resists against

the Islamic law known as *sharia* which gives full rights to the male in case of beginning and ending the *sigheh* and also whether to renew it or not. So ending it by herself, she resists or shows her rebellious nature.

Likewise, Anita also presents the protagonist's act of learning the reading and writing from her friend Naheed which is also restricted in her society. But the narrator learns how to read and write even though she is from village and poor. She utilizes her skill of writing in making the designs in the carpet. Before she begins the rug making, she makes design in the copy and copies the same in her carpet and writes a letter to Fereydoon with the information that she is ending the temporary marriage contract. This is really her bold decision because she made this decision by going against the conservative and discriminatory social values.

Moreover, according to *sharia*, women should wear veil while going outside otherwise they are punished for bad *hijabi* because it is taken as un-Islamic. The protagonist, in the novel lifted off her *picheh* and eats meat in the open market place without paying any attention to the passer. This shows that she is raising her voice against such dogma. The holy book Qur'an does not mention any strict rules for the dress code in case of man and woman. That is why, her act is not un-Islamic.

Similarly, the protagonist learns skill of carpet making from her father and after his death from her half uncle and finally becomes a successful carpet designer. It means the belief that is prevailed in the Muslim society is male centered and conservative. Otherwise both are equal and have rights to work for earning money. She takes full responsibility of her mother by earning money through her talent of carpet making.

Thus, the research concludes that by engaging in activities which are prohibited in Muslim society such as carpet making, lifting off the veil, reading and

writing, ending the *sighesh*, the protagonist dismantles and subverts the patriarchal norms and values, rules and regulations. Carpet making, among other, is supposed to be the male's forte. But, the protagonist crosses the boundary set by patriarchy and turns into a successful carpet designer at the end of the novel.

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