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THE PASS / ASHUU (1966) *Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997)*

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OVERVIEW

Author

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997) was a Kyrgyz writer born in Keng-Suu, in present-day Issyk-Kul Region. Because his official birth date was unknown, he later chose May 14 as his birthday through a family tradition involving his daughter selecting a date at random.

He studied at the Agricultural Technical School in Frunze (1928–1931) and later at the Central Asian Veterinary Institute in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. He worked at the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* (1931–1936), served as a consultant for the Union of Writers of Kyrgyzstan (1937–1947), and worked as an editor at *Kyrgyz mambas* publishing house (1949–1951).

In the Soviet period, he was labeled a “nationalist writer,” but his earlier Stalin Prize recognition limited political repression against him. He supported objective study of Kyrgyz history, promoted the development of the Kyrgyz language, and openly criticized official shortcomings, leading some scholars to describe him as a Soviet-era Kyrgyz dissident.

Sydykbekov remained a major figure in Kyrgyz literature for nearly seventy years and died in Bishkek on July 19, 1997.

Literary career

He began his literary career as a poet. His first poem, *Who Are These People? (Bular Kimder?)*, was published in the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* on May 1, 1930. Soon afterward, he wrote *The Old Komuz Player (Chal Komuzchu)*, which appeared in the magazine *Chabuul*. His first poetry collection, *Struggle (Kurosh)*, was published in 1933, followed by *Heroes (Baatyrlar, 1936)* and *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul, 1938)*. During this period, he also began working actively in prose.

Like many writers of his generation, Sydykbekov's early works reflected social changes in Kyrgyz society, including the new socialist system, labor, and changing social relations.

In 1937–1938, his novel *Keng-Suu* (*Keng-Suu*) was published in two volumes, becoming one of the first novels in Kyrgyz literature. In the 1950s, he revised it and republished it as *In the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*), with volumes appearing in 1955 and 1958. During this period, he also wrote *Poet-Nightingale* (*Akyn-Bulbul*, 1938), the essay *Ala-Toodon Jetoo* (1939), the poem *News from the Night Watchman* (*Tun Jarchysynan Kabar*, 1939), and the verse tale *The Greedy Father* (*Ach Koz Ata*, 1940).

His collection of stories *During the War Days* (*Sogush Kundorundo*, 1943) reflects wartime unity and patriotism during World War II.

Between 1938 and 1940, he wrote the novel *Temir* (*Temir*), published in 1946, depicting the establishment of Soviet power in southern Kyrgyzstan. His novel *The People of Our Time* (*Bizdin Zamandyn Kishileri*, 1948) marked a major stage in his career. It was first published in *Sovetskii Kyrgyzstan* (*Ala-Too*) and later in Moscow in Russian. In 1949, it received the Stalin Prize, making him one of the leading Kyrgyz writers.

After the war, he contributed to children's literature with *Mountain Children* (*Too Baldary*, 1953). Later, after *In the Mountains*, he wrote the major novel *Women* (*Zaiyptar*). Its first part, *Batiyna*, was published in 1962, and the complete version, including *Mountain Pass* (*Ashuu*), appeared in 1966.

His later works include *Friends* (*Kurbular*) and *Confession* (*Syr Achuu*, 1977), focusing on youth, and *Yimanbay's Character* (*Yimanbay Peyili*, 1980), which continues a character from *Among the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*).

In his autobiographical works *The Road* (*Jol*, 1982) and *Over the Mountain Passes* (*Bel-Beleste*, 1996), he reflects on his life and experiences.

Novel

The second part of the novel *Women* (*Zaiyptar*), titled *The Pass* (*Ashuu*), was written in 1966. The title carries a symbolic meaning, referring to a mountain pass as a metaphor for the transformation in the lives of the main characters, Zuurakan and Batiyna. This essay is based on the Russian translation by M. Chechakovsky (1972), published in Moscow by the *Sovetskii Pisatel* publishing house.

Background

The novel depicts the early life of Zuurakan Kainazarova, who would later become a celebrated Hero of Socialist Labor. Born on June 18, 1902, in the village of Belek, Chuy region of Kyrgyzstan, she came from a poor peasant family. Like many rural girls of her time, she began working in agriculture at a young age and officially joined a collective farm in 1929.

In 1935, she started growing sugar beets. Inspired by Ukrainian farmer Maria Demchenko's record, who harvested 55 tons from one hectare, Kainazarova achieved an extraordinary 103 tons per hectare, setting a world record. Her success brought her national fame, leading to an invitation to Moscow, where she was awarded the Order of Lenin at the age of 34.

Kainazarova maintained exceptionally high yields for decades and became one of Kyrgyzstan's most prominent agricultural workers. She was twice named Hero of Socialist Labor, received the Order of Lenin three times, and served as a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Since 2015, her birthday has been celebrated in Kyrgyzstan as Rural Women's Day.



MAIN CHARACTERS

Zuurakan – One of the two central heroines of the novel, based on Zuurakan Kainazarova

Batiyna – The second main heroine, a fictional character

Tekebay – Zuurakan's first husband

Oroz – A trader and Zuurakan's second husband

Buken – The wife of Serkebay, landlady of the wealthy household

Serkebay – A wealthy village elite

Oshur – A trader and gambler connected to Oroz

Valentina Kopylova – A Russian activist and government official

Temirbolotov – A Soviet official

Cholpon – A young girl kidnapped for forced marriage

Jusup – A young man, later Batiyna's husband

SYNOPSIS

The story follows Zuurakan and Batiyna as their lives unfold during the collapse of traditional bay rule and the rise of Soviet power. Zuurakan lives as a servant in a wealthy household, suffering abuse and humiliation. After a violent beating, she steals horses and flees into the mountains. She confronts her husband, survives hunger and a wolf attack, and later falls into the hands of traders who treat her as property. She lives with Oroz, but gambling, betrayal, and distrust destroy their marriage. When Oroz stakes her in a game, Zuurakan finally leaves him, determined to protect her dignity.

At the same time, Batiyna leaves her village and enters Soviet public life. In the city she meets Valentina Kopylova and becomes active in women's political work. She travels as a delegate, speaks at a congress about women's suffering, and later returns to the villages as an official. Batiyna challenges powerful elders, investigates crimes, rescues the kidnapped girl Cholpon, and demands justice for abused women. After surviving an attack and continuing her education, she marries Jusup by choice. Through both women's journeys, the story shows a society in transition and women fighting for freedom.

SCENES

Zuurakan in the Wealthy Nomad Household

Zuurakan's Escape from the Rich Household Zuurakan left the bay household after a violent insult and beating from the landlady. Angry and exhausted from years of forced labor, she refused to stay in servitude. She gathered her few belongings, but then threw them away, feeling they meant nothing. Her husband Tekebay did not protect her. In the night, she quietly untied the guest horses at the village. She mounted the best horse belonging to Nurbay and led two others. She justified taking them as payment for her years of hard work. Once away from the village, she urged the horses forward and fled into the darkness night.

Confrontation in the Mountains Zuurakan fled through the mountains and was pursued by her husband Tekebay and his companion Mekebay after she had stolen horses to escape abuse. Disguised as a man, she tried to mislead them on the road to Chu Valley. Exhausted but defiant, she argued that she deserved justice after years of servitude. When she was caught, she confronted both men, questioning their cowardice in letting her be beaten. Her boldness and fearlessness unsettled them, and they momentarily relented. The confrontation revealed the collapse of her marriage and the brutality of bay society. Later, she met Batiyna, to whom she recounted her suffering and escape. Freedom began for her.

Batiyna's First Experience of Soviet Life

In the City Batiyna arrived in the city for the first time after she had left her mountain village. She was amazed by tall buildings, crowded markets, and unfamiliar urban life. Guided by a companion, she reached the local administration of the communist party, believing it protected the poor and brought justice. She reflected on past oppression by the wealthy nomads and hoped for equality under the new power. At the office, she was welcomed by a Russian woman, Valentina Kopylova.

Batiyna at Valentina Kopylova's Home She stayed with Valentina Kopylova, a Russian woman working in the women's department of the local administration of the communist party, who welcomed her kindly and introduced her to a new way of life. Batiyna was amazed by lamps, pictures, and household objects, but felt uneasy in the unfamiliar environment. After a sleepless night, she reflected on her harsh past and compared it with the city's crowded, unequal life. At the bazaar she sold her horse under pressure and witnessed deception and greed among traders. Gradually, she became more aware of urban realities. Later, she was chosen as a delegate and prepared to travel to Moscow with other women.

Farewell Procession and Public Reaction A large crowd filled the street as people gathered to watch the departure of the women delegates. Villagers and townspeople discussed the event with curiosity and excitement. Some men speculated that the women were going to Moscow to receive freedom from Lenin and that new laws would change marriage customs and punish old practices like bride price and polygamy. Street vendors moved through the crowd selling food, including the husband of Anarhon, one of the delegates, who offered baked meat-filled bread to Batiyna. She hesitated but accepted it. As the procession moved on, music played and people slowly dispersed.

Journey to Moscow and the Museum

Conflict and Solidarity among the Delegates Batiyna traveled by covered cart with Anarhon, an Uzbek woman, Rabiyya, a Tatar woman, and Rahima, a Sart-Kalmyk woman of Mongolic background. During the journey, tensions rose when Anarhon called Batiyna “uncultured,” leading to an argument over rural and urban identity. Batiyna defended her mountain people and rejected social and cultural superiority. Though differences in language and background surfaced, the women remained united by their shared journey toward Moscow. Gradually, anger softened as reflection replaced insult. Batiyna’s song, filled with memory and longing, helped ease the conflict and created a fragile sense of solidarity among the diverse delegates.

Women on the Road of Change Batiyna and her companions traveled for weeks by covered cart along a long and difficult road through mountains, valleys, and open steppe. Exhausted by dust, heat, and constant shaking, each woman reflected on her life and fears. Batiyna felt pride and frustration, wishing they had ridden horses instead of enduring hardship. Anarhon worried about her past, her husband, and whether her new freedom would last. Rabiyya thought of her children and home, while Rahima longed for her village and cattle. Batiyna argued with her companions over insults, defending her people’s dignity. Despite tension, they gradually understood one another. Anarhon suffered a disturbing dream of violence and loss, revealing her deep anxiety about returning home and the fragile nature of her emancipation.

Anarhon’s Fear, Journey, and Changing World Anarhon, once confined to the strict world of home life and seclusion, traveled with the other women through long and difficult roads toward Moscow. During the journey she suffered deeply from anxiety after a disturbing dream in which her husband Turgunbay threatened her under religious pressure. The dream seemed like a warning, and she feared returning home. Her illness, however, was only emotional exhaustion, and her companions tried to comfort her. Over time, she slowly recovered and became more engaged in conversations during the journey. Yet memories of oppression and fear continued to haunt her.

Arrival in Moscow A cleanly dressed Russian woman asked Rabiyya what Batiyna was saying so loudly and boldly. Rabiyya explained how Batiyna had taken offense at Anarhon. The Russian woman thought for a moment. Her reddish eyebrows drew together, as if she were irritated. Her bright blue eyes became serious and even somewhat sad. “Yes... this is all, of course, from ignorance. Look, Anarhon said one careless word, but Batiyna was deeply offended and still remembers it. And yet Uzbeks and Kyrgyz share the same faith and have related languages. When will the time come when peoples of different religions, customs, and languages stop insulting and humiliating each other? Only the Soviet era will strengthen friendship among peoples.”

Museum Encounter in Moscow Batiyna met a Russian scientist and his wife in the museum. He explained that she was Kyrgyz from the mountain region and introduced her to visitors. The scientist said Kyrgyz people had a long history and should not be called “wild.” His wife admired Batiyna’s face and clothing. Another woman criticized the group, calling them idle. Inside the museum, the women walked through halls filled with ancient objects. Rahima was tired and uninterested, wanting to rest. Rabiyya read museum labels. People in the museum stared, whispered, and asked questions about their nationality and clothing.

Voices in the Museum In the museum, Anna Nikolaevna praised Batiyna’s beauty and compared her eyes to berries washed by dew. The scientist warmly shook her hand and said the Kyrgyz people had a rich history and would grow quickly under Soviet power. He said they should not be called “wild.” Some

visitors looked at the women with kindness, but one upper-class woman insulted them and called them “savages,” causing a conflict with another woman. At the hotel, Rahima rested from exhaustion. Batiyna reflected on her people’s past, feeling both pain and curiosity about the world, while remaining calm about the insults she heard.

Zuurakan Returns and Faces Judgment

Tense Situation Zuurakan returned to the village on horseback and stood before the mistress of the household, declaring that she was ready to accept any punishment. The household erupted in anger and confusion over the stolen horse and her escape. Tekebay wavered between fear of the mistress and concern for his wife. The elders gathered, observing the tense confrontation. Nurbay spoke slowly, coughing slightly, as if about to say something important, urging restraint and reminding them of the hardships of travel and changing times. He advised settling the matter without cruelty, allowing the couple to decide their path. He concluded: “If you want to leave, go in peace, my child.”

Do whatever you want At dawn the elders gathered near the white kid tied in front of the yurt. Buken, the landlady spoke calmly about a dream and ordered the sacrifice to the spirits. The villagers listened in silence, afraid to oppose her. Tekebay stood pale, holding the trembling animal. Suddenly the sound of hoof beats rolled through the valley. Zuurakan arrived, covered in dust, her eyes burning with anger. She stopped her horse sharply and threw down the reins. “Here I am,” she said. “Do whatever you want.” The crowd froze. Buken hesitated for a moment. For the first time, her authority, built on fear and curses, showed a crack as morning light spread across the silent settlement.

Buken’s Plan against Zuurakan After Zuurakan returned, she continued working in the Serkebay’s household, but his wife Buken’s hatred did not disappear. Outwardly she acted calm and even kind, while secretly preparing revenge. She told Tekebay that Zuurakan remained dangerous and needed to be “treated.” She praised Zuraakan’s strength to gain trust, while planning to control her. Buken suggested carrying out her plan during a future gathering across the river, when most villagers would be away. Confused and frightened, Tekebay could not resist or fully understand her intentions and finally broke down in tears, trapped between fear and obedience.

Zuurakan Resists the Attack Zuurakan was alone in the yurt when three men entered and tried to seize her, claiming they would cure her. She struggled fiercely, breaking their grip and striking back with great strength. One man fell against the lattice wall, injured, while another was pushed to the ground. She fought her way outside, still holding a wooden tool, and continued to resist despite torn clothing. Tekebay stood nearby, crying and failing to protect her. The attackers hesitated and retreated, alarmed by her strength. Zuurakan, shaken and furious, left the camp, refusing to submit or stay under their control anymore that day.

Women’s Congress in Tashkent

Arrival in Tashkent On the train, the women learned that the women’s congress would be held in Tashkent instead of Moscow. Batiyna felt disappointed, while Anarhon was excited about the city. They traveled together, joking and talking to ease the long journey. Batiyna thought about Zuurakan and Kanymbubu and wished such struggling women could attend the congress. She fell asleep, and Anarhon gently helped her. In her dream, Batiyna called out to women suffering in different places. The next morning the train approached Tashkent. The passengers prepared their belongings, and Batiyna and her companions got ready to step out.

Tashkent Streets and Women’s Awakening While walking through Tashkent, Batiyna, Anarhon, Rahima, and Rabiyya faced hostility from men in the crowded bazaar. A man insulted them, followed by another in a carriage who mocked women and called them immoral. Batiyna answered him boldly, laughing at his words, and the women moved away together. The experience filled Batiyna with anger and reflection on women’s lack of rights. She questioned why men treated women as objects and dreamed of equality. Turning to Anarhon, she softened and suggested friendship, asking her to become her closest companion as they continued walking through the city.

Batiyna Speaks at the Congress Batiyna stepped onto the stage of the women's congress, her heart trembling as she represented the women of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Region. Earlier she had hesitated, fearing her Kyrgyz speech would not be understood, but Sharapat Nurpaissova encouraged her to speak from her own life. Looking at the hall filled with women, Batiyna saw Kanymbubu, Gulbubu, and Zuurakan in her mind and began to speak about their suffering and longing for freedom. Her voice grew stronger as she continued. She declared that women must no longer live in fear and oppression. In the end, she cried out for the freedom of Eastern women and support for Soviet power. The hall fell silent, and many women quietly wiped away their tears.

Zuurakan's Journey

Zuurakan in the Mountains Zuurakan climbed far from the inhabited valley toward a lonely mountain pass. Angry and wounded, she walked without fear, her torn clothes tied at her waist. She drank once from a cold spring, then continued upward, leaning on a rowan stick she had cut herself. Hunger and thirst grew, but she endured, thinking of freedom and her life with Tekebay and Buken. Night fell over the mountains. Shadows moved, and she tightened her grip on the stick. She climbed higher and found a narrow rocky ledge. Exhausted, she lay down on cold stone, staring at the stars, and finally drifted into sleep.

Zuurakan on the Pass Zuurakan walked forward on the rocky slope, bleeding but still upright. The dead wolf lay behind her, and the surviving one had withdrawn into the shadows of the stones. Her hand throbbed, yet she gripped the wooden stick tightly and did not stop. The cold wind cut across the pass, but she kept moving step by step. Hunger and pain followed her, yet inside her rose stubborn strength. When she reached higher ground, she lifted her head toward the brightening sky and kept walking, refusing to fall, refusing to surrender to fear or exhaustion.

Village Assemblies and Struggle for Justice

Batiyna at the Village Assembly Batiyna arrived in a noble clan village as an official instructor representing Soviet authority. She ordered the men to dismount from their horses and allowed the women to move forward, breaking traditional hierarchy. The villagers gathered in confusion, divided between custom and curiosity. Batiyna spoke firmly about women's rights, equality, and protection under the law, invoking Lenin's support. Gradually, resistance weakened as people listened. Women felt hope, and men, though uneasy, obeyed the order. The assembly became a shared public space where women were finally seen and heard, marking a turning point in the mountain community's social life forever changed.

Batiyna and Adyke At the village assembly, Batiyna confronted Adyke, her former father-in-law and once a powerful local nomadic ruler, demanding that he recognize women as equal under the new Soviet law. The gathering fell into tense silence as her words challenged long-standing customs and authority. Some men reacted with unease and resentment, while others were forced to reconsider their views. Adyke, who had once supported the system that oppressed Batiyna, struggled under her direct and unwavering gaze, confronted with his past. Salkynay, her stepmother-in-law who had once been part of that oppression, unexpectedly stepped forward and sided with Batiyna, urging acceptance of the new order. Under collective pressure and shifting public sentiment, the assembly began to acknowledge the demand for equality, marking a decisive change in the village's social hierarchy.

Batiyna on the Galloping Aksur Riding the swift horse Aksur, Batiyna sped through the mountain road after leaving the village assembly. Though she sensed the silent contempt of men who saw a woman in power as an insult to tradition, she refused to yield. When a group of riders tried to stop her, Aksur burst through them like a storm and carried her forward with uncontrollable force. The men recognized her as the "woman-chief," both amazed and uneasy. As the wind rushed past, Batiyna felt a mix of fear and determination but kept her posture firm. The journey became a symbolic passage: old authority was being left behind, while a new, uncertain order was accelerating forward.

Farewell under a Shifting Order In the crowded courtyard, Manapbay's relatives gathered to bid him farewell, filling the space with blessings and ritual words. Elders invoked ancestral honor, though fear of the new order unsettled their speech. Manapbay was under detention, neither fully free nor formally in prison, awaiting removal under state orders. Aynagul spoke with Batiyna about the new laws that now constrained the old elite and their privileges. After their meeting, she calmly departed with her escort, Sanjar. Her exit was steady but final, reflecting acceptance of unavoidable separation. Around her, prayers continued, while uncertainty and the collapse of old authority hung over the gathering.

Zuurakan Meets Oshur and Oroz

At the Mountain Ford At the mountain ford, a caravan of mule traders halted where the roaring stream met the river below the ravine. The merchants Oshur and Oroz were startled when they saw a half-naked, wounded woman emerge from the wilderness. It was Zuurakan, who had escaped a wolf attack, her arm bleeding and her body torn from the struggle. Exhausted and starving, she demanded cloth and food, insisting she was not a spirit but a living woman who had suffered violence and flight. One trader covered her with a cloak while the other watched cautiously. Yet greed soon surfaced, and her safety became uncertain.

The Disappearance of Zuurakan At the large village assembly, Batiyna confronted Serkebay and Buken over the sudden disappearance of Zuurakan, a strong young woman who had worked in their household. Rumors spread that she had been driven away or harmed, yet the couple claimed she had simply run off. Batiyna rejected their explanations, insisting that Zuurakan would not abandon her dignity without cause. Batiyna reminded everyone that under the new order, even powerful village elites could not hide injustice behind custom or superstition. Buken attempted to deflect blame, but her words only deepened suspicion. Batiyna declared that Zuurakan must be found and that any harm done to her would be punished by law.

Rising Suspicion Months passed, but Zuurakan had not returned. Serkebay came back from the Chu Valley more bitter than afraid. He claimed she had simply run away and remarried, even producing a paper from the authorities confirming her new marriage. To him, this was proof that women were now "free to leave" under new laws. His words were sharp with anger and humiliation, as if the world itself had changed against him. He mocked the idea of order, blaming women's freedom for chaos. Yet in the village, doubt grew. People whispered that Zuurakan's disappearance was not simple escape but something darker, possibly tied to violence and hidden crimes.

Batiyna Demands Truth Batiyna refused to accept Serkebay's version. She gathered the people and openly challenged him and Buken, insisting they explain what truly happened to Zuurakan. Her voice was steady, firm, and fearless in front of elders and men. She reminded everyone of past injustices and accused the powerful of hiding the truth behind lies and excuses. Fear spread among the guilty, while ordinary people began to listen more carefully. For the first time, the balance of power shifted in the gathering. Batiyna also revealed how Buken disgraced Gulbubu by falsely accusing her of adultery, showing it was Buken's own scheme to destroy Gulbubu's honor.

Violence and Loss

Batiyna's Ordeal Batiyna rode alone through the valley lost in heavy thoughts about her past and the struggle for justice. Two armed men suddenly appeared on the road pretending to know her and blocking her way. They seized her horse and dragged her toward a rocky ravine despite her desperate resistance. Batiyna tried to fight back but was struck down and fell into darkness. She drifted between life and death hearing distant sounds and feeling unbearable pain. After days of unconsciousness she slowly regained awareness under a doctor's care wrapped in white cloth. She whispered weakly asking where she was now safe.

Zuurakan on the Caravan Road Zuurakan rode a low mule with traders Oshur and Oroz across the mountain road. Though wounded and exhausted, she tried to stay cheerful, speaking boldly and even singing. The traders argued over her as if she were a prize in their gambling game, each hiding greed and

tension behind rough jokes and threats. Zuurakan, unaware of the full truth, believed she was simply traveling toward safety and her family. When insults escalated and Oshur threatened her, she challenged him fearlessly and even dismounted in anger. The journey grew dangerous as hidden violence and betrayal surfaced on the road ahead.

Oroz's Intentions

Zuurakan between Resistance and Surrender That night in the forest, Oroz revealed his true desire, abandoning all pretense of kinship. Zuurakan first resisted him with anger and irony, reminding him she was a married woman. Yet his persistent words, touch, and manipulation slowly unsettled her thoughts. Torn between loyalty to Tekebay and fear, she hesitated, her strength wavering under emotional confusion and exhaustion from her journey. In that vulnerable moment, Oroz pressed closer, and her resistance collapsed into conflicted surrender. For an instant, she felt both guilt and longing, as memory and desire clashed within her. The night deepened, and her inner world broke apart.

Zuurakan Learned the Truth At dawn, Zuurakan woke to chaos as Oshur and Oroz fought over her, each claiming ownership through a gambling agreement she had never understood. Shocked, she realized she had been treated as a wager between men. Oroz had once sworn friendship and protection, but now spoke of her as a lost prize, while Oshur insisted she was his "won wife." Confused and humiliated, Zuurakan demanded the truth and rejected both men's claims. Her anger rose as she understood how deeply she had been deceived. Refusing to be property, she declared her freedom and prepared to leave, wounded but determined to reclaim her dignity.

Batiyna Attacked, Anarhon Murdered

Batiyna in the Hospital: Awakening to Loss and Resolve Batiyna lay in a clean, quiet hospital room, recovering under the care of attentive doctors. Her strength slowly returned as she remembered past sufferings and survival. Visitors brought her food and flowers, and she felt gratitude for human kindness. Yet beneath this peace, unease lingered. One day, she was ordered back to her room. Soon after, Kopylova entered in distress and announced that Anorhon had been murdered. Shocked and grieving, Batiyna prepared for the funeral. At the memorial, she spoke passionately against violence and oppression, pledging justice and freedom for women.

Batiyna's Path to Knowledge After leaving the hospital, Batiyna followed the doctors' advice to rest, though she still suffered from headaches. Temirbolotov, the government official suggested she recover in a quiet village, but she refused and asked instead to be sent to courses in Alma-Ata, determined to continue her education. She felt she had survived many trials and now owed it to Anorhon's memory to study and understand the world. At the courses, despite her illness, she studied eagerly and observed city life with intense curiosity. She visited markets and workshops, learning not only from books but also from people around her. Gradually, she realized that both freedom and injustice existed in the city as well as in the mountains, and she began to question the true meaning of women's liberation.

Batiyna's Recovery and Awakening Batiyna returned from her studies in Alma-Ata ill and stayed with Kopylova's family. Valentina and her mother cared for her, keeping her warm, giving her medicine, and urging her to rest. They warned her against overexertion, fearing her fragile health. While recovering, Batiyna listened to their conversations about injustice, class struggle, and the violent history of exploitation. These discussions deepened her awareness of social inequality and strengthened her determination. As she regained strength, Batiyna reflected on her journey from a simple mountain girl to a conscious learner. She understood that people of different nations share similar hopes and suffering.

Fear, Ideology, and the Burden of Justice After her examination, Batiyna's illness continued to affect her daily life. She felt dizzy and weak, yet still walked with Valentina Kopylova, who insisted that the doctor was politically unreliable and linked to past violence. Batiyna, however, sensed only confusion and unease, especially after hearing again about Anarhon's murder and the forces that had incited it. Valentina explained that enemies of the new order still manipulated people, hiding behind old beliefs. Batiyna listened, disturbed but thoughtful, trying to understand how justice could be achieved in such a

world. Despite her weakness, she agreed to travel back to the village if necessary and continue her work after recovery, believing action might restore her strength.

The Rescue of Cholpon

The Search for Cholpon Temirbolotov ordered Batiyna and Valentina to join a mission to find the missing girl Cholpon, whose grandfather Bayterek had come in despair. The old man had lost his sons, his wife, and now feared for his only granddaughter. He begged the Soviet authorities to rescue her from unknown abductors. Moved by his grief, Batiyna agreed to help. They rode urgently into the countryside with soldiers and the grandfather as guide. Batiyna felt renewed strength on horseback, while Valentina remained firm and decisive. On the way, Batiyna spoke with village women, sensing fear and hidden truths. She learned that girls were sometimes taken by force and forced to claim they had married willingly, exposing the fragile justice behind appearances.

Hidden in the Smoke The police searched Shaymerden's village but did not find Cholpon at first. His wife, Jypar, had hidden the girl in a smoky storage pit where she nearly suffocated. When they finally discovered her, Bayterek collapsed in despair, believing his granddaughter was dead. Cholpon had been taken by Shaymerden's son Myrza with a group of men. Shaymerden denied guilt and tried to justify his power, but no one listened. Batiyna ordered that both Shaymerden and his wife be taken in accordance with the law. Valentina cried when she saw Cholpon's condition. The girl was rescued alive. Bayterek thanked the officials, and they left the village to bring the guilty to justice.

Zuurakan and Oroz

Zuurakan's Anger and Softening Zuurakan walked away without looking back, filled with anger and hurt. On a narrow path she killed a snake that crossed her way, symbolically rejecting all obstacles before her. She crossed a river and moved quickly through a wide valley, still feeling that someone was following her. Hearing hoof beats behind her, she grew tense and prepared to defend herself, thinking it might be an enemy. It was Oroz on a mule. He stopped, came toward her, and confessed his guilt, begging forgiveness and swearing his love. Zuurakan, though deeply wounded, slowly softened as she listened to his sincere words.

Zuurakan and Oroz Years passed, and Zuurakan and Oroz lived a relatively comfortable life. The old wound in Zuurakan's heart had faded. Every Friday they went to the bazaar, neatly dressed, joking with others and eating in teahouses. They lived in a crowded courtyard filled with people and livestock, surrounded by high mud walls and small rooms. Zuurakan spent her days in their small room while Oroz met his friends outside. Their life became routine and familiar. Oroz often laughed at her jokes, and they passed time with humor, teasing, and quiet suspicions about each other's loyalty and behavior.

Marriage, Suspicion, and the Desire for the Mountain Village Zuurakan grew increasingly restless within the enclosed courtyard life. She told Oroz she was tired of the city and its hidden trades, urging him to leave for the village where they could farm and live honestly. Oroz, suspicious and defensive, grew uneasy at her words and questioned her loyalty. To push him toward leaving the city, Zuurakan began inventing stories about men threatening her, hoping to awaken his jealousy and change his behavior. Oroz believed her and became more possessive and violent in thought, convinced that rivals wanted his wife. Their relationship slowly shifted from affection to distrust and emotional manipulation on both sides.

Gambling, Wealth, and the Breakdown of Trust Oroz's behavior changed as he brought strangers into their home and engaged in gambling and drinking. He grew unpredictable, sometimes arriving with money, sometimes drunk and hostile toward Zuurakan. One day he hosted a gambling gathering with dangerous men, including his rival Oshur. They played games for large sums of money while Zuurakan silently observed, disturbed by the illegal and reckless nature of their actions. Oroz proudly claimed his money was honestly earned, though his actions suggested otherwise. As the night continued, he lost heavily, demanded more money from Zuurakan, and deepened the tension and moral distance between them.

Zuurakan Breaks Free Zuurakan watched in horror as Oroz lost everything in the gambling game. Drunk with rage and desperation, he even staked his wife against Oshur's winnings. The men laughed and urged him on, while the room filled with chaos and spilled wealth. Suddenly, Oroz collapsed, unable to continue, and Zuurakan, furious at his betrayal, pulled the rug and sent the gamblers crashing to the floor. Without hesitation, she stepped over her husband and walked out, declaring she would not be treated as property or wager. She left the house, burning with anger, determined to reclaim her dignity and freedom forever free.

Barskan's Threat Shaymerden, his tokol Jypar, and his son Myrza were arrested for kidnapping Cholpon, shocking their younger son Barskan deeply. Half drunk and wearing his Mauser, Barskan rushed to Temirbolotov demanding their release. He insisted he was a loyal Soviet security police worker and threatened to report the case to Moscow. Temirbolotov calmly refused and forced him to confront the truth about his family's feudal violence. He also warned Barskan that his own position would not protect him if he continued to hide their crimes. When news arrived that Shaymerden's relatives had beaten villagers, Temirbolotov's position hardened further. Barskan was left trapped between family loyalty and Soviet law.

Batiyna's Education and Marriage

Unexpected Feelings Months passed while Jusup recovered from his head wound in the hospital. Batiyna and Valentina visited him often, noticing how he had grown weaker in body but remained bright in spirit. Jusup had long admired Batiyna, though he had never dared to approach her because of her strength and authority. After winter, Valentina revealed her own tragic past love, showing how war and loss reshaped lives. Meanwhile, Batiyna received a heartfelt letter from Jusup confessing his love and desire to marry her. His words unsettled her, reviving memories of Abyl and awakening doubts about her own life. Though she felt drawn to him, she also feared she was no longer a woman capable of love or family.

A Wedding of Freedom and Friendship The women's courses organized by Batiyna and Valentina brought together young women, former tokol, and girls like Cholpon who had once suffered under forced marriages. Living in the confiscated house, they studied literacy and prepared for new lives. Batiyna, who served as the director, firmly defended her students' health and dignity, insisting that they received medical care first. One day, Jusup visited her and openly confessed his love. After an honest conversation about age, past pain, and personal freedom, Batiyna accepted his proposal while keeping the memory of Abyl in her heart. Their wedding became a joyful celebration of women's emancipation, friendship, and chosen love.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Zuurakan

Zuurakan is one of the central figures of the novel and is based on the historical personality Zuurakan Kainazarova. Her character represents the suffering and transformation of rural Kyrgyz women during a time of social change. Born into poverty and later trapped in a wealthy bay household, she experiences humiliation, physical violence, and emotional betrayal. However, Zuurakan is not portrayed as a passive victim. Her journey through escape, survival in the mountains, betrayal by men, and final rejection of humiliation shows a woman in constant struggle for dignity. Through her experiences, the novel presents both personal endurance and the awakening of self-worth.

Resilient Zuurakan is deeply resilient. Despite years of abuse in the wealthy household, she does not completely lose her inner strength. After being beaten and humiliated, she makes the bold decision to flee, even though she faces danger and uncertainty. In the mountains she survives hunger, cold, and even a wolf attack. Later, when deceived and treated as property by traders and gamblers, she continues to endure emotional pain without surrendering her sense of self. Her resilience is not loud or dramatic; it is steady and stubborn. No matter how often she is betrayed, she finds the strength to stand up again.

Courageous Zuurakan shows remarkable courage throughout the novel. Stealing horses and escaping at night requires both physical and moral bravery, especially in a society where women are controlled by men and tradition. She confronts her husband Tekebay without fear, openly questioning his weakness. When attacked in the yurt, she fights back fiercely against several men. Even later, when Oroz gambles her away, she does not collapse in silence but openly rebels and walks out. Her courage is not only physical but emotional — she dares to reject humiliation and refuses to accept the role of obedient victim.

Independent Independence defines Zuurakan's character. From the moment she steals the horses, she begins choosing her own path. She refuses to remain in a household where she is treated as a servant without dignity. Even when she lives with Oroz, she questions their life in the city and suggests moving to the village for honest work. When she discovers she has been gambled like property, she immediately rejects both men's claims over her. Her final act of walking away alone shows that she values self-respect more than security. Zuurakan's independence grows from painful experience and personal awakening.

Passionate Zuurakan is passionate in both anger and affection. Her emotions are strong and direct, whether she is defending herself, arguing with Oroz, or expressing hurt. She does not hide her feelings behind silence. When betrayed, her anger burns intensely, giving her the strength to act decisively. At the same time, she is capable of warmth and longing, which makes her vulnerable to manipulation. This emotional depth makes her human and complex rather than idealized. Her passion drives her actions and decisions, pushing her toward freedom even when the path is uncertain and painful.

Tekebay

Tekebay is Zuurakan's first husband and an important secondary character in the novel. He represents the weakness and moral uncertainty of men shaped by traditional patriarchal society. Although he is not openly cruel like the bay household, he fails in his responsibility to protect and support his wife. His silence and hesitation allow injustice to continue. Tekebay stands between fear of authority and personal loyalty, but he never finds the courage to choose firmly. Through his character, the novel shows how passivity and cowardice can contribute to oppression just as much as direct violence.

Weak Tekebay's most defining trait is his weakness. When Zuurakan is beaten and humiliated by the landlady, he does not defend her. He fears the authority of the wealthy household more than he values his wife's dignity. Even during confrontations in the mountains, he hesitates and avoids taking responsibility. His weakness is not physical but moral. He cannot stand up against injustice or make firm decisions. This inability to act makes him partly responsible for Zuurakan's suffering. His character shows how weakness in times of injustice can harm others as deeply as cruelty.

Fearful Tekebay is driven by fear—fear of the bay, fear of punishment, fear of social consequences. His behavior often reflects anxiety rather than conviction. When conflicts arise, he tries to avoid confrontation instead of facing it directly. Even when elders gather to judge Zuurakan, he appears nervous and uncertain. Fear controls his actions and prevents him from defending what is right. This constant anxiety weakens his authority as a husband and undermines his relationship with Zuurakan. His fear contrasts sharply with Zuurakan's courage, highlighting the difference between submission and resistance.

Passive Passivity defines Tekebay's role in the story. He rarely initiates action and mostly reacts to others. Instead of shaping events, he is carried by them. When Zuurakan decides to escape, he follows rather than leads. When she is attacked in the yurt, he stands nearby crying instead of intervening. His passivity creates emotional distance between him and his wife. It also symbolizes a generation of men unable to adapt to social change or challenge unjust traditions. Through Tekebay, the novel suggests that silence and inaction can maintain oppressive systems.

Conflicted Although weak, Tekebay is not entirely heartless. He shows moments of inner conflict, especially when torn between obedience to authority and concern for Zuurakan. He appears troubled

and ashamed, aware that he is failing as a husband. This internal struggle makes him more human and tragic rather than simply villainous. However, his conflict never turns into decisive action. He remains trapped between fear and responsibility. His inability to resolve this conflict ultimately leads to the collapse of his marriage. Tekebay represents a man caught between old traditions and the need for moral courage.

Oroz

Oroz is Zuurakan's second husband and one of the most complex male characters in the novel. Unlike Tekebay, he first appears confident, bold, and protective. He rescues Zuurakan from danger and speaks passionately about love and loyalty. However, as the story develops, his true nature becomes clearer. Oroz is shaped by pride, jealousy, and greed. His involvement in gambling and risky behavior gradually destroys trust in their marriage. Through Oroz, the novel shows how charm and strength can hide moral weakness. His relationship with Zuurakan moves from attraction and security to betrayal and collapse.

Charismatic Oroz is charismatic and persuasive. When he approaches Zuurakan, he speaks with confidence and emotional intensity. He knows how to use words to gain her trust and forgiveness. His bold personality and physical presence make him seem strong and dependable, especially after her painful experiences with Tekebay. He presents himself as a man who can protect and provide stability. This charm allows him to win Zuurakan's heart despite her doubts. However, his charisma is double-edged: it attracts and reassures her at first, but later it becomes a tool of manipulation and control.

Jealous Jealousy strongly influences Oroz's behavior. He becomes suspicious when Zuurakan speaks about other men or suggests changes in their life. Even small comments awaken his possessiveness. He imagines rivals and reacts emotionally rather than rationally. This jealousy does not come from love alone but from a desire to control. He wants to be the only authority in her life. As his insecurity grows, his trust weakens, and tension increases in their relationship. His jealousy eventually contributes to aggression, gambling, and reckless decisions, revealing the fragility beneath his confident exterior.

Reckless Oroz's recklessness becomes clear through his gambling and drinking. He brings dangerous men into his home and risks large amounts of money without thinking about consequences. His desire to prove himself bold and successful pushes him toward irresponsible actions. He ignores Zuurakan's concerns and chooses excitement over stability. This impulsive behavior shows his lack of discipline and foresight. The climax of his recklessness occurs when he stakes Zuurakan in a gambling game, treating her as property. At that moment, his carelessness turns into moral failure, destroying the foundation of their marriage.

Self-Centered Oroz often prioritizes his pride and reputation over Zuurakan's dignity. He wants admiration from other men and fears humiliation more than he fears losing his wife's trust. His decisions are guided by ego rather than partnership. Even when he claims to love Zuurakan, his actions reveal that his own image matters most. By staking her in a game, he reduces her to an object for his personal gamble. This selfishness ultimately leads to their separation. Through Oroz, the novel demonstrates how self-centered behavior can transform affection into betrayal and destroy relationships.

Buken

Buken is the cruel landlady of the wealthy bay household where Zuurakan serves. She represents the harsh and oppressive face of traditional elite authority. As the wife of Serkebay, she holds power over the servants and uses it without mercy. Her treatment of Zuurakan reflects the deep inequality and brutality of feudal society. Buken is not only physically violent but also manipulative, using superstition, false kindness, and social influence to maintain control. Through her character, the novel exposes how women of privileged classes could become instruments of oppression against other women, reinforcing rather than challenging injustice.

Cruel Buken is openly cruel toward Zuurakan and other servants. She insults, humiliates, and beats them, treating them as inferior beings rather than human workers. Her cruelty is not occasional but constant, shaping the daily atmosphere of the household. She uses physical violence as a tool of discipline and emotional abuse as a form of control. Even after Zuurakan returns and accepts punishment, Buken does not show forgiveness. Her cruelty has no clear limit, and it grows whenever her authority is challenged. Through her, the novel illustrates how unchecked power often turns into brutality.

Manipulative Buken is highly manipulative. She knows how to hide her true intentions behind calm words and false kindness. After Zuurakan's return, she pretends to forgive her while secretly preparing revenge. She influences Tekebay through fear and persuasion, pushing him into actions he does not fully understand. She uses superstition, dreams, and rituals to justify her plans, giving them the appearance of tradition. Her manipulation allows her to maintain power without openly showing aggression. This calculated behavior makes her more dangerous than a directly violent person, because her cruelty is planned and disguised.

Authoritarian Buken rules the household with absolute authority. She expects complete obedience from servants, her husband, and even other relatives. No one dares to oppose her openly, and her decisions shape daily life in the yurt. Her authority is built on fear, social status, and tradition rather than respect. She uses her position to enforce hierarchy and punish anyone who challenges her. When Zuurakan resists, Buken perceives it as a threat to her power and reacts harshly. Her authoritarian nature reflects the rigid structure of the old feudal order, where dominance was maintained through intimidation.

Vengeful Buken's vengeful character is one of her most destructive traits. She does not forget insults or resistance, and she carefully plans revenge against those who oppose her. After Zuurakan escapes and later returns, Buken cannot accept that a servant defied her authority. She waits patiently for the right moment to strike, even arranging an attack disguised as a "cure." Her desire for revenge is stronger than reason or compassion. This vengefulness reveals her wounded pride and fear of losing control. Through Buken, the novel shows how personal hatred can become a tool of social oppression.

THEMES

Patriarchy: Violence as a Response to Women's Emancipation

Violence as a response to women's emancipation forms one of the most disturbing and recurring themes in the novel. As women begin to reject traditional roles and seek freedom, education, and public voice, they are met not with acceptance but with brutal physical retaliation. The story clearly shows that the patriarchal system does not give up power willingly; instead, it uses violence to punish, intimidate, and push women back into submission.

Zuurakan is repeatedly attacked because she refuses to remain silent and obedient. After escaping the bay household, she is assaulted in the yurt by men sent by Buken. The violence is carefully planned and disguised as a "cure," showing how tradition can be used to justify brutality against a woman who dares to claim her independence.

Batiyna faces even more direct political violence. After she becomes an active Soviet representative, speaks at public assemblies, confronts powerful men, and demands justice for abused women, she is ambushed on a mountain road, beaten unconscious, and left to die. The attack is clearly meant to stop her work and silence her growing influence.

The murder of Anarhon represents the most tragic expression of this theme. Having broken away from seclusion and traveled as a delegate to fight for women's rights, she is killed by forces connected to the old order. Her death serves as a terrifying warning to any woman who chooses emancipation over traditional obedience.

Through these events, the novel reveals a harsh reality: every step toward freedom carries the risk of violence. Whether resisting domestic abuse, speaking in public, or working for legal change, women who challenge the old system become targets. The author powerfully suggests that true emancipation is not only a political struggle but a dangerous personal battle that demands immense courage.

Illustrative moment: A striking illustrative moment is the murder of Anarhon. After traveling with the other women delegates, participating in public life, and embracing new freedoms, she becomes a symbol of the changing role of women. Yet her transformation provokes deadly resistance. When Kopylova enters the hospital in distress and announces that Anarhon has been murdered, the news reveals how violently the old order reacts against women who step beyond tradition. Her death is not an isolated tragedy but a sign of the larger conflict between the past and the emerging social order. Those who fear losing power respond with force, trying to halt change through fear and bloodshed.

At Anarhon's memorial, Batiyna speaks passionately against violence and oppression, transforming grief into determination. This moment captures the painful cost of social transformation: progress is real, but it is achieved through suffering, sacrifice, and the courage to continue despite danger.

Gender:

1) The Vulnerability of Women

The novel portrays the deep vulnerability of women living in a society shaped by poverty, patriarchal authority, and shifting power structures. Women are often left without protection, dependent on men who may fail or betray them, and exposed to violence, deception, and exploitation. Their vulnerability is not a sign of weakness but a result of the unequal social conditions that surround them.

Zuurakan's life clearly reflects this vulnerability. As a servant, she has no legal rights and no protection from abuse. Her husband Tekebay is too weak to defend her, leaving her exposed to the cruelty of the household. After she escapes, she becomes even more vulnerable in the outside world. Traders treat her as property, gamble over her, and attempt to control her future. Despite her courage, her position as a lone woman makes her a constant target for exploitation.

Batiyna, although stronger in social status, is also vulnerable. Her work for women's rights places her in danger, and she is violently attacked on the road. The murder of Anarhon further shows how exposed women remain, even when supported by new laws. Cholpon, kidnapped and hidden in a smoky pit, represents the extreme vulnerability of young girls who have no power to resist forced marriage.

Yet the novel does not present vulnerability as permanent helplessness. The women respond to their exposed conditions with resilience, resistance, and solidarity. Zuurakan refuses to remain a victim, Batiyna fights publicly for protection, and other women begin to support one another. Through these contrasts, the novel highlights both the dangers women face and their capacity to struggle against them. Vulnerability becomes the starting point for transformation, showing why social and legal change is urgently needed.

Illustrative moment: After being kidnapped for forced marriage, Cholpon is hidden by Shaymerden's wife inside a smoky storage pit, where she nearly suffocates. When the police finally discover her, she is barely alive, and her grandfather Bayterek collapses in despair, believing she is dead.

This moment captures the extreme powerlessness of women and girls within an unjust social order. Cholpon has no ability to resist or protect herself; she is taken by force and treated as property. The scene also shows the beginning of change, as Soviet authority intervenes and arrests those responsible. Through Cholpon's suffering and rescue, the novel exposes the injustice women face and the urgent need for legal protection and social transformation.

2) Women's Struggle for Dignity

The novel presents women's struggle for dignity as a central and continuous theme, expressed through both personal suffering and social resistance. Zuurakan's life reflects the harsh reality faced by many rural women under traditional authority. In the bay household, she is treated not as a human being but as unpaid labor, exposed to insults and physical violence. Her dignity is constantly attacked, yet she does not fully surrender. When she steals horses and escapes into the mountains, this act becomes more than flight—it is a declaration that she will no longer accept humiliation. Even later, when she is deceived by traders and betrayed by Oroz, she ultimately refuses to be treated as property. Her decision to walk away after being gambled away shows that dignity, for her, is more important than security or dependence.

Batiyna's struggle follows a different but related path. She begins as a young woman trapped in forced marriage and poverty, silenced by patriarchal expectations. However, through exposure to Soviet political life, she gains confidence and education. Speaking at congresses and confronting village elites, she demands recognition not only for herself but for all women. Her fight is not limited to personal survival; it becomes a public defense of women's rights and legal protection.

Through both characters, the novel suggests that dignity is not automatically granted—it must be claimed and defended. Whether through physical resistance, public speech, or moral courage, women assert their humanity in a society that often denies it. Their struggle symbolizes a broader transformation in which women move from silence and submission toward voice, independence, and respect.

Illustrative moment: Oroz, drunk and desperate during a gambling game, stakes Zuurakan as if she were property. The men laugh and treat her as part of the wager. In that humiliating instant, Zuurakan realizes that despite everything she has endured, she is still being reduced to an object. Instead of collapsing in silence, she reacts fiercely. She pulls the rug from under the gamblers, disrupts the game, and walks out, stepping over Oroz without looking back.

This moment clearly shows her struggle for dignity. She refuses to accept ownership, rejects humiliation publicly, and chooses uncertainty over degradation. Her action transforms her from victim to decision-maker, proving that dignity is defended through courage and self-respect.

Conflict: Tradition versus Soviet Reform

The conflict between traditional authority and Soviet reform is one of the central tensions in the novel. The old order is represented by wealthy landowning households, patriarchal customs, arranged and forced marriages, bride price, and the unquestioned power of male elders. In this system, women are expected to obey their husbands, serve rich families, and remain silent in public life. Zuurakan's suffering in the household where she works shows how tradition can become a tool of control. Physical punishment, superstition, and strict hierarchy maintain the dominance of elites like Serkebay and Buken. Custom functions as an unwritten law, leaving little space for personal freedom.

In contrast, Soviet reform introduces new legal principles that promote equality and women's rights. Through Batiyna's work as a representative, the novel presents public assemblies where men are ordered to step down from their horses and women are invited to move forward and speak. New laws challenge bride kidnapping, polygamy, and forced marriage. The rescue of Cholpon illustrates how state authority begins to interfere in private family matters that were once protected by tradition and silence.

Yet the transformation is difficult and contested. Many men react with hostility, mocking female delegates and seeing women in leadership as a threat to established norms. Even when legal structures change, social attitudes remain resistant. Influential figures attempt to manipulate the law to defend their reputation and conceal wrongdoing.

Through these opposing forces, the novel portrays a society in transition, where long-standing customs collide with revolutionary reforms, shaping new possibilities and deep conflicts in everyday life.

Illustrative Moment: When Batiyna arrives as a Soviet representative, the men are seated on horseback, maintaining their traditional display of authority, while the women stand behind them in silence. Batiyna orders the men to dismount and invites the women to step forward. This simple action disrupts the established hierarchy. The men react with confusion and quiet resentment, but they obey.

In that moment, two systems directly confront each other: the old custom that places men above women, and the new law that demands equality. The physical act of changing positions symbolizes the broader social transformation taking place in the village.

Power: Abuse of Authority

The novel shows that authority, whether traditional or Soviet, can become cruel and unjust when used for personal interest rather than justice. Characters like Buken and Serkebay represent the older form of power rooted in wealth, status, and fear. In their household, authority is maintained through intimidation, humiliation, and violence. Buken uses superstition and manipulation to justify her actions, while Serkebay relies on influence and reputation to silence criticism. Their power is not based on fairness but on control, and those beneath them suffer without protection.

However, the novel also suggests that abuse of authority is not limited to the old order. Barskan, a Soviet security officer, represents a new kind of power that can also be misused. When his parents and brother are arrested for kidnapping and hiding Cholpon, he does not seek truth or justice. Instead, he uses his position to demand their release. He threatens Temirbolotov, claiming he will complain to Moscow and use higher political connections to protect his family. Barskan's reaction shows how loyalty to family and personal pride can corrupt official responsibility.

Temirbolotov's refusal to give in highlights the tension within the new system. The law is meant to protect the weak, yet individuals within it may still attempt to manipulate power for private benefit. Through these contrasting figures, the novel demonstrates that injustice can exist under any system if authority is not guided by integrity. True justice depends not only on laws but on the moral strength of those who enforce them.

Illustrative moment: In the wealthy household Buken organizes a so-called "treatment" for Zuurakan. Pretending concern, she secretly arranges for several men to seize Zuurakan inside the yurt. The act is presented as a ritual cure, but in reality it is punishment and revenge disguised as tradition. Tekebay stands nearby, powerless and afraid, while Buken controls the situation without openly showing violence herself.

This scene illustrates how authority can hide cruelty behind custom and social status. Buken does not need to strike Zuurakan directly; her power lies in commanding others and shaping the narrative. The abuse is justified as tradition, making resistance even more difficult. The moment reveals how unchecked authority becomes dangerous when it is protected by fear and silence.