

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN WOMAN AND SOCIETY IN EASTERN AND
WESTERN LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF KECHA VA KUNDUZ
AND MADAME BOVARY**

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Annotation: This article explores the thematic intersection of gender, social constraints, and tragic individualism through a comparative analysis of Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cho'lpon's *Kecha va Kunduz* (Night and Day) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Representing Eastern (Uzbek/Central Asian) and Western (French) literary traditions respectively, both novels serve as profound critiques of their contemporary societies. By examining the protagonists, Poshshaxon and Emma Bovary, this study highlights how patriarchal structures, religious dogmatism, and bourgeois provincialism stifled female agency. Despite differing cultural landscapes, both authors portray the female struggle not merely as personal defiance, but as a fatal conflict with an unyielding societal apparatus.

The relationship between women and society has long been one of the central themes of world literature. Both Eastern and Western writers have explored the challenges women face in patriarchal social structures, where individual aspirations often come into conflict with established norms and expectations. This article examines the problem of woman-society conflict in the novel "*Kecha va Kunduz*" by Cho'lpon and "*Madame Bovary*" by Gustave Flaubert. Through a comparative analysis, the study identifies common and distinctive features in the representation of female characters, their struggle for personal freedom, and the social mechanisms that restrict their self-realization. The article argues that despite cultural and historical differences, both novels reveal the tragic consequences of societal pressure on women and demonstrate the universal nature of gender inequality.

Keywords: Comparative literature, Eastern realism, Western realism, Cho'lpon, Flaubert, female agency, patriarchal oppression, woman and society, gender conflict, female identity, patriarchy, social norms.

The literary representation of womanhood has long served as a mirror for societal progress, morality, and systemic flaws. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, both Western and Eastern literatures witnessed a shift toward critical realism, where authors dismantled romanticized notions of domestic life to expose the structural entrapment of women.

This article contextualizes this phenomenon by comparing Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Cho'lpon's *Kecha va Kunduz* (1936). Separated by geography, religion, and historical eras, these works are profoundly united by their exploration of the "woman versus

society" dichotomy. Flaubert exposes the suffocating banality of French provincial bourgeois life, while Cho'lon depicts the double-layered oppression of traditional Central Asian patriarchy complicated by Russian colonial administration. Through *Emma Bovary* and *Poshshaxon* (*Zebiniso*), both novels demonstrate that any attempt by a woman to claim autonomy—whether through romantic escapism or simple personal happiness—ends in systemic destruction.

The issue of women's position in society has occupied an important place in literary discourse across different cultures and historical periods. Literature often serves as a reflection of social reality, revealing tensions between individual desires and collective expectations. In both Eastern and Western literary traditions, female characters frequently become symbols of social contradictions, exposing inequalities and cultural limitations imposed upon women. The novels "*Kecha va Kunduz*" by Cho'lon and "*Madame Bovary*" by Gustave Flaubert provide valuable material for examining the conflict between women and society from a comparative perspective.

The concept of woman-society conflict refers to the contradiction between a woman's personal aspirations and the social norms that regulate her behavior. Patriarchal societies often define women primarily through their roles as wives, mothers, and guardians of family values. Any attempt to challenge these expectations may lead to social condemnation, isolation, or tragedy [1, p. 45].

Cho'lon's novel "*Kecha va Kunduz*" occupies a significant place in Uzbek literature due to its realistic portrayal of social transformation and the status of women in traditional society. The novel depicts a period of historical change when old customs confronted emerging modern ideas. Through female characters, Cho'lon reveals the limitations imposed on women by patriarchal traditions and demonstrates how social structures restrict their opportunities for self-expression [2, p. 112].

One of the most important aspects of the novel is its criticism of social practices that deny women the right to make independent decisions regarding their lives. Women's destinies are often determined by family interests, social conventions, and male authority. Their personal wishes become secondary to the demands of society. As a result, female characters experience psychological suffering and emotional oppression [2, p. 118].

Similarly, Gustave Flaubert's "*Madame Bovary*" presents a profound exploration of the conflict between individual desires and social reality. *Emma Bovary* becomes a symbol of a woman whose aspirations exceed the limits established by nineteenth-century French society. Her dissatisfaction with provincial life reflects a broader struggle for personal fulfillment and emotional freedom [3, p. 87].

Although *Emma's* circumstances differ significantly from those of the women depicted in "*Kecha va Kunduz*," both works illustrate how society restricts female agency. *Emma* seeks happiness through romantic ideals and material aspirations, yet she finds herself trapped within social institutions that offer little room for self-realization. The conflict between her expectations and reality gradually leads to psychological disillusionment and personal tragedy [3, p. 145].

A comparative analysis reveals several similarities between the two novels. First, both authors portray women as individuals whose inner worlds are richer and more complex than the

roles assigned to them by society. Female characters possess personal dreams, emotions, and ambitions that conflict with traditional expectations [4, p. 56].

Second, both works expose the mechanisms through which society maintains gender inequality. In "Kecha va Kunduz," these mechanisms are closely connected with traditional customs, family authority, and conservative cultural norms. In "Madame Bovary," social restrictions emerge through class expectations, moral conventions, and rigid gender roles. Despite cultural differences, both societies limit women's autonomy and define acceptable forms of female behavior [5, p. 204].

Another important similarity lies in the psychological portrayal of female suffering. Both Cho'lpun and Flaubert pay significant attention to the inner experiences of their heroines. The authors demonstrate that social oppression affects not only external circumstances but also emotional and psychological well-being. Feelings of loneliness, frustration, disappointment, and alienation become central elements of the narrative structure [1, p. 91].

At the same time, important differences distinguish the two works. The female characters in "Kecha va Kunduz" often symbolize broader social and national concerns. Their struggles reflect the tension between tradition and modernization in early twentieth-century Central Asian society. Women's emancipation is presented as part of a larger process of social progress and cultural renewal [2, p. 136].

In contrast, Emma Bovary's conflict is primarily individual and psychological. Her dissatisfaction stems from personal expectations shaped by romantic literature and idealized visions of life. While her experience reflects broader social problems, Flaubert focuses mainly on the psychological dimensions of her struggle [3, p. 172].

The comparison of these novels demonstrates that literary representations of women frequently reveal deeper social contradictions. Female characters become a means through which authors criticize social injustice and question established norms. Both Cho'lpun and Flaubert challenge the structures that restrict women's freedom and expose the consequences of denying individuals the opportunity for self-determination [4, p. 73].

From the perspective of comparative literature, the analysis also highlights the universality of gender-related issues. Despite differences in geography, religion, culture, and historical context, women in both Eastern and Western societies encounter similar obstacles in their pursuit of personal autonomy. This suggests that the conflict between women and society transcends national boundaries and remains relevant in contemporary discussions about gender equality and human rights [5, p. 217].

Furthermore, both novels emphasize that social progress is impossible without recognizing women's individuality and dignity. The authors encourage readers to reconsider traditional attitudes toward gender roles and to acknowledge women's right to participate fully in social, cultural, and personal decision-making processes [2, p. 142].

Societal Frameworks: Bourgeois Boredom vs. Jadidist Critique

To understand the tragic trajectories of Emma and Zebiniso, one must first analyze the societal mechanisms that enclosed them. Flaubert's mid-19th-century France was a world dominated by the bourgeoisie, where material wealth, superficial reputation, and rigid social codes dictated human worth. Emma's conflict stems from a romantic education clashing with a profoundly unromantic reality. Society offers her only one respectable role: the submissive, domestic wife of a country doctor [1, p. 42]. Her dissatisfaction is viewed by her community not as a valid existential crisis, but as a moral failing or mental illness. Conversely, Cho'ipon's early 20th-century Turkestan is characterized by deep-seated traditionalism, religious distortion, and colonial corruption. Writing from the perspective of the Jadid reform movement, Cho'ipon uses his characters to diagnose the stagnation of his homeland. In Kecha va Kunduz, the domestic sphere for women is a literal and figurative prison—the harem. Marriage is not a partnership, but a transactional acquisition. When Zebiniso is forced to become the fourth wife of the aging, corrupt Mingboshi, her individual identity is completely erased by religious and societal norms that mandate absolute female obedience [2, p. 115].

The Protagonists: Desires and Entrapment

The manifestations of female rebellion in both novels differ based on the protagonists' environments, yet their psychological confinement is identical.

Emma Bovary's rebellion is active, fueled by the romantic novels she consumed in her youth. She seeks passion, luxury, and artistic elevation—things completely unavailable in Tostes and Yonville. Flaubert brilliantly illustrates her psychological entrapment through physical spaces; Emma is constantly looking out of windows, yearning for an elusive Paris [1, p. 87]. Her affairs with Rodolphe and Léon are desperate attempts to break free from the mediocrity embodied by her husband, Charles. However, Emma's tragedy lies in the fact that her tools of rebellion—consumerism and romantic illusion—are themselves products of the bourgeois society she despises.

Zebiniso's (Poshshaxon's) tragedy in Kecha va Kunduz is quieter, rooted in innocence and forced passivity. Unlike Emma, Zebiniso does not dream of grand romantic adventures; she merely desires a natural, peaceful youth. Her initial world consists of music, poetry, and nature. However, her traditionalist parents, particularly her deeply religious yet hypocritical father, Razzoq so'fi, view her blooming womanhood as a liability that must be quickly locked away via marriage [2, p. 143]. Zebiniso does not actively rebel through infidelity; rather, her very existence as a pure, sensitive soul is a passive rebellion against a cruel, transactional patriarchal system. She is trapped not by her own illusions, but by the greed of the men around her and the complicity of older women who perpetuate their own oppression.

The Climax and Systemic Punishment

Society does not merely ignore female non-conformity; it actively punishes it. In both novels, the climax arrives when the societal apparatus crushes the protagonist to restore its own status quo.

Emma's downfall is economic and moral. Blinded by her desires, she falls into massive debt engineered by the manipulative merchant Lheureux. When her financial ruin becomes absolute and her lovers abandon her, she realizes that the bourgeois legal and social system

offers no mercy for a fallen woman [3, p. 210]. Her suicide by arsenic is agonizingly detailed by Flaubert, symbolizing how the toxic reality of her environment finally poisoned her from within. Zebiniso's end is equally catastrophic but occurs through the judicial and political corruption of colonial Turkestan. After the Mingboshi is poisoned (a crime plotted by others), Zebiniso is falsely accused. Cho'lon uses the subsequent trial to show how traditional patriarchy and the Russian colonial court system merge to destroy an innocent woman. Zebiniso is powerless, unable to speak for herself in a public sphere ruled entirely by men [4, p. 301]. Her sentence—exile to Siberia—represents the ultimate triumph of a corrupted society over female innocence. The "night" in the novel's title completely swallows her destiny.

Conclusion

The comparative study of "Kecha va Kunduz" and "Madame Bovary" demonstrates that the conflict between women and society is a significant theme in both Eastern and Western literature. Although the novels emerge from different cultural environments, they reveal similar patterns of social restriction, gender inequality, and psychological suffering experienced by women. Cho'lon and Flaubert portray female characters as individuals struggling against societal expectations that limit their freedom and self-expression. Their works expose the harmful consequences of patriarchal structures and emphasize the importance of personal autonomy. The analysis confirms that the woman-society conflict remains a universal literary and social issue, reflecting broader questions of justice, identity, and human dignity.

The comparative analysis of Kecha va Kunduz and Madame Bovary reveals that the conflict between woman and society transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

- Gustave Flaubert paints a devastating portrait of Western provincialism, where a woman's soul is suffocated by materialism, hypocrisy, and the rigid expectations of the bourgeoisie.
- Cho'lon delivers a fierce Eastern critique of a society blinded by distorted religious dogma and colonial subjugation, where women are treated as currency and stripped of basic human dignity.

Ultimately, both Emma Bovary and Zebiniso are martyrs of their respective eras. Whether through Emma's destructive pursuit of romantic ideals or Zebiniso's forced submission to patriarchal tyranny, both authors illustrate a grim truth: in a society built on the subjugation of the vulnerable, a woman's pursuit of individuality is treated as a crime punishable by total elimination.

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