



# An Analysis of the Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

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## Abstract

In 2003, Afghan-American writer Khaled Hosseini burst onto the world literary stage with his debut novel *The Kite Runner*. Another representative work of him, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, published on May 22, 2007, has won wide acclaim from readers around the world for its profound themes, rich emotions and unique narrative. Through his delicate and realistic writing, Hosseini shows the resilience of the two Afghan women in the novel-Mariam and Laila, in the midst of suffering and their courageous quest for freedom. In the patriarchal Afghan society, women are disadvantaged in social status, marital status and economic status. They are at the bottom of the society, severely constrained by policies, do not have their own freedom in marriage, only serve as a tool for the continuation of offspring, cannot achieve economic independence, and are completely dependent on their husbands, losing their right to pursue freedom and equality. Thus, this paper intends to interpret *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of the awakening of women's consciousness. Through depicting the protagonists Mariam and Laila, facing the oppression of patriarchal society and suffering from the abyss of suffering, they have obtained liberation and freedom from the initial submission and patience to the final resolute resistance. This paper deeply reveals the enslavement and control of women by a male-dominated society, and reflects the course of Mariam and Laila's gradual awakening of their female consciousness. Their awakening has not only earned them dignity and freedom, but also provided an example and strength to millions of oppressed women around the world. Their stories also inspire real-life women to courageously pursue their dreams and goals to achieve self-worth.

## Subject Areas

Psychology

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## Keywords

*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Feminist Consciousness, Awakening

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

#### 1.1.1. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

The second novel of Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was highly praised by mainstream media as a brave, honorable and inclusive fine popular novel since it was published on May 22, 2007. The novel takes place in Afghanistan, a country that has suffered through decades of conflict, including the Soviet invasion, civil war, and the Taliban regime. Against this backdrop, Mariam and Laila's stories unfold, reflecting the resilience and struggle of Afghan women during a tumultuous time. Across three decades of time and space, the author used delicate brushstroke to depict Mariam, Laila and other women struggling under the old family system in Afghanistan, as well as their hopes, love, and dreams.

Born as an illegitimate daughter of a wealthy man, Mariam grows up in poverty and isolation. When she was fifteen, her mother committed suicide because her leave, and she was forced into a loveless and abusive marriage by her father with a middle-aged shoemaker from Kabul, Rasheed, who is the source of much of the violence in the novel. After Mariam had seven miscarriages and been unable to conceive, Rasheed began to commit violence against her.

The novel's other heroine, Laila, Rasheed's other wife, a young woman with dreams of attending university, is thrust into a life of hardship after the death of her parents and the loss of her lover during the war. She is eventually coerced into marrying Rasheed. The protagonist's life is full of loss and despair. At first, the two wives are hostile to each other, but gradually, they grow closer and closer as they raise their children. Their friendship survived Rasheed's abuse and the country's relentless war.

At the same time, the book also shows the political and life circumstances of women subjected to gender discrimination and patriarchal oppression, as well as the resistance to such discrimination and oppression and the desire and pursuit of freedom and equality.

#### 1.1.2. Khaled Hosseini

Khaled Hosseini is a highly acclaimed Afghan-American author and physician. He was born in 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan, and moved to the United States with his father. Hosseini graduated with a medical degree from the University of California, San Diego and received his license to practice medicine in 1993. However, his literary talent was not buried by his medical career, and he began his writing career in 1999 and published his debut novel, *The Kite Runner*, in 2003. *The Kite Runner* (2003) quickly gained worldwide acclaim for its deep human insight and

touching storyline. This work not only shows the historical changes and people's suffering in Afghanistan, but also deeply explores the complexity of human nature and the theme of self-redemption. As a result, Hosseini was awarded the United Nations Humanitarian Award and invited to serve as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Following *The Kite Runner* (2003), Hosseini published *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *Echoes of the Mountains* (2013), which continue to tell stories of love, betrayal, sacrifice and hope set in Afghanistan. His works have sold more than 50 million copies worldwide, making him a force to be reckoned with in contemporary literature. In addition to writing, Hosseini is also active in public service, having created a foundation in his name to provide humanitarian aid to refugees in Afghanistan. With his pen and actions, he has delivered a message of love and hope to the people of Afghanistan and the world.

## 1.2. Research Purpose

Female self-consciousness, in a feminist context, refers to a woman's critical awareness of her own identity, worth, and position within a patriarchal social structure. It involves the recognition of oneself not as the "Other" defined by masculine norms, but as an autonomous subject with agency, desires, and the right to self-determination. This consciousness entails a critique of imposed gender roles, an understanding of systemic oppression, and the impetus to seek liberation and define one's own existence. The foundational concept is powerfully articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) [1]. She famously stated, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." This highlights that female identity is a social construct rather than a biological destiny. Awakening to this fact is the first step toward female self-consciousness, enabling women to reject essentialist definitions and claim the freedom to create their own essence. Meanwhile, the intersectional and activist dimension is emphasized by bell hooks. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) [2], she argues that true feminist consciousness and self-awareness involve not only personal recognition of oppression but also a commitment to collective struggle and political change. She states, "Feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels." This view expands female self-consciousness from individual awakening to a broader critique of interlocking systems of power and a call to action.

This paper aims to help readers understand the female characters in the book, Mariam and Laila. Through in-depth research on their self-consciousness awakening, firstly, we can learn how women survive under certain social background, such as the oppression of the patriarchal society. In the era of war, what difficulties and challenges they face. Second, by studying the process of female Self-Consciousness awakening, we can understand the growth path of the two female characters in the book from endurance to resistance. Third, this paper also provides

inspiration for contemporary women in reality, encouraging them to bravely pursue self-Consciousness and freedom.

### 1.3. Research Significance

This paper analyzes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of female Self-Consciousness awakening has the following significance: First, it not only provides a new perspective for the interpretation of this work, but enriches the theoretical research category of initiation novel and female literature. Second, by studying the awakening of women's Self-Consciousness in novels, we can arouse the attention and reflection on the status and rights of women in the real society. It reveals that only when women's self-Consciousness is awakened, they can realize their own rights in thought, and then fight for these rights. Third, by emphasizing the importance of women's self-Consciousness, the paper can also help promote social Consciousness and attention to gender equality. When women begin to wake up and pursue their rights, men will reflect on their own behavior, thus promoting the attention and practice of gender equality in the society.

### 1.4. Research Methods

This paper will mainly use literature research method and textual analysis method to go from the surface meaning of Khaled Hosseini's novel text to the deeper connotation of the text, and to dig out the awakening and revelation of women's Self-Consciousness in the depth of the text from the women's image depicted in "A Thousand Splendid Suns".

First of all, this paper will use the literature research method to collect relevant literature to understand the theoretical basis of women's Self-Consciousness awakening and the theoretical literature related to this work, so as to have a systematic and in-depth understanding of the focus of this work. Secondly, this paper will use textual analysis to deeply analyze the specific original text of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that focuses on the portrayal of female characters, the development of the storyline, and the manifestation of the awakening of female consciousness. The situation, struggle and growth of female characters in this work will be further analyzed in order to achieve a better research effect on this work.

## 2. Literature Review

Khaled Hosseini is a famous American writer of the new generation. Because of this, many scholars have studied him and his works in depth. The academic research on him has the following characteristics. First, Hosseini's research is still in the stage of naming and positioning. Although Hosseini has published only four novels, the theme covered in these novels are different, and due to the author's own diaspora experience and multicultural identity, the literary world has different names for the author, such as postcolonial writer, diaspora writer, etc. Secondly, most of the current studies on Hosseini's works focus on *The Kite Runner*, while *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has not received enough attention due to

its late year of publication. Therefore, it is meaningful and worthwhile to focus on this work in this paper. Studies of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* have been conducted both at home and abroad, from several different perspectives as follows.

## 2.1. Status Quo of Domestic Research

Since the book was translated and published by the translator Li Jihong [3] in 2007, some domestic scholars have begun to study and interpret it.

First, there are several articles that focus on the theory of trauma in the novel and the growth of female characters. For example, Zou Xia and Li Xinmei [4] explore Mariam's journey of growth in *A Thousand Yang* from the perspective of trauma theory, while Li Kexin [5] focuses on the study of female trauma in the novel. At the same time, Zhang Dan [6] discussed the study of Mariam's traumatic experience, and Ming Yongping [7] analyzed gender and trauma.

Secondly, some articles focus on the analysis of the novel from the perspective of feminism. For example, Liu Yang [8] analyzed the story from the feminist viewpoint in his paper *The Redemption of the Unfortunate Soul: An Interpretation of the Brilliant Yang from the Feminist Perspective*, and Wu Cihui [9] analyzed the novel from the feminist perspective to explore the path of self-liberation of the two heroines, Mariam and Laila. Moreover, there are many studies on this novel from the perspective of ecofeminism. For example, Zhang Haining [10] wrote about the severe persecution of women and nature by patriarchy and advocated the development of a model of harmonious coexistence between people and between people and nature. Liu Zhe [11] noted that by writing about how male authority persecutes women and the natural world and how women and the natural world coexist in harmony, Hosseini criticized the ugliness and darkness of male authority and eulogized the power of women and nature. From the viewpoint of ecofeminists, Hu Yi [12] points out that in the process of constructing the image of mud house, the novel constructs a series of dualistic oppression relations. Finally, through the protagonist's return to the mud house, it implies that the key to changing gender injustice is to break the dualism and establish an ecological relationship in line with the ideal of ecofeminists. Wang Jingyu [13] interprets *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of ecofeminist criticism, showing feminist consciousness and ecological significance, and reflecting the author's thinking on the relationship between man, woman and nature.

At the same time, this literature analyzed from a specific theoretical perspective is also quite rich. For example, Wang Yuxiao [14] interprets the novel from a post-colonial feminist perspective, while Yi Yaqi [15] uses the Irigaray style interpretation to explore the reconstruction of the female lineage in it. In addition, Song Jiashan [16] and Liu Yalan [17] also conducted in-depth analysis from the perspective of post-colonialism and mother-daughter relationship. At the same time, Shang Biwu [18] analyzed the novel from the research perspective of attitude system, the core subsystem of evaluation theory, so as to explore the behavior, character and emotion of the two female protagonists in the novel, opening a new

dimension for the interpretation of the novel. Liu Xibo and Ge Jian [19], based on Lacan's mirror theory and the theory of the three realms of theme, take a theoretical look at the life experiences of the protagonists, clarify their subjectivity construction process from the chaotic reality world to the illusory imagination world, and finally to the symbolic world of legally prescribed desires, and explore the role of the other in their subjectivity construction process.

In general, various scholars from different fields, using different theories to study the work, and put forward their own different opinions.

## 2.2. Status Quo of Overseas Research

Compared with the domestic research, the study of this work by foreign scholars provides some new perspectives.

Such as *The Intersections of Masculinity and Disability in Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns and Leila Aboulela's Lyrics Alley* written by Abbady Amel [20] emphasizes on the intersection of the young male protagonist Tariq's disability and masculinity, which provides a new perspective for this paper. *Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns: A saga of Unconventional Relationships* written by Ahmed Abrar [21] follows in detail the novel's unconventional relationships and their fusion, highlighting the plight of "Afghan women" during the long years of conflict. *Gender Discrimination in Orhan Pamuk's Snow and Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns* written by Lis Sugianti [22] adopts the feminist perspective of Damwood's sexism theory to explore how sexism, patriarchal culture and most violence and oppression occur in families and countries by comparing the two works.

*Endurance and Resilience: A Study of the Subaltern Voice in A Thousand Splendid Suns* of Suhana P. A. [23]—depicts the lives of the female characters, showing the three times of oppression by patriarchy, militarization and religious fundamentalism of the underprivileged women in Afghanistan and their attempts to "speak".

Nevertheless, because the novel is still relatively new, academic circles both domestically and internationally have not yet thoroughly and methodically studied the author and his works; more research is required to determine the scope and depth of the novel's study. Based on both domestic and international research, the primary starting point for this paper is female Self-Consciousness. This article examines the experiences of the two characters in the novel and their Self-Consciousness awakening in coping with problems as women in order to provide inspiration for women's self-growth in life.

## 3. The Causes of Female Self-Consciousness Awakening

### 3.1. Oppression of a Patriarchal Society

Patriarchal society, also known as patriarchy, refers to a society in which power is centered on the adult male. In this society, men dominate the family and society and have more power, privileges and authority, while women and children have a relatively lower status.

Patriarchal society is characterized by the following aspects: first, male dominance. Men are seen as the leaders of the family and society and have more power and decision-making authority. Second, women are secondary. Women tend to be secondary in patriarchal societies and their rights and autonomy are limited. Third is the family structure. The family structure is usually a nuclear family model with the male as the head of the family and decision maker.

Patriarchy can also be defined as “any kind of group organization in which males hold dominant power and determine what part females shall and shall not play, and in which capabilities assigned to women are relegated generally to the mystical and aesthetical and excluded from the practical and political realms” [24].

In Afghanistan’s patriarchal society, women are seen as a burden to their families, and they are taught from an early age to obey men, which leads them to a vulnerable position in the family. Under Taliban rule, they banned women from university and secondary education, allowing them only primary education. They also prohibit women from entering public places and working for non-governmental organizations, a move that greatly limits their professional development and social advancement. Afghan women, meanwhile, are required to be covered from head to toe with only their eyes visible, which limits their freedom to participate in social activities. Women cannot go out alone or interact with men, and must be accompanied by a “male guardian” when traveling, effectively confining women to their homes and depriving them of basic freedoms. When women violate the Taliban’s religious rules, they are punished with violence and punishment. In such a social environment, women are born inferior to men, women can only be attached to men, obey men. Just as Beauvoir puts it” women have been made inferiors, and the oppression has been compounded by men’s belief that women are inferiors by nature” [25].

The two main characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Mariam and Laila, are two tragic Afghani women who are ruined by patriarchy. The novel also portrays two typical representatives of a patriarchal society, Zalil and Rasheed. Zalil is Mariam’s father, a typical rich Afghan businessman. He does not recognize Maryam’s existence and abandon her with her mother Nana in a mud hut in the countryside in order to save face and family interests. However, in a patriarchal society, no one would accuse Zalil, as Nana tells Mariam, “Just as the compass always points to the north, the man’s finger of blame is always pointing at the woman.” Zalil was ever the most important person in Mariam’s life. Every week, he would come to see Mariam on Thursdays. Every Thursday, Mariam would wait for Zalil to arrive by sitting calmly with her back against a wall and her eyes fixated on the mountain stream. When he did, Mariam would leap to her feet, grinning broadly and flailing her arms wildly. And then Zalil taught Mariam how to fish, how to paint, taught her the right way to kill a salmon and read her the news. He was Mariam’s link to the outside world, proving to her that there was a whole other world beyond the mud hut.

Later, when she wanted to meet his children at the movies, he lied to her that

he would come to pick her up, but when he didn't come, Mariam left the mud hut for the first time. She walked across the stream to Zalil, waiting for the whole night seeing Zalil, but Zalil refused to see her. After she came back to mud hut, her mother had hanged herself. In order to preserve Zalil's reputation, the three wives of Zalil jointly married the teenage Mariam to Rasheed, a shoemaker in his 40s. They falsely told Mariam that it was time for a teenage girl to get married, but their own daughters wore uniforms to school. Zalil, who Mariam once loved the most, in order to maintain his reputation, no matter how broken Mariam is, he did not say a word for Mariam from beginning to end. In that case, young Mariam had no choice but to marry someone she didn't love, but even without Rasheed, she would have had to marry someone she didn't love or didn't even know, because in that society, women don't have the right to say no, they ever don't have the right to choose. Rasheed, the cobbler, who is a very conservative and traditional man with a serious patriarchal mindset. He requires his wife, Mariam, to wear a traditional garment, the burqa, which covers her entire body, including her face, to prevent other men from seeing her. He also often shows a tendency towards anger and violence. His violent behaviors become particularly severe after learning that Mariam is unable to conceive. He exercises strict control over his wife, Mariam, not only restricting her freedom, but also forcing her to do household chores and give birth to children, and punching and kicking her at the slightest hint of resentment.

When faced with his other wife, Laila, he has saved Laila but at the same time lied to her that her lover, Tariq, had died, leaving her undependable and desperate so that he himself would have the opportunity to marry her. And Rasheed, after marrying Laila, similarly commits deception and violence against her. When he knows that Laila's lover Tariq and Laila meet, he intends to beat Laila to death. In Rasheed, we can clearly see his cruelty and selfishness towards women, but these qualities are not inherent in him, and are caused by the environment of discrimination against women, which is a typical product of a patriarchal society. when the awakened Mariam swung that fatal spade, she was rebelled not only against Rasheed, but also against the oppression of a patriarchal society.

### **3.2. Precious Affection and Love**

As the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy family and a maid, Mariam is the central representative of the tragedy and suffering of this novel. She grows up in a small mud hut on a hill, dependent on her mother, Nana. Although she is kind, pious, and grateful at heart, she grows up with no friends or siblings because of her "Harami" name, and she thinks that her father loves her, but eventually realizes that he cares more about his reputation than her.

After being forced to marry Rasheed, she thought her life would be happy, but a series of miscarriages and Rasheed's increasing violence and beatings made her stop craving and wanting love. It is only when she meets Laila that she feels true love. And Laila, this smart and sensible girl, originally had a happy childhood and

a deep love of the boy Tariq. However, the smoke of war breaks her quiet life, her parents are killed by a missile during the escape, and she is forced to marry Rashid. As a result, her life plunged into deep pain and despair.

However, Laila was initially a “rival in love” identity into the world of Mariam, as the “mistress” of the home, Mariam has always maintained indifference and vigilance to Laila. But when Rasheed domestically abuses Mariam, Laila bravely stands up for her, and this is the first time Mariam feels that someone has stood up for her. Mariam begins to accept Laila, and after the birth of Laila’s child, Azisha, she tangibly feels the emotion of being needed, and her heart is gradually nourished. Not only does she support Laila in her life, but she also takes on the role of a mother during Laila’s labor and gives her motherly warmth. They support each other, take care of their children together, and share the joys and sorrows of life. Mariam reaps the happiness of being surrounded by children and grandchildren and her daughter Azisha, while Laila receives motherly care from Mariam. It is only later, at the crucial moment when Rasheed attempts to turn the tables on Laila, that Mariam bravely steps forward and protects Laila by breaking Rasheed’s head with a shovel. This act exemplifies the deep emotion and mutual dependence between the girls.

By spending time with Laila, Mariam gradually makes up for her years of spiritual desolation and lack of affection, and finds meaning and hope in life. Similarly, Laila, with Mariam’s love and support, gradually comes out of the shadow of losing her lover and regains her courage and strength in life. As I read on the cover of the book, this is about unforgivable times, impossible friendships, and indestructible love. This deep emotional connection supports their gradual awakening of Self-Consciousness, from obedience to eventual rebellion. They use love to heal each other’s wounds, and their love allows them to bravely rebel and liberate themselves.

## **4. The Manifestation of Female Self-Consciousness Awakening**

### **4.1. Laila’s Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness**

Unlike Mariam, although they both lived in a time of turmoil, Laila was cherished by her loving parents, especially her father, during her childhood, enabling her to receive a good education. This educational background made Laila more aware of the importance of self-worth, and she was not just satisfied with traditional family roles, but pursued personal growth and self-fulfillment. “I will send you to school, Laila. You are going to be a brilliant woman. I know this. And you are going to see your dreams come true”, her father said. And Laila realized: “She was a woman who had reminded herself that she had a will, an identity, a mind of her own.” [3] At the same time, this kind of education also laid the foundation for her independent thinking and the awakening of women’s consciousness, and this kind of emphasis on education is an important manifestation of her awakening of women’s consciousness. Secondly, Laila has her own choice of love. She was child-

hood friends with Tariq and expected to spend her life with him, which shows that she has her own expectation and choice of love and marriage. Even after she is later forced to marry the Rasheed, she does not give up her pursuit of true love. When she learns that her lover may still be alive, she bravely pursues the truth, which reflects her desire for personal happiness and freedom. It also shows her desire to control her own emotions and life, and is one of the manifestations of the awakening of women's self-Consciousness.

Furthermore, after being forced to marry Rasheed, Laila also suffers from domestic violence, and after Rasheed's lies are exposed and she learns that her first love, Tariq, is not dead, Laila faces a great crisis in her life. However, instead of choosing to suffer in silence, she teams up with Mariam to fight back against the cobbler's violence. Eventually, with Mariam's help, she escapes the cobbler's control and begins a new life. This resistance to domestic violence and the pursuit of freedom fully demonstrates the strong awakening of her female consciousness.

Finally, after Laila escapes Afghanistan, she travels to Pakistan and eventually settles in the United States to start a new life of independence. She not only strives to adapt to her new environment, but also actively seeks self-redemption and growth. This ability and courage to live independently, as well as her determination to redeem herself, are important manifestations of her awakening of female consciousness.

To summarize, Laila's awakening of female consciousness in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is manifested in her pursuit of education and knowledge, her independent choice of love, her resistance to and escape from domestic violence, as well as her independent life and self-redemption. Her experience not only highlights her personal courage and wisdom, but also reflects the spirit of Afghan women's continuous efforts and struggles in difficult circumstances.

#### **4.2. Mariam's Awakening of Female Self-Consciousness**

Unlike Laila, Mariam did not have a happy, loving childhood, and spent her childhood being indoctrinated by her mother, Nana, into being a "Harami" (illegitimate child), which caused her to suffer from low self-esteem and humiliation. However, as she grows up, she begins to examine her own identity and gradually breaks away from the negative labels given to her by her mother. On her fifteenth birthday, despite her mother's warning not to leave the mud hut, Mariam decides to leave the mud hut where she has grown up to go down the mountain to her father, an action that shows that she is beginning to rebel against the limitations imposed on her by her family and society in her search for her own freedom and identity. Secondly, when Mariam was forced by her father's wives to marry Rasheed, the shoemaker, her father just silently bowed his head and remained silent, which disappointed Mariam greatly, and as time passed, she began to look at the patriarchal power, and gradually realized that her father's love for her was limited, and was based more on his own interests and status. Based on her own interests and status, she questions her father's image of perfection, and this shift

from admiration to scrutiny is one of the manifestations of the gradual awakening of her feminine consciousness.

Mariam had a short period of happiness after marrying Rasheed, but after she had several miscarriages and did not give Rasheed a son, she began to suffer from her husband's domestic violence, which she could only choose to tolerate in silence at first, until later on, with the help of Laila, she began to resist. In the end, when Laila's life is in danger, she bravely raises the shovel and swings it at Rasheed, an extreme patriarchal figure, and eventually ends Rasheed's life and saves Laila, which is the first time she actively decides her own life trajectory, "And so, Mariam raised the shovel. She raised it high, as if she were pulling it out of the depths of the earth. She turned and swung it through the air, her face contorted in a grimace of effort. 'This is for you, Mariam,' she said through gritted teeth, and then she brought it down. Down on his head." [3] The act of bringing the shovel down expresses not only her actions to protect herself and others, but also expresses her actions to fight against the violence and oppression of the male-dominated society, which shows that she is no longer willing to accept the traditional constraints and limitations. Mariam's friendship with Laila is also an important manifestation of her awakening female consciousness. She cherishes her friendship with Laila and is willing to sacrifice herself for Laila. This cherishing of her friendship not only reflects her self-sacrificing spirit, but also highlights her deep understanding of mutual support and care among women. Mariam comes to realize her own value in this story; she is no longer merely an accessory defined by a patriarchal society. She begins to realize that even though she is a woman, she also has her own thoughts, feelings and needs, and that she does not exist only to serve others or to meet the expectations of society. Ultimately, Mariam chooses to spend her life fighting against violence and oppression, which is the highest expression of her awakening of female consciousness. Through her actions, she proclaims to the world that women are not weak to be bullied, and that they have the right to fight for their dignity and freedom.

To sum up, Mariam's awakening of female consciousness in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a gradual process, from the initial enhancement of self-knowledge, to the rebellion against the bondage of her family and society, to the scrutinizing and criticizing of patriarchal power, and finally to the courageous protection of herself and others, as well as the self-sacrifices made for the sake of love and friendship, all of these examples show vividly how her female consciousness gradually awakens in the midst of adversity. She illustrates the awakening of female consciousness and the greatness of her power through her actions. Her awakening not only won her dignity and freedom, but also set an example and strength for other women.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides a detailed analysis of the awakening of female self-con-

sciousness in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, it is not without limitations. Primarily, the research methodology relies heavily on textual analysis and theoretical interpretation within the framework of feminist literary criticism. This approach, while insightful, could be complemented by incorporating comparative perspectives. For instance, a comparative analysis between Hosseini's portrayal of female awakening in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and other contemporary literary works dealing with similar themes in different cultural contexts (e.g., Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* in the Egyptian context or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in the Western context) could yield a more nuanced understanding of the universality and cultural specificity of patriarchal oppression and female resistance. Furthermore, future research could explore the intersections of gender with other identity markers such as class, ethnicity, and education in the novel to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the characters' experiences and the multifaceted nature of their awakening.

## 5.2. Conclusions

This paper discusses the work *A Thousand Splendid Suns* from the perspective of women's awakening of consciousness, describes the living conditions and experiences of the two main heroines in the book, Mariam and Laila, and analyzes the reasons for their awakening of Self-Consciousness and performance in the light of the prevailing social situation and their growing up process, through which we aim to reveal the significance of women's awakening of Self-Consciousness for women's pursuit of their own emancipation and self-worth. Through this analysis, we aim to reveal the significance of women's awakening of consciousness for women's pursuit of liberation and self-worth, which will be an important inspiration for women's courageous pursuit of self-worth in contemporary society.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Hosseini expresses his concern about how Afghan women survive and seek self-identity in a harsh society by depicting Mariam and Laila, two women of different times with different educational, social and economic backgrounds, but married to the same man named Rasheed. We see two women, Mariam and Laila, gradually recognize their self-worth in the midst of suffering and wake up from blind obedience and adversity. They bravely face their fate and firmly pursue their dreams. This reveals to us that women should realize their own power and bravely pursue their own goals without being bound by society and tradition. At the same time, their resilience and bravery show us that no matter what difficulties we encounter, we should maintain a positive attitude and face challenges bravely. This spirit is not only an inspiration to individuals, but also to society. By depicting the story of Mariam and Laila's mutual support in the difficult situation, and their joint resistance against the male power and eventual awakening of Self-Consciousness, the author, Mr. Hussaini, not only expresses his concern for the women of Afghanistan, but also tries to draw the attention of the whole world to the women who are suffering from the oppression of the male-dominated society. We should pay attention to the status and rights of women in

real life. In many countries and regions, women still face a lot of inequality and discrimination. Therefore, we need to pay more attention to women's issues and promote gender equality and social progress. Only when women can obtain equal status, rights and interests in society will the whole society be more harmonious and progressive.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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