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## **Breaking the Silence: Women's Resistance and Liberation in Nadia Al-Kawkabani's Novel *Aqeelat*(\*)**

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## كسر الصمت: مقاومة المرأة وتحررها في رواية نادية الكوكباني عقيلات

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### الملخص

يستكشف هذا البحث معاناة النساء اليمنيات كما تعرضها نادية الكوكباني في روايتها "عقيلات"، وهي رواية تدعو بوضوح إلى مقاومة المرأة للظلم وسعيها نحو التحرر عبر التأكيد على أهمية التعبير وعدم الصمت أمام الانتهاكات. وتتمثل أهمية هذه الدراسة في إبراز الكيفية التي تمكّن بها رواية عقيلات النساء من مواجهة الهيمنة الأبوية، والمطالبة بالتحرر، وتعزيز المساواة بين الجنسين. ومن منظور نسوي، تتناول الدراسة موضوعات القمع الاجتماعي، والتحرش، والعنف، والاعتداءات الأبوية. تعتمد الدراسة أيضاً المنهج الوصفي - التحليلي لاستكشاف موضوعات الرواية وشخصياتها واستراتيجياتها السردية بصورة منهجية. وتُظهر الكوكباني، من خلال تجارب شخصيات روايتها، حجم معاناتهن وصراعهن المستمر ضد الأعراف الاجتماعية والثقافية للذكور، كما تكشف البنية الأبوية التي تعمل على إسكات النساء وحرمانهن من أبسط حقوقهن. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الكوكباني قد نجحت بفاعلية في معالجة القضايا الاجتماعية المتجدّرة، مثل القمع والتحرش والعنف، التي تواجهها المرأة اليمنية في مجتمع تحكمه منظومة أبوية. كما نجحت في الارتقاء بمكانة المرأة عبر تمكينها من تحدي التمييز والتقاليد القمعية، وتتخطى روايتها الحدود الثقافية لتصل رسالتها إلى نساء العالم الساعيات إلى العدالة والمساواة، وبفضل رسالتها الإنسانية العالمية، تقف عقيلات شاهداً قوياً على صمود المرأة وقوّتها في مختلف أنحاء العالم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التحرر، النظام الأبوي، مقاومة المرأة، التهميش، اليمن.

## **Breaking the Silence: Women's Resistance and Liberation in Nadia Al-Kawkabani's Novel *Aqeelat***

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### **Abstract**

This research explores the struggles of Yemeni women as portrayed in Nadia Al-Kowkabani's novel *Aqeelat*, which advocates for women's resistance and liberation by emphasizing the need to speak out against injustice. The significance of the study lies in highlighting how Al-Kowkabani's *Aqeelat* empowers women to resist patriarchal oppression, advocate for liberation, and promote gender equality. Adopting a feminist approach, the study examines themes of social oppression, harassment, violence, and patriarchal aggression. The study also employs a descriptive-analytical approach to systematically explore the novel's themes, characters, and narrative strategies. Through the experiences of the novel's characters, Al-Kowkabani illustrates their experiences and battles against gender norms. She also exposes the patriarchal structure that silences women and denies them basic rights. The study concludes that Al-Kowkabani effectively addresses the deeply rooted social issues of oppression, harassment, and violence faced by Yemeni women within a patriarchal society. She succeeds to raise the status of women by empowering them to challenge discrimination and oppressive traditions. Her novel transcends its cultural boundaries, resonating globally with women striving for equality. With its universal message, *Aqeelat* highlights shared struggles for justice and liberation, standing as a powerful testament to the resilience and strength of women worldwide.

**Keywords:** Liberation, patriarchy, women's resistance, marginalization, Yemen.

## Introduction:

Nadia Al-Kawkabani is a contemporary Yemeni novelist and academic. She is known for her work as a short story writer and began writing at a young age. Born in Taiz in 1968, she studied architecture at Sana'a University and earned her PhD in architecture from Cairo University in 2008. Currently, "she serves as an associate professor at the Faculty of Engineering at Sana'a University. In her stories and novels, she focuses on themes of gender and social inequality" (Al-Rubaidi, 2018, p. 4). Some of her notable novels include "It's Just Love," "Aqeelat," "My Sana'a," and "Souk Ali Mohsen," all written in Arabic. Al-Kawkabani has received numerous literary awards, including the Saud Al-Sabah Prize in 2000 (Second prize), the Yemeni President's Award for Young Writers in 2001, and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Grant in 2010. Many of her novels explore the struggles faced by Yemenis, particularly the marginalization and oppression of Yemeni women. "Aqeelat" is one of her most renowned works, challenging the oppression and suppression of Yemeni women.

In her novel "Aqeelat", Al-Kawkabani delivers a powerful message advocating for women's resistance and liberation from the patriarchal society they are bound by. The story revolves around Aqeelat, a young woman who grows up in a society that restricts women's freedom and rights. Through Aqeelat's experiences and hardships, the author exposes the daily realities of violence, discrimination, and oppression faced by women. The novel highlights the long-standing silencing of women's voices and emphasizes the urgent need to break free from this suppression. Additionally, Al-Kawkabani's commitment to promoting women's rights is evident through her involvement in various groups, "including a committee dedicated to ending violence against women" (Alkodami, 2020, p. 88). By actively participating in such initiatives, she demonstrates her dedication to advancing women's rights and working towards a safer and more equitable society for all. Her work serves as a thought-provoking and inspiring call-to-action, urging women to stand up against patriarchal societies no matter how oppressive they may appear. The novel challenges women to reclaim their power, fight for their rights, and strive for liberation. Its profound message resonates with women globally, sparking conversations and inspiring actions towards creating a world where women are treated equally and able to live their lives to the fullest.

## Significance of the Study:

The study is significant in providing new insights into Nadia Al-Kowkabani's critical and reflective novel *Aqeelat*. It also seeks to clarify the Yemeni society's darkness and to interpret the desire of post-modern women

who have become self-aware and aware of the social structures that oppress and manipulate society as they fight for their identities to reveal the reality and return to their stolen rights that they need in order to achieve freedom and equality. In contribution to the understanding of Al-Kowkabani's novels concerning the struggle of modern Yemeni women against traditional values limiting their freedom, so it may inspire other women. Al-Kowkabani's characters, as Suvorov notes, "these female protagonists tell about the typical problems of Yemeni women as external narrators, and not as people who have experienced these problems themselves. The heroines practically do not have to challenge society and to make moral choices"(2023, p. 97). This means that they are not portrayed as actively struggling against societal norms or having to make difficult moral decisions. Instead, they share the stories of other women and the issues they encounter, presenting these challenges from an outsider's perspective rather than involving themselves directly in the narrative. This study presents the conservative resistance to the release of women's silence found within the novel "Aqeelat". The feminine discourses of silence and resistance are examined, and the threads of liberation aide in countering suppression; effectively breaking the silence of women's voices.

### Questions of the Study:

The novel serves as a powerful platform for amplifying the marginalized voices of women in patriarchal societies, advocating for their empowerment through resistance and liberation. This study explores key research questions, including: How does the novel portray the challenges faced by women in Yemeni patriarchal society? In what ways do the female characters resist patriarchal norms and assert their agency? What insights does the novel offer into the pursuit of women's liberation and empowerment amidst systemic oppression? The novel provides an opportunity for women to challenge our silencing in our patriarchal society and calls for resistance and liberation. Silencing techniques reinforce the disciplinary power of patriarchal society. These silencing insights serve as mechanisms to suppress female autonomy and agency. Attempts to silence the feminine sexual voice emerge across various domains, including literary works, revealing the intersection of power, gender, and societal control.

### Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of this study are derived from the research questions and guide the feminist analysis of Nadia Al-Kowkabani's *Aqeelat*. They focus on examining women's challenges, resistance, silencing, and empowerment within a patriarchal Yemeni society.

- To examine how *Aqeelat* portrays the social, cultural, and psychological challenges experienced by women within Yemeni patriarchal society.
- To analyze the strategies of resistance through which female characters challenge patriarchal norms and assert their agency.
- To explore how the novel represents women's pursuit of liberation and empowerment in the context of systemic oppression.

### Literature Review:

Yemeni women's experiences within patriarchal society have been consistently shaped by systemic inequality, restricted autonomy, and rigid social norms that limit their opportunities for education, self-expression, and personal development. Literary representations of these experiences reveal the pervasive impact of cultural and institutional structures that perpetuate gender-based oppression, including early marriage, domestic abuse, and societal silencing. While prior research has examined these themes extensively, few studies have explored how contemporary narratives not only depict these forms of oppression but also integrate strategies of resistance, empowerment, and agency within their storytelling. This literature review critically evaluates existing scholarship on women's oppression in Yemeni literature and highlights the need to investigate how narrative form and feminist advocacy intersect to challenge patriarchal structures and promote social transformation. By situating the current study within this context, the review identifies gaps in the literature and establishes the foundation for examining how contemporary novels amplify women's voices while addressing systemic injustices.

Nadia Al-Kawkabani's significance extends beyond her role as a writer to encompass her active advocacy for women's empowerment and social justice. Al-Mutawakel (2005) describes Nadia Al-Kawkabani as "an active member of organizations such as the Women's Culture and Civilizations Dialogue Foundation (Louqa), the Short-Story Club, and the Literary Writers' Union" (p.181). Her mission is to support and empower women by advocating for their rights in areas such as education, science, marriage, and work. Al-Mutawakel's description underscores the breadth of Al-Kawkabani's contributions, portraying her as a dynamic figure whose activism extends beyond writing to tangible efforts in education, advocacy, and cultural dialogue. By linking her creative and social endeavors, Al-Kawkabani exemplifies how literature and activism can work together to promote women's rights and societal progress. This holistic approach makes her an influential voice in both Yemeni culture and global conversations about gender equality.

Critical scholarship on Nadia Al-Kawkabani's *Aqeelat* underscores the novel's sustained engagement with patriarchal structures and their devastating impact on Yemeni women's lives. By centering the narrative on systemic inequality, restricted autonomy, and rigid gender roles, Al-Kawkabani exposes the social conditions that continue to marginalize women within conservative cultural frameworks. As Omar S. Bahaj states that the novel "*Aqeelat* is a critical depiction which captures the harrowing reality that a lot of Yemeni women endure in a country embracing conservative social and cultural conventions and beliefs" (2023, p. 67). Women in Yemen continue to face significant challenges, deeply rooted in traditions and customs that often neglect their rights. By addressing these issues, *Aqeelat* becomes more than just a narrative—it is a call for reflection and change. It challenges readers to confront the cultural and social norms that sustain inequality and to recognize the courage and agency of women who fight for their dignity and rights within these constraints. In doing so, Al-Kawkabani aligns her work with broader feminist discourses, advocating for greater awareness, solidarity, and ultimately, societal transformation in Yemen and beyond.

Thabit Ibrahim underscores the significant themes of the novel "*Aqeelat*", which critically examines the systemic oppression faced by women and girls in patriarchal societies. The narrative brings to the forefront the denial of education to girls, portraying it as a deliberate tool for maintaining societal control and perpetuating inequality. The novel also explores the issue of early marriages, emphasizing the detrimental impact of forcing young girls into these unions. Through vivid depictions, it highlights the intense pressures exerted by parents on their daughters, which often manifest as a blend of emotional coercion and physical violence. "The novel addresses the denial of girls' education and early marriages, highlighting parental pressures and violence, including restrictions on freedom, abuse, confinement, divorce, and loss of child custody" (Ibrahim, 2020). By addressing these intersecting forms of oppression, the novel sheds light on the broader cultural and societal dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality. Thabit's analysis situates the novel as a powerful critique of patriarchal practices, advocating for a reimagining of cultural norms to support women's autonomy and rights.

Alamari (2023) observes that "Al-Kowkabani's novel grapples with the topics of marriage, abusive husbands, and the violation of the female body within patriarchal cultural practices" (p. 3). Through its narrative, the novel also explores the violation of the female body, portraying it as a metaphor for the systemic exploitation and control of women under cultural practices

that devalue their autonomy and humanity. By tackling these issues, the novel critiques the oppressive structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality, calling for societal introspection and reform. *Aqeelat* explores everything that related to women and their lives. It encourages women to prove their worth and existence in a society that remains constrained by patriarchal customs and traditions, which perceive women as inferior. It also examines the institution of marriage within a patriarchal society, where women often face unequal power dynamics and are subjected to the dominance of abusive husbands.

Al-Bakry highlights the pervasive oppression and inequities experienced by women in a patriarchal society as depicted in the novel. Through the diverse portrayals of women, Al-Kawkabani underscores how systemic patriarchal norms dictate the lives of these characters, reducing them to societal labels that hinge on their relationships with men. Whether as daughters, wives, or mothers, these women are confined within rigid roles that suppress their individuality and autonomy. "In the novel *Aqeelat* by Nadia al-Kawkabani, various women are presented, all experiencing the oppression and unjust treatment of a patriarchal society. They are defined by the terms and labels attached to them, as defined by their relationships to men" (Al-Bakry, 2017). His observation emphasizes how the novel critiques these labels as tools of subjugation, which deny women their agency and reinforce gender inequality. By presenting a range of experiences, the novel illuminates the shared struggles of women within this societal framework, including emotional, physical, and psychological oppression.

As Alkodimi notes that the novel *Aqeelat* "focuses on the difficulties of women in general and girls, in particular, in the patriarchal society of Yemen. The title itself is ironic in the sense that while the word *Aqeelat* is supposed to refer to respected women, in Arabic culture, the story shows women as being oppressed and ill-treated" (2020, pp. 88-89). The title *Aqeelat* carries an ironic undertone; while the term traditionally denotes respect and honor for women within Arabic culture, the narrative reveals a stark contrast. Instead of portraying women as valued members of society, the novel exposes their oppression and mistreatment under a patriarchal system that marginalizes their roles and denies them their rights. The novel critiques the societal structures that, despite professing to honor women, perpetuate their subjugation through practices such as denying education, enforcing early marriages, and subjecting them to physical and emotional abuse. Alkodami's analysis suggests that the novel uses this contradiction to provoke critical reflection on the gap between cultural rhetoric and the harsh realities women face, advocating for social reform and gender equality in Yemen.

Al-Mudhaffar clarifies that this novel portrays the oppression, exploitation, degradation, and marginalization of women. He states that: "*Aqeelat* is a novel that tells a story about women who struggle to liberate themselves and to achieve their dreams in their patriarchal society. This novel narrates the sufferings of Yemeni women under men dominance. It is about suffering women who live in a patriarchal society" (2020, p. 250). In her work *Aqeelat*, Nadia addresses the difficulties faced by women in Yemen. She depicts their pain as well as their rebellion and defiance against the restrictions imposed by patriarchal society. The novel highlights how patriarchy tries to suppress the creative energies and resistance of women. The novel serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of women who, despite systemic barriers, strive to liberate themselves from the constraints imposed by patriarchal traditions. It narrates their suffering and resistance, highlighting the emotional, physical, and psychological toll of living in a society that devalues their autonomy and aspirations. Al-Mudhaffar underscores that while the novel reveals the pervasive suffering of women, it also celebrates their courage and determination to achieve their dreams, offering a narrative of both struggle and hope. By portraying these dynamics, *Aqeelat* becomes a critique of patriarchal oppression and a call for transformative change, making it a significant contribution to Yemeni and feminist literature.

Scholarly discussions of Nadia Al-Kowkabani's *Aqeelat* emphasize its powerful representation of women's oppression within Arab and Yemeni cultural contexts, where patriarchal customs continue to restrict women's freedom and agency. This novel portrays the entire social environment of women, with its advantages and disadvantages, customs and traditions. It also depicts the reality of women as they strive to assert their existence in this life. Abdulaziz interprets the title of the novel (*Aqeelat*) as carrying dual connotations, married or imprisoned. He states that:

Nadia's novel is not simply a narration of the tragedies and schemes of some wives, as she tries to mislead us. She is striving to find her own narrative style in telling the stories of these wives, and wants her name to appear on the cover of the novel! (Al-Maqaleh, 2009)

His statement critiques Nadia Al-Kawkabani's approach in her novel, suggesting that while the narrative focuses on the tragedies and struggles of wives in a patriarchal society, it carries a deeper intent. He implies that the novel is not just a portrayal of these women's lives, but also an effort by the author to establish her own unique narrative style and literary identity.

Overall, the existing literature highlights the pervasive impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives, including systemic inequality,

restricted autonomy, and social and cultural constraints. While previous studies have documented these forms of oppression, they rarely examine how contemporary narratives integrate both thematic critique and strategies of female resistance and empowerment. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how the selected novel not only portrays women's struggles but also amplifies their voices and agency, offering insights into the intersection of literature, feminist advocacy, and social transformation. This review establishes the foundation for understanding how narrative form and content work together to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and promote societal change.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

This study is grounded in feminist literary theory, which serves as the principal theoretical lens for examining the representation of women, gender relations, power structures, and social inequality in Nadia Al-Kawkabani's *Aqeelat*. It interrogates how literary texts reflect, reproduce, and challenge patriarchal ideologies, and how female characters negotiate systems of domination, marginalization, and exclusion. It also foregrounds women's voices, experiences, and subjectivities, emphasizing literature's capacity to function as a site of resistance and social critique.

The feminist movement in the Arab world emerged as a pivotal force for women's rights, emphasizing themes such as the search for identity, equality, freedom, and opposition to patriarchal oppression. Feminist theory conceptualizes patriarchy as a pervasive social system that privileges male authority while restricting women's access to autonomy, education, and self-determination. Themes such as a woman's search for identity, equal rights, freedom to live and learn, and opposition to patriarchal oppression became popular in the works of both male and female writers. As Bell Hooks states, "feminism is a movement to end sexism and sexist domination and oppression, a struggle that includes efforts to end gender discrimination and create equality, it is fundamentally a radical movement" (Hooks, 2000, p. 113). Contemporary Yemeni novels depict female characters who resist traditional roles of wife, mother, or daughter, negotiating societal constraints while asserting their agency. These narratives highlight both the structural barriers imposed by patriarchy and the strategies women use to overcome them, demonstrating the ongoing relevance of feminist perspectives in understanding gender dynamics within Yemeni society. Female writers like Habib Abdulrab Sarori, Huda al-Attas, Zahra Rahmat Allah, Nabila al-Zubayr, and Nadia Al-Kokabany provide a realistic portrayal of Yemeni women who fight for their rights and refuse to be confined to traditional roles of wife, mother, or daughter. It is worth noting

that, as Hooks suggests, many women who associate feminism with an alternative lifestyle come from "middle-class backgrounds, are unmarried, college-educated, and often lack the social and economic responsibilities faced by working-class and poor women" (Hooks, 2015, p. 130). The main female characters in the Yemeni novel undergo significant changes in their family lives, but they overcome obstacles and strive to assert their true identities in a patriarchal society.

Nadia is a feminist writer who recognizes and challenges the oppression, suppression, and marginalization of women in society. Through her writings, she aims to turn this pattern around. She actively works to dismantle patriarchal authority and speaks out against male domination. In her novel *Aqeelat* (2009), Nadia tells the story of Joud and Rawada, two ordinary girls on a journey to becoming self-sufficient women. The novel showcases their resistance against a patriarchal society as they strive to achieve their goals. According to feminist standpoint theories, "women's standpoint, developed within the women's movements, is essential for critiquing and reimagining society to create a socially just societal order without oppression or inequality" (Lykke, 2010, p. 206). Nadia's novel *Aqeelat* exemplifies this perspective through the rebellious and determined characters of Rawda and Joud, who challenge traditions and norms in Yemeni society to assert their independence and identities. The issues and themes explored in Nadia's novel arise from the experiences of women at a societal crossroads, navigating the shift from traditional to modern values. She vividly portrays the struggles faced by educated middle-class Yemeni women as they balance their own aspirations and the constraints imposed by patriarchal forces.

This study focuses on the novel *Aqeelat* as a primary source, which is analyzed through a feminist lens. Feminist theory suggests that women are oppressed and subjugated by patriarchal societies, and Yemeni women are actively fighting for their liberation and empowerment. Education has played a crucial role in opening their eyes to their rights and responsibilities. As she explains, "privileged women wanted social equality with men of their class; some women wanted equal pay for equal work; others wanted an alternative lifestyle. Many of these legitimate concerns were easily co-opted by the ruling capitalist patriarchy" (Hooks, 2015, pp. 7-8). The main female characters in *Aqeelat* reject societal norms that undermine women's capabilities. They strive to prove their abilities and challenge the restrictions imposed by their families, society, and culture. Nadia portrays women who, in their fight for existence and identity, may lose their stability. These new women have the courage to break free from docility and, like Rawda and Joud, defy their families' expectations.

### Research Methodology:

A descriptive-analytical approach is a qualitative research method that combines detailed description of the text with critical interpretation. It involves systematically describing the features of a literary work—such as themes, characters, language, and symbols. Then analyzing these elements to uncover their underlying meanings and ideological implications. Rather than merely summarizing the text, this approach seeks to explain how and why specific literary patterns operate and what they reveal about social, cultural, and psychological realities. In literary studies, the descriptive-analytical approach is particularly effective because it allows the researcher to move from close textual observation to informed critical interpretation. In the present study, this approach is used to describe key scenes, character developments, and narrative strategies in *Aqeelat*, and to analyze how these elements construct representations of women's oppression, resistance, and empowerment within a patriarchal Yemeni context.

The descriptive-analytical method enables a systematic examination of the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques, while feminist literary criticism provides the conceptual tools necessary to interpret issues of gender, power, and resistance. The primary source of data is the novel *Aqeelat*, which is subjected to close textual reading. Selected passages, character interactions, and narrative moments are analyzed to identify patterns related to women's oppression, marginalization, and resistance. This method allows the study to move beyond surface-level description toward critical interpretation, revealing how the text constructs meanings about women's roles and possibilities within Yemeni society.

This approach is applied by examining how female characters are represented, how patriarchal authority is portrayed, and how acts of defiance and self-assertion are narrated. Particular attention is given to the development of Rawda and Joud as central figures whose personal struggles reflect collective female experiences. Their psychological growth, conflicts with family and society, and pursuit of autonomy are analyzed as narrative expressions of feminist resistance. In addition, narrative analysis is employed to explore how point of view, characterization, symbolism, and plot structure contribute to conveying feminist concerns. This approach helps clarify how storytelling strategies reinforce the novel's critique of patriarchal norms and its advocacy for women's liberation. This combined approach allows the study to demonstrate how Al-Kawkabani's novel functions both as a literary work and as a socio-cultural commentary on Yemeni women's struggles for identity, freedom, and empowerment.

## Patriarchal Oppression and Women's Resistance:

Various Yemeni literature writers, including Habib Abdulrab Sarori, Huda al-Attas, Zahra Rahmat Allah, Nabila al-Zubayr, Wajdi Al Ahdal and Nadia, have raised their voices against women's oppression. These writers have advocated for women's rights and encouraged them to liberate themselves from societal and male oppression. In her novel, Nadia narrates the story of oppressed women within a Yemeni community who face persecution and suppression from their families and the patriarchal society, as well as outdated social traditions and norms. According to feminist theory, the main aim of feminism is to actively participate in global movements to "end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Hooks, 2000, p. 47). Nadia, like many other Yemeni female writers, addresses these issues of oppression and patriarchy faced by Arabian women in general and Yemeni women in particular.

Nadia delves into women's rights, emphasizing equality in education, the freedom to choose a partner, and the opportunity to work in government offices. She illustrates the stories of two significant girls who suffer under the patriarchal society and traditional norms. Despite Joud's right to education, she faces suppression and persecution from her brother and mother. She experiences mistreatment and frustration from her family. However, she refuses to remain silent. They undermine her by insisting that no matter how much she studies, no matter how much she learns, she will never reach the same level as men or be allowed to enter the labor market because she is just a woman. Initially subjected to her father's orders, Rawda, on the other hand, strives to defend herself through her pursuit of education. Rawda describes her situation by saying:

Jude humorously repeats her brother's phrase: "Don't think you'll get a job just by graduating-it's all about reading and sitting at home!" My father echoes a similar sentiment: "If you choose an easy path instead of hard work, you're just a girl." We stay silent, swallowing the pain and humiliation, fearing we might lose the opportunities they've given us. (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 16)

Through the lines above, the writer discusses the complexities and barriers faced by oppressed and imprisoned women in Yemen, as explained by Nadia Al-Kawkbani in her novel "Aqeelat". Al-Kawkbani shows the patriarchal oppression that women face in society by telling the stories of marginalized and repressed Yemeni women. According to feminism, men are expected to "dominate women, to exploit and oppress us, using violence if they must to keep patriarchy intact" (Hooks, 2000, p. ix). In this story, the female characters are portrayed as marginalized and powerless, oppressed

by men. The researcher analyzes the portrayal of patriarchal oppression in Nadia Al-Kowkabani's *Aqeelat*, focusing on the struggles of marginalized Yemeni women, particularly Joud and Rawda. Drawing on feminist theory, this study highlights how these characters resist oppression by building a community and seeking autonomy, challenging traditional gender roles. It also connects this resistance to the broader feminist idea of women combating all forms of oppression, even those that do not directly affect them.

Al-Kawkbani is aware of the suffering experienced by Yemeni women due to the patriarchal system. Her understanding of marginalization motivates her to resist patriarchy in her society. This resistance is evident in her writings and her rejection of patriarchal ideology. Both Joud and Rawda suffer greatly due to their families and societal norms. Although Rawda is allowed to attend university, she is still bound by customs and traditions that oppress and suppress women. She also endures injustice from her father and husband throughout her marriage, leading to a third divorce. When she reaches a point of despair, her friend Joud and her mother encourage her. Joud gives her a notebook containing the stories of oppressed women, inspiring her to write a novel. Her goal is not only to discover herself and unveil her hidden truth that has been suppressed for years, but also to escape her repression. Rawda describes her writing process:

Joud provided a calm environment that enabled me to complete key parts of the novel. After returning home, I spent a month or two finishing it, writing and revising late into the night. A sense of victory and triumph overcame me, overcoming the defeats planned by my ex-husband and father. I was determined to conquer them, no matter the challenge. (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, pp. 266-267)

Through the above quote, Rawda rediscovers her true self and her passion for life. However, despite this revelation, society continues to oppress and restrict her, limiting her ambitions and potential. In response, Rawda resolves to fight for victory in a society that suppresses women's aspirations, which ultimately leads to the destruction of families and the oppression of women. According to feminist perspective, "it is important for women to recognize their role in challenging forms of oppression that may not directly affect them individually (Hooks, 2015, p. 64). This research explores how Nadia Al-Kowkabani uses the characters of Joud and Rawda in *Aqeelat* to highlight the systemic oppression of Yemeni women within a patriarchal society. We examine how Rawda's journey of self-discovery and empowerment, facilitated by Joud's support, reflects Al-Kowkabani's rejection of patriarchal ideologies. It also underscores how Al-Kowkabani's portrayal of Rawda's struggle aligns with broader feminist principles of resistance against societal constraints on women's potential.

Nadia Al-Kowkabani explains that literature has a significant impact on the political climate of the time, as her literary work empowers women to reclaim their freedom and rights. It also highlights the need for societal changes in traditions and norms. The Yemeni community becomes an oppressive force for women, perpetuating the logic of the oppressor. However, Yemeni women can overcome these challenges and find their true selves if they possess the will to do so. Despite the pressures and restrictions that surround them, there will come a time when women explode and demonstrate their abilities within society. In the novel, "Aqeelat," the two main female characters, Joud and Rawda, endure oppression and domination from their family and society. Rawda's life is suppressed by both her father and husband, who exploit and mistreat her. Rawda courageously speaks out against this mistreatment:

I refuse to obey you this time, Father. I won't say 'yes' without understanding why. 'Yes'-the word you crave from everyone-will no longer come submissively from me. The strength I feel now comes from your unjust treatment and attempts to control my life. I'm sorry, but it's time for my life to have meaning. I have goals, and I will define them myself. (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 266)

This quotation reflects a sentiment of rebellion and assertiveness against the control and expectations imposed by the speaker's father. It conveys a desire to break free from a submissive and obedient role and to exercise personal agency and autonomy in determining one's own life and goals. According to feminism, the men have "power under patriarchy to exploit and oppress women in a manner far more grievous than the psychological stress or emotional pain caused by male conformity to rigid. They don't not believe in the abilities of a woman that she could achieve in her life"(Hooks, 2015, p. 74). The ideologies of men or fathers have their ability to fulfill their wills and business on the account of their daughters. Therefore, they create the role of women by using concept of domination and protection. Drawing on Hooks' feminist theory, the researcher explores how patriarchal systems grant men power to exploit and oppress women, undermining their abilities and potential. This analysis highlights the father's imposition of domination disguised as protection, which serves to confine women within roles defined by male authority.

Rawda suffers from oppression and marginalization under the control of her father and her husband. Her husband wants to torture her and preventing his daughters from completing their university studies. As a result of this, her friend Joud saves her by giving her a notebook of collecting women's stories to turn it into a novel that has met her father's disapproval. She

refuses her father's opinion and continues her writing. Joud is also oppressed and disturbed by her brother and her mother after the death of her father. She suffers from the side of her brother or her mother. After her university graduation, her mother and brother prevent her from work. Her mother also refuses the newlyweds who proposed to her. The one her mother wants has special characteristics, she refuses Joud's cousin, who loves her and vice versa. Her mother is not comfortable with her daughter's fiancé, so she reached the age of spinsterhood. "When I betrayed him, unable to stand up to my brother and mother, he collapsed, disappointed by my cowardice despite my love for him. As I tried to resist, his breath warmed my lips, and we shared a tender kiss" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 33)! In this quote, Joud is talking about her cousin and the emotional turmoil she experienced in their relationship. She mentions betraying him, as she was unable to withstand the pressure from her brother and mother. The study examines Joud's internal conflict and emotional struggles in her relationship, emphasizing the societal pressures that enforce patriarchal dominance. By analyzing Joud's betrayal, shaped by her inability to resist familial influence, the researcher highlights how patriarchal norms foster women's internalized inferiority and undermine their agency. Drawing from feminist theory, the analysis explores how men dominate societal structures, using judgment and control to oppress women. This analysis further emphasizes Joud's yearning for autonomy and individuality as a pivotal act of resistance against these oppressive expectations, framing her journey as a broader struggle for self-determination and equality.

Thus, Joud suffers from increasing pressures that make her explode and demand her inheritance from them. After taking her inheritance, she establishes a nursery school for children, which has developed into one of the most prestigious private schools in Sana'a. As Joud says, "She demanded her complete inheritance from her father and established a nursery for children, which has developed into one of the most prestigious private schools in the capital, Sana'a" (p. 38). This is the only school that follows a special system in its curricula and the mixing of its students until the secondary stage. Even if men and women do the same work at the same time, women are paid less than men. This study shows Joud's journey as a response to patriarchal pressures, focusing on her demand for her rightful inheritance as an act of defiance against systemic gender inequality. By establishing a nursery that evolves into a prestigious school in Sana'a, Joud demonstrates how women can reclaim agency and create impactful contributions despite societal constraints.

Both Joud and Rawda are graduate students at Sana'a University. Joud doesn't remain silent against the injustice she faces from her family and

society. So, she decides that she will not be the wife of anyone. As Joud explains, "I do not regret, Rawda, and I do not search and will not look for a man to be his wife after I was injured by my brother" (p. 37)! And that she could stand alone without resorting to a man, and that decision is not out of anything but out of the horror of what she sees from the tragedies of imprisoned wives, and she is one of them. Joud's revolution began as a primary school and then as the director of the most prestigious schools in Sana'a. As she states, "You know, people, that my success in life wasn't easy. It started as a fleeting thought, but I held onto it and fought to defend it as if I were defending my very existence, even if it came late" (p. 37). By choosing not to marry and instead focusing on her career, Joud challenges traditional gender roles, which typically expect women, especially after marriage, to stay at home regardless of their education. This research connects this resistance to broader feminist themes of female empowerment, highlighting Joud's decision to establish her own business and rise to prominence in Sana'a as an act of defiance against oppressive social norms. It also underscores the struggle for women's autonomy and rights in a society that limits their opportunities.

Rawda says to Joud, after reading the notebook, which includes the stories of many wives, "This is what you resisted, Joud? Is this why you refused to be the wife of so-and-so? That is why I wanted to prove that you can be you without being anyone's wife" (p. 19). Of course, the woman's request is very simple, which is to enjoy her rights, self-respect, and desires from the man. According to feminism, "it should clarify for women the powers they exercise daily and show them ways these powers can be used to resist sexist domination and exploitation. Sexism has never rendered women powerless" (Hooks, 2015, p. 95). Thus, Joud and Rawda reject the norms and roles of the dominant patriarchal society and show their reaction to female characters in the novel. They are searching for her feminine identity rather than that of a wife and a mother. This research connects their resistance to feminist theory, specifically Hooks' assertion that women have the power to resist sexist domination and exploitation. By examining Rawda's question to Joud and their shared desire to assert their identities beyond being wives or mothers, it explores how both women challenge the societal expectations placed upon them. This resistance is seen as a response to the oppression they face, where they seek to reclaim their autonomy and rights as women.

The patriarchal society considers women as offenders and the cause of mistakes. The Yemeni society despises and exploits women for the sake of its own interests. Most women suffer from ignorance, poverty, and

corruption that push them to be aimless in their lives. According to Yemeni traditions and norms, the woman is the only cause of all problems that distort the family and society. But how did a society oppress and repress women based on the social traditions and norms of a long time ago? So, a woman wants the rights that society has denied her. So, Joud is the first to be liberated from society's oppression, and after her, she opens the way for her friend Rawda to rebel and see the light that she shows to the girls around her by writing. Joud says to Rawda: "Without you, Rawda, wives will never see the light, and trust that! Yesterday's wives will liberate today's and tomorrow's wives. The liberation we want, Rawda, is our right to life. Respect for ourselves and our desires by man as we do with him. Do you understand me, Rawda" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 47)? This quotation expresses a dialogue between two individuals, Joud and Rawda. Joud exclaims that without Rawda, wives will never achieve freedom or equality. This study outlines how the patriarchal system views women as the source of societal problems, leading to their exploitation and marginalization. By examining Joud's and Rawda's rebellion against these norms, it focuses on their roles in challenging traditional gender expectations. It also draws on feminist theory to demonstrate how Joud's assertion that yesterday's wives will liberate today's and tomorrow's wives reflects a call for women's empowerment and the quest for equality, autonomy, and respect in a male-dominated society.

Rawda encourages her two daughters to continue their education in secret, as their father believes women have no need for education. He insists that "university women do not go to education but to look for husbands" (p. 69). In their marriage, there is no care, love, or affection; instead, the patriarchal dynamic dictates that sex is a wife's duty, regardless of her desires. This is evident when Rawda feels distressed by her husband's attempts to prevent their children from getting an education. In this oppressive environment, women's rights and opinions are disregarded, and their voices remain unheard. Joud and Rawda are not the only ones who decided to rebel against social traditions and patriarchal society. Rather, Rawda's mother encourages her daughter Rawda to continue writing the stories of the imprisoned wives (Aqeelat). According to feminist theory, "despite sexist discrimination, exploitation, or oppression, many women feel their lives as they live them are important and valuable" (Hooks, 2015, p. 29). She herself struggles to complete her education after having five daughters. Rawda describes the situation of her mother: "She always says that God blesses her with education so that she does not go crazy when she thinks that her husband is in the arms of another woman, even if she is his

wife" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 57). Rawda's mother, an example of resilience, continues her education even after having five daughters, defying the stigma attached to women's education and becoming deeply passionate about learning, reading, and staying informed, motivated by her husband's second marriage. This research illustrates how women like Rawda and her mother, despite immense challenges, find value in their lives and fight for their rights.

Rawda is obedient and submissive to her father as well as her husband. The silence of Rawda in Sana'a is another major issue, and it is very difficult to hear a woman's answer about having her own opinion towards men. Patriarchal society considers women inferior, especially those who are divorced or unmarried. The divorced woman is always at fault without finding out and verifying whether the fault is the man, the woman, or the spinster. "In our society, nothing satisfies us, no matter how logical, except the labels they seek-a 'wife,' which they adore; a 'divorcee,' which they despise; and a 'spinster,' which they debate" (p. 19). Rawda is a divorced woman, so she is not a respectful woman in her society. Her silence makes her father and her husband more superior. According to feminism, "patriarchy allowed all men to completely rule women in their families, to decide their fate, and to shape their destiny. Men could freely batter women with no fear of punishment" (Hooks, 2015, p. 121). Feminist theory, as Hooks argues that patriarchy allows men to dominate women, determining their fate and reinforcing this power through violence and control. Rawda's silence and her status as a divorced woman reinforce the societal norms that silence and oppress women in patriarchal structures. This portrayal of women's submission to patriarchal authority highlights the broader issue of gender inequality and the societal stigmatization of women who do not conform to traditional marital expectations.

From early childhood, men have been taught to play a different role in the family. A patriarchal society will blame those who disobey its orders. The father in the family, or the younger man, makes a decision that he controls and governs the family's work, purchases, etc. Here, the woman has no choice to make. It means that society and family exploit marginalized and suppressed women, confiscating their rights for the benefit of patriarchal society. Most people think that divorce is a scandal and a big matter, so they try to hide it. As Rawda says:

Oh my God, how does divorce transform a woman's life in our society? It makes her non-existent, a scandal whispered about by her parents. Instead of support to start anew, she faces blame for the divorce and endures more insults for the sake of her children, until her death. (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 82).

The above quote shows that the patriarchal system demands obedience and enforces control, with male authority figures-such as fathers or husbands-making decisions for the entire family. Women's choices are limited, and they are often exploited and denied autonomy. The stigma surrounding divorce in such a society, as portrayed by Rawda's statement, further exacerbates women's oppression, as divorce is seen as a scandal that ruins a woman's life, reducing her to a non-existent status and subjecting her to blame and further humiliation. This reinforces the idea that women are consistently silenced and marginalized within both the family and society at large, reflecting the broader oppressive structures of patriarchy.

Rawda expresses to her mother a deep sense of disillusionment with the relationships she has observed, both in her own life and those around her, especially within a patriarchal society. She believes that she is the one who caused the error because she is a woman and not a man. No matter how much men may allow women some freedom, they still cling to their aggressive views toward them. "Experiences around us show that true, equal relationships based on human principles are rare, as men manipulate religious teachings to serve their own interests, ignoring the parts that don't suit them" (p. 111). According to the above lines, women in Yemen are regulated by culture and religion. They have to comply with the rules in that country. According to feminism, "married women for whom holy wedlock represented a kind of "civil death" that denied them independent legal status and gave their husbands dominion over their lives, their labor, their property, and even the children born into their marriages" (Rooney, 2006, p. 30). This concept aligns with Rawda's feelings of frustration, as it highlights how marriage in patriarchal societies often results in women losing their independence and becoming subjugated to the authority of their husbands. This research underscores how religious and cultural norms serve to reinforce women's subjugation, framing marriage as a system that legally and socially confines women, stripping them of rights and autonomy. Empowering and changing the mentality of society to get out of patriarchal oppression is one of the great projects of the feminist movement to end the ongoing abuse and subordination that have occurred towards women in a patriarchal society.

### **Women's dream for liberation:**

The dreams of women for liberation in Yemen reflect a direct response to the systemic oppression and injustice they face in a patriarchal society. These aspirations for equality, autonomy, and freedom are not only a desire to break free from the constraints of tradition, but also an urgent response to the denial of their basic rights, including the freedom to choose their

spouses. As Rawda states, "At that moment, life overwhelmed me because I had no will from the start. I accepted its burdens, slapped it back, and lost my balance, paying for others' mistakes without questioning them or believing in myself. I was never truly myself (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 49). This illustrates the deep internal conflict women experience as they struggle against both familial and societal oppression. These are the reasons that led to the explosion of women in front of family oppression as well as society.

According to feminism, "Collective rebellion came to be known as women's liberation and would later evolve into a feminist movement. Feminist struggle takes place anytime, anywhere. Any female or male resists sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Hooks, 2015, p. xii). Scholars like bell hooks and others in feminist theory argue that women's liberation movements are rooted in the collective rebellion against gender-based oppression and the limitations placed on women by societal norms. Rawda's internal conflict and rejection of societal pressures highlight that women's aspirations in such contexts are not just personal but part of a broader feminist struggle against oppression, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries. This study emphasizes the role of literature in voicing women's resistance and advancing feminist discourse, especially in societies where women's roles are severely restricted.

Nadia Al-Kowkabani narrates the story of Joud, who suffers persecution from her brother and her mother. They prevent her from achieving her dreams. She is afraid of them. But when the burden increases on her shoulder, she explodes and walks behind her ambition. She also proves her existence and her rights in front of her family members. After the death of her father, she demands her inheritance from her mother and brother. Although Yemeni society considers women's demands for their rights a shame and a violation of the customs and traditions of society, especially when the woman is not married. She starts to build her dream by making a good school for children. As Rawda says, "the incident led her to choose her own path in life: to become Joud Al-Taj, the principal of Al-Ula Educational Schools, the most renowned in Sana'a, staying true to herself rather than conforming to others' expectations" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 92). Through the above lines, Joud succeeds in achieving her dreams of liberating herself from the oppression and marginalization of her family and from the restrictions of social norms in patriarchal society. According to feminist theory, "their suggestion that they should first obtain money and power so as to work more effectively for liberation had little appeal for poor and/or non-white women" (Hooks, 2015, p. 86). The exploration of Joud's journey-demanding her inheritance, defying societal expectations, and becoming the

principal of a renowned school-underscores the complexity of female empowerment in a culture that restricts women's roles. This research shows Joud's liberation as not just personal achievement, but as a response to the broader, intersectional struggles of marginalized women often overlooked by mainstream feminism. It advocates for a more inclusive feminist framework that addresses the unique cultural, social, and economic challenges faced by women in oppressive societies.

The novelist argues that literature shapes social conditions by empowering women to claim their rights and challenging societal norms. She emphasizes the importance of personal freedom for women, urging them to recognize their dreams and circumstances in order to resist Yemen's patriarchal society. Joud helps her friend Rawda escape the brutality of oppression, freeing her from the injustice imposed by men. She strives to convince Rawda to break free from her father's and ex-husband's control. As Joud says:

My goal is not that. I want to learn from each other's experiences to avoid repeating past mistakes. These experiences should guide us, not harm us. My purpose is to reveal the truths I've discovered, not for distortion, excitement, or fame, but for a higher cause. For the sake of future generations, we must not hide anything from them, no matter how harsh; to spare them the pain we've endured. Do you understand what I'm saying, Rawda? (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 46)

The above quotation by Joud expresses a deep desire to learn from the experiences of others and use that knowledge to avoid making the same mistakes. It highlights Nadia Al-Kowkabani's argument that literature serves as a powerful tool for shaping social conditions, particularly by empowering women to claim their rights and challenge societal norms. Through the character of Joud, we show how Joud's actions-helping Rawda escape oppression and urging her to break free from male control-illustrate a larger message about the need to confront and learn from past mistakes. This study connects Joud's statement about revealing painful truths to the broader theme of using shared experiences to prevent future generations from suffering the same hardships. It also underscores how Al-Kowkabani uses Joud's journey to convey a message of empowerment, compassion, and societal change.

Rawda decides to confront her fears of her father and ex-husband, stepping out of her shell. Joud gives her a notebook containing the stories of imprisoned and suffering wives, which inspires Rawda to liberate herself from the oppression of her family, husband, and patriarchal society. After reading the notebook, Rawda begins to pursue her dreams by breaking free

from her father and ex-husband, expressing her journey through writing. She says, "I was busy writing in my room, with the wives of Joud, Aqila, and Aqila. I lived their tragedies as if I were a partner, hovering over them to witness the severity of the injustice they endured. There is no better Aqila than Aqila" (93). This quote reflects Rawda's deep connection to these women's struggles, feeling as though she is living their pain and injustice. She highlights Aqila as the epitome of oppression in Yemeni society. According to feminism, "it is necessary for feminist activists to stress that the ability to see and describe one's own reality is a significant step in the long process of self-recovery, but it is only the beginning" (Hooks, 2015, p. 26). This contribution highlights Rawda's awakening as part of a broader feminist process of self-discovery and resistance to societal constraints. Receiving the notebook from Joud, which contains the stories of suffering wives, inspires Rawda to reclaim her agency and pursue her dreams through writing. It also emphasizes how Rawda's deep emotional connection to these women's struggles-particularly Aqila's-symbolizes the broader oppression faced by women in Yemeni society.

Rawda sacrifices many years fulfilling the roles of daughter, wife, sister, and mother, but now seeks to discover herself and free herself from these societal expectations. Her strong reaction to oppression leads her to reject returning to her husband, recognizing that marriage traps women, reducing them to emotional slaves. She believes that writing the novel *Aqeelat* will help her break free from the control of her husband and father. Rawda yearns for a dignified life in her community, but fear-particularly her father's injustice-has long held her back. Once freed from these constraints, she experiences ecstasy and victory. The pact between her father and ex-husband sparks her determination to confront and overcome them. She tells her father, "You are responsible for the injustice and for trying to control my life and future. I apologize, but it's time for my life to have meaning. I have goals, and I am the one who determines them, not anyone else" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 266). This quote focuses on Rawda's desire for autonomy, independence, and the ability to shape her own life according to her own wishes and aspirations. According to feminist views, "the vision of "women's liberation," which captured and still holds the public imagination, was the one representing women as wanting what men had. And this was the vision that was easier to realize" (Hooks, 2015, p. 4). The current study further integrates bell hooks' feminist theory, which critiques the traditional vision of women's liberation as a mere imitation of male power. By confronting her father and ex-husband, Rawda moves toward self-empowerment, embodying a desire for a dignified life on her own terms.

This emphasizes Rawda's pursuit of true autonomy, highlighting her desire to shape her own life, not by adopting male-defined roles, but by asserting her own goals and aspirations. The research ties Rawda's desire to reclaim autonomy through writing *Aqeelat* to feminist perspectives on self-determination and independence.

Rawda achieves her dreams by breaking free from the constraints of patriarchal society. She wants to be strong and live on her own terms, recognizing women's power and strength, as she notes: "I confess that what Catherine did with my brother made me realize how powerful a woman can be when she insists on and believes in achieving her goals" (Al-Kowkabani, 2009, p. 259). However, societal customs and traditions have diminished this strength, stifling women's dreams and ambitions. Despite these pressures, Rawda refuses to return to her former life and continues to challenge patriarchal norms. If she cannot fulfill her dreams in this oppressive world, she decides to escape to a freer one, where she can shine and realize her potential. She describes her father's downfall: "His smarts betrayed him, driven only by greed, selfishness, and a love of money! I laughed loudly, eagerly envisioning the world ahead" (289). Rawda believes her father's intelligence led him astray, prioritizing greed over other values, ultimately leading to unwise decisions and unethical actions in pursuit of wealth. She is also portrayed as brave at the end of the story, particularly in her responses to her father and ex-husband. Her courage is evident when she travels to Italy to meet her brothers, seeking a life that respects her rights and fulfills her dreams.

From a feminist perspective, "although early feminists demanded respect and acknowledgment for housework and child care, they did not attribute enough significance and value to female parenting or to motherhood" (Hooks, 2015, p. 134). In *Aqeelat*, Nadia Al-Kawkabani situates Rawda's personal struggle within the broader socio-cultural realities of Yemeni and Arab society, where patriarchal norms and traditional expectations limit women's autonomy and voices. When Rawda's father attempts to return her to her husband for mutual interests, her defiance reflects the challenges women face in negotiating family obligations, societal pressures, and personal freedom. Her decision to travel to Italy to meet her brother further symbolizes a rejection of restrictive cultural norms and an assertion of self-determination. Through Rawda, the novelist critiques entrenched patriarchal structures and advocates for recognition of women's rights, ambitions, and agency, highlighting how Yemeni literature can engage with social and cultural realities to promote reflection on gender, autonomy, and resilience.

## Conclusion:

The study concludes that Nadia Al-Kowkabani delivers a powerful and universal message of resistance, empowerment, and hope for women. Her narrative highlights the profound struggles women face in patriarchal societies, offering a roadmap for liberation through self-reliance, intellectual growth, and collective resistance. Through characters like Joud and Rawda, the novel critiques societal norms that marginalize women and demonstrates the transformative potential of women's autonomy and resilience. These characters break free from oppressive traditions, challenging the patriarchal systems that seek to control their identities and suppress their voices. Joud's independence and Rawda's pursuit of fulfillment underscore the broader message that the fight for women's rights and equality is ongoing. Even in the face of divorce or threats of divorce, a woman who can support herself has the strength and autonomy to navigate the challenges of life without relying on a man. Al-Kowkabani stresses that a woman must cultivate internal strength and self-assurance to resist the societal pressures that demand her conformity to outdated social traditions and norms. The novel underscores the importance of breaking the silence that keeps women oppressed and encourages them to take action to change their circumstances. Through her characters, Al-Kowkabani illustrates the power of women to challenge the limitations imposed by a patriarchal society. The novel serves as both a critique of oppressive traditions and a call to action for societal change, inspiring women to assert their voices and claim their rightful place in a just and equitable world.

Nadia Al-Kowkabani envisions a transformative future for Yemeni women, urging them to resist patriarchal oppression, societal discrimination, and outdated traditions that limit their autonomy. She advocates for women to unite as a social force, challenge oppressive norms, and pursue their rights and freedoms, emphasizing the importance of collective action and resilience. Through *Aqeelat*, the novel portrays women as independent, courageous, and capable of excelling in fields like medicine, literature, and administration, even in the face of adversity. It highlights the role of education and intellectual awareness as catalysts for self-liberation, while calling on men to acknowledge and dismantle structures that perpetuate gender inequality. By celebrating women's voices, agency, and historical contributions, Al-Kowkabani provides a hopeful and empowering message, inspiring both social change and continued efforts toward gender equality.

Finally, this research underscores the importance of literary works and literary criticism as powerful mediums for expressing women's views, ideological orientations, and broader societal contributions. Literature can

offer insight into women's struggles and triumphs, providing a platform for their voices and experiences to be heard. It calls on feminist researchers to shift their focus towards women's resistance, urging them to portray women not merely as victims of violence and oppression but as active agents of change who fight for their rights and autonomy. Such research would not only promote a reclaiming of women's rights but also contribute to a deeper understanding of their historical and ongoing roles in shaping and advancing societies. By highlighting women's contributions and struggles, this research would facilitate a more nuanced and empowering perspective on their position in the world, ultimately fostering a fuller recognition of their essential role in the progress and development of society.

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