

## Woman Exploitation Reflected in Memoirs of A Geisha by Arthur Golden

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### ABSTRACT

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is one of literary work that describes the issues about the development of Japan civilization and the growth of a certain profession called Geisha. This research aims to analyze the woman exploitation reflected in *Memoirs of A Geisha*. Method that is used to analyze the woman exploitation is qualitative method. As the object of the research, *Memoirs of a Geisha* is also become the primary data source. This novel is written by Arthur Golden and printed in 1997 by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York. The secondary data sources are the author's biography and books of literary theory. In analyzing the data, the researcher used library research and descriptive analysis. In analyzing the woman exploitation, the writer uses feminist perspective. The term that will be analyzed consists of woman's position, woman's role, woman's participation, and woman's right. The result of the research shows that women are exploited in male-controlled. It also shows that woman must fight to get their right. Woman must be clever and brilliant to have the freedom. *Memoirs of a Geisha* is very interesting novel to analyze. Therefore, it is possible to be a good novel to read and take the moral lesson from it.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Geisha is a unique profession of woman in Japan which makes their point and part fairly different. As an expert hostesses, it charms visitor over kinds of acting art such as traditional dance, singing and playing an Ochaya, shamisen in teahouses. The main trade is to make man feel witty, virile, and warm (Aihara, 1999). Although Geisha career bargains the woman to have their financial independence, but it loses its freedom to determine the life when it has to look the process of *Mizugae*, a ritual that takes a girl selling her virginity to the top buyer (Aihara, 2000). Usually an orphan pretty little girl from lack stricken relatives are traded to an O-chaya by relations as a funds of getting money, they are accomplished to be a geisha (Aihara, 1999).

Geisha occupation offers a woman live independently in public life, although it does not have any right to make decision, especially in process of *Muzuage* which relates to a ritual when a woman lose her virginity to the man who pays the most expensive price (Aihara, 2000). Commonly a pretty young orphan girl is forced to be sold to O-chaya by their family to earn money to live. Then they will be a geisha (Aihara, 1999).

If someone decides to be a geisha in her job, she cannot marry anymore. Although she gets a *donna* or Patron, a geisha is still considered as a single woman. Then, if she has a child it is controlled unlawful (Aihara, 1999). A *donna* is considered as a man who has the important position to have appointment to hire a geisha. Most of *donna* do not recognize the child they have with geisha. Japanese companions do not impress with the relationships between geisha and their partner because of the geisha's facilities and it would not disturb their marriage (Aihara, 1999).

In Hanamachis, the life of geisha is spread without control, although their life is secret. There is no talk about the life of customer, because the private of customer is important. But geisha spread the detail of party and the identity of customer. Then, it means break the role of geisha life (Aihara, 1999).

Golden has shown the unique life of a geisha in his novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*. He describes the diaries of someone who once ever becomes a geisha. Golden is a famous novelist in America who has written a famous novel, such as *Geisha* published in 1999, *Die Geisha* published in 2000, and *Memoirs of a geisha published in 2005* that has been translated into 21 languages.

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is an image of one existence in the past at sure time and abode when geisha does occur in public called *Hanamachy*. One of the characters, Sayuri has to accept all the penalties that her boldness is being measured by the custom to fight for a better civilization. She also misplaces her pride and independence.

There are some articles that analyze about *Memoirs of Geisha*. The first is *Translation of 'Memoirs of a Geisha': Analysis and Insights on Cultural Perspective*, which is written by Rosalina (2012). She analyzes the translation of Japanese's cultural words, e.g. ecology, metaphor, taboo word, etc. into Malay language. It focuses on definition and categories of culture are used throughout this article to analyse the novel. Then, *Teaching Geisha in History, Fiction, and Fantasy*, which is written by Bardsley (2010). He analyzes how the students can understand the history, fiction, Fantasy term through the novel. Another study is *Human Needs in Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha*, which is written by Putra (2016). He analyzes the motivation of the main character which drives his behavior, deeds, thought and feeling that the main character has and identifies the problem of the main character needs which are revealed in her journey to reach her dreams to be a successful Geisha. Then, *The Struggle of a Geisha in Maintaining Her Pride as Seen in Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha*, which is written by Handiyani, et al., (2019). She analyzes the types of struggles in maintaining her pride by Sayuri as the main female character, to oppose and think of Sayuri's struggle to fight exploitation and significant meaning, and to find out and explain the depiction of Sayuri's struggle. Furthermore, another study has focused on *Language change and linguistic etiquette portrayed in the characters of the novel and movie "Memoirs of a Geisha"* is written by Ulinuha & Parnawati (2019). They analyze the intercultural communication portrayed by the characters of *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Furthermore, Susanti (2010) focuses on *An Analysis on the Indonesian Subtitle of Modals Used in the Movie Memoirs of a Geisha*. This current research focuses on how woman exploitation reflected in *Memoirs of a Geisha* novel. Feminism takes the point to make adjustment about woman's position of life so they understand what they are valuable persons having the same treats and truths as every man (Bressler, 1999).

This research is included to Liberal Feminist which consist of four major values namely women's position, women's role, women's right, and woman's participation. Those principles will be analyzed in this research.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research is the type of research which is used to analyze the woman exploitation that occurs in *Memoirs of a Geisha* novel. The research focuses on the woman exploitation which is reflected in the novel. Library research is used as the data collecting method. Therefore, the researcher is the one who collect all of the information needed in this study. The primary data is *Memoirs of a Geisha* novel which is written by Arthur Golden and distributed by Division of Random House, Inc. New York. 1997. It contains thoughts, assertiveness, the means of intellectual, and conversations between the characters in the novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* relating to their part. While the secondary data is author's biography and other related information to analysis of this research. The descriptive analysis is used as the technique of data analysis which contains of words, sentences or picture as the data research, and those data will include to quotation or documentation.

In analyzing the woman exploitation the writer uses feminist perspective. Feminism happens because woman is considered as imperfect human who does not have any onclusi with man, especially in onclus, economic, and social. Feminism makes commitment in politic, economic, and social to erase class, race, and sexual domination and to rearrange the opinion that the self development of each person is more important than economic expansion and material desire (Mandell, 1995). There are four theories of Feminist, namely liberal feminist, radical feminist, socialist feminist, and onclus feminist. Liberal feminists concerns about the woman fairness with men. Liberal Feminist activist social and legal reform through policies designed to create equal opportunity for woman, such as achieving citizen's right and ensuring educational opportunities" (Mandell, 1995). Radical Feminist concern about the problem on sexual violence such as rape, slavery, prostitute and violence in the family circle as the most imperative problem" (Humm, 2002). Socialist feminist appears to be predisposed by twentieth-century theorists such as Louis Althusser and Jurgen Habermas. "They claim the fundamental cause of woman's domination is neither "Classism" nor "Sexism" but an involved interaction between capitalism and patriarchy" (Humm, 2002). Marxist feminist theory aims to

respect directly to Marx, Engels, and other nineteenth-century philosophers. "Marxist Feminist aims to identify classism rather than sexism as the eventual cause of women's domination" (Humm, 2002).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result of the research on woman exploitation that occurs in *Memoirs of a Geisha* novel. There are four analysis that can be described in the following.

#### 1. Woman's Position

Society always sees woman as the second class person, woman does not have any importance in making decision to their life. It is called Patriarchy, which refers to the condition that man is the main rule to the woman's life. In *Memoirs of a Gesiha*, the writer finds many exploitation to woman. So that, Feminist Perspective is appropriate to analyze the phenomenon.

In this novel there are some part that contains of the woman's position analysis. It shows that woman is man's stuff so they don't have anycontrol over their own life.

"You're a very expensive commodity, little girl. I understand you. I'm lucky no thing has happened. But you may be very sure I'm going to watch you more closely in the future. What a man wants from you, a man will pay dearly, to get. Do you follow me?." (MOAG: page 319).

When Sayuri is still 9 years old, she has a traumatic moment with her sister Satsu. They are examined whether they are good to be a Geisha or just to sell as prostitute.

"I think Satsu must have resisted, for Mrs. Fidget gave a shout, smacking Satsu on the leg-as I could tell letter from the red mark there. In a moment Mrs. Fidget was done and told Satsu to put her clothes back on. While she was dressing, satsu gave a big sniff. She may have been crying, but I didn't dare look at her. Next Mrs. Fidget came straight at me, and in a moment my own pants were down around my knees and my shirt was taken of me just Satsu's had been". (MOAG: page 28).

As a slave woman, Sayuri must work hard in order to give some money to the geisha household and the debt. And it will happen to her life.

"You're right about what that! She said. "Half a yen might have been more that you're worth. Well, I had the impression you were claver but you're not clever to know what's good for you. She went back to puffing at her pipe for a while, and then said, "I paid seventy five yen for you, that's what I paid. Then you ruined a kimono, stole a brooch, and now you broken your arm. So I'll be adding medical expenses to your debt as well. Plus you have your meals and lessons, and just this morning I heard from the mistress of the Tatsuyo, over Miyagawa-cho, that your older sister has runaway. The mistress still hasn't paid for what she owes. Now she tells me she's not going to do it! I'll add that to your debt as well, but what difference will it make? You already owe more than you'll ever repay."(MOAG: page 157)

#### 2. Woman's Role

In this novel, a geisha must have a sexual appeal to attract their guest (man). They learn to be a devious woman.

"... So I drew my sleeve up above my elbow and hold my arm out for her to see. She took it and turned it in her hand to look at the top and the bottom. "You have a lovely arm, and beautiful skin. You should make sure every man who sits near you sees it at least once."(MOAG: page 196- 197)

Going from tea house to tea house everynight is a job of Geisha. They must be able to sing, dance, and sometimes only chat with the guest.

With all the guests arranged shoulder to shoulder in a sort of U- shape around the outside of big tatami room, and trays of food sitting on little stands in front of them. The geisha, who entertain, move around the center of the room- inside the U- shape made by all the trays, I mean-and spend only a few minutes kneeling before each guest to pour sake and chat (MOAG : page 200).

A geisha must have ability in playing various instruments. It can support the career of geisha. That's why geisha is sometimes called an artisan.

"My first lesson in the morning was a kind of small drum we call *tsutsumi*. You may wonder why a geisha should bother learning drums, but the answer is very simple. In a banquet or any sort of informal gathering in Gion, geisha usually dance to nothing more than the accompaniment of a *shamisen* and perhaps a singer. But for stage performances , such as Dance of the old capital every spring, six or more *shamisen* players join together as an ensemble, backed by various types of drums and also a Japanese flute we call *fue*. So you see, a geisha must try her hard at all of these instruments, even though eventually she'll be encouraged to specialize in one or two." (MOAG: page 179).

### 3. Woman's Participation

This novel shows that Woman has no participation in making decision in their life, because man has all their life control.

"Mr. Tanaka raised me into a sitting position. I thought he was going to tell me to leave, but instead he said," Don't swallow that blood, little girl unless you want to make a stone in your stomach. I'd spit it onto the floor, if I were you." A girls blood Mr. Tanaka? Said one of the man" Here, where we bring the fish?" (MOAG: page 17).

Japanese has belief that woman has no participation at all. All fishermen trust that woman has a bad luck.

"Fishermen are terribly superstitious, you see. They especially don't like woman to have anything to do with fishing. One man in our village. Mr. Yamamura, found his daughter playing in his boat one morning. He beat her with a stick and then washed out the boat with sake and lye so strong it bleached streaks of colouring from the wood. Even this wasn't enough; Mr. Yamamura had the Shinto priest come and bless it. All this because his daughter had done nothing more than play where the fish are caught." (MOAG: page16).

### 4. Womn's Right

The major character, namely Sayuri doesn't have anyright in her life. She can't decides what she wants. Even when she was child, her father sold her. It can be seen that the man who actually must protect Sayuri, doesn't have any responsible to her.

For a flicker of a moment I imagined a world completely different from one I'd always known, a world in which I was treated with fairness even kindness-a world in which fathers didn't sell their daughters (MOAG: page 174).

When Mizuage Ceremony is coming, Sayuri must lose her virginity. Eventhough she doesn't want it, but she has no right to avoit it.

"And you're afraid that once Nobu has touched you, after that they can never be?Really, Sayuri. What did you think life as a geisha would be like? We don't become geisha so our lives will be satisfying We become geisha because we have no other onclu."(MOAG: page 133)

Based on the result above it shows that the women is inferior. It is in line with the analysis by Anderson (1983) shows that feminist's reliance that women are dried as inferior. Mandell (1995) also states that "woman's life is full of patriarchy in which the man has the most powerful role in woman's life, and it makes woman to be exploited by man.

The most important woman's roles are still considered as wardens and house hold. They are continually related with local roles. Home life makes the house and the work linked with it as women's most suitable place and the role are to complement their family life (Humm, 2002). Mandel (1995) states that each person wants to get an equal chance and rights. It is important that the role to manage and make sure that all the citizen have equal right and position in society. It is also to have participation in national life without looking race, religion, sex, and other terms which is not related to the individual life (Gallagher, 2003).

After analyzing feminist perspective in the novel, the writer wants to discuss how the woman exploitation occurs in *Memoirs of a Geisha*. There is s study that has similar topic with this current research, namely *The Struggle of a Geisha in Maintaining Her Pride as Seen in Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha*, which is written by Handiyani, et al. (2019). She analyzes the types of struggles in maintaining her pride by Sayuri as the main female character to oppose and think of Sayuri's struggle to fight exploitation and significant meaning, and to find out and explain the depiction of Sayuri's struggle.

The previous research focuses on how major character, Sayuri, must be struggling to survive in her life. The previous research used feminist perspective which is the same used in this current research. But there must be difference between the previous and the current research. The difference is the result. The result of the previous research has shown how Sayuri survive and succed to be a geisha. This current research shows that woman exploitation happen in Japan. Woman must have many ability to be a successful geisha. They succed to be a geisha they will have a comfort life, although they still do not have any right to make decision in their life. .

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is the story of the struggle of a woman to become Geisha. Golden invents that geisha is a unique profession. It is the symbol of cultured and skilled woman, their life is a kind of secret. Mandel (1995) has mentioned that each person wants to get an equal chance and rights. The life of a woman in leading geisha profession is not easy. To be a geisha a woman should dare to sacrifice their life including their freedom. They have to leave their ordinary life in which having family is women's most supreme life objective because geisha cannot marry or have children, and most of them never have the option of retiring.

In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, it is explained that from the very start to be a geisha a woman should learn the rigorous art such as dancing, singing and playing shamishen. They also learn alcohol-serving manners; the purpose is to entertain men with, music, and conversation just to get a wealthy patrons. The word *geisha* does not mean prostitute but 'Artisan' or 'Artist' however sexual intrigue is part of the job description, namely in the ritual known as *Mizuage*, the selling of their virginity.

By elaborating all details of geisha's experience from the confession of an ex-geisha above Golden wants to give the readers a completely new viewpoint of history and admiration for affected life of Japanese geishas. The reader involvement the problems and victories of a highly popular geisha known as Sayuri, from the times she is sold by her father to geisha family, to the successful sale of her *Mizuage* and her suggestive old age in Manhattan. Most of the section centres on the geisha's coming of age in Gion (geisha region), fight with competitors and her search for love through 1930s and 1940s.

In this novel, Golden creates the major character of this novel that is Sayuri coming from poverty stricken family. She struggles from maid to trainee and finally an actual geisha, and learns just what it is like live exclusively. In the novel of *Memoirs of a geisha* Sayuri is a portrait of a woman with so much beautiful and intelligent, but she is taught to be devious and dishonest.

Many events in *Memoirs of a Geisha* reflects Sayuri's journey of life. First, she is sold, then she gets a bad treatment as a servant in geisha family cause by the debt she has when she tries to runaway and break her leg. Then after becoming a geisha she should face the reality that she has fallen in love with Iwamura-ken even she has to hide this feeling for several years.

The story of *Memoirs of Geisha* is certainly dissimilar from any other book. Because of the theme and the way of the author writes the story. The rapidly altering conflicts consent no room for dullness. It is the motional and probes into the sunspecs of erotic manoeuvrings. It offers a new viewpoint to the reader about geisha which always has been considered speciously as prostitute.

In the story, we will find several situations such as the tragic condition of Sayuri at the beginning of the story but it ends with the happiness. In the story, it can also be found several romantic situations when Sayuri has to serve her costumer who has won her *Mizuage*. Golden wrote it in erotic way. The moment of *Mizuage* becomes Sayuri's experience when she loses her virginity for the first time (Jin, 2011; Majid, 2014). Golden portrays the story through the eyes of a young girl allowing us to

experience the thought and feeling of a woman in her world, as well as the characteristic, grace, stoicism and politeness of Japanese culture.

The setting of time in *Memoirs of a Geisha* used by Golden is on World War II around 1929 to 1956 and the setting of place in Japan and America. Golden develops a traditional plot in the first eight chapters, he puts the exposition by introducing to the readers about the major character, tells what happen before the story open. This moment introduces a complication; it is the moment when Sayuri is brought into Kyoto to be sold to the geisha family, trained to be a geisha, and competing with jealous rival named Hatsumomo. It leads to the climax, the moment of greatest tension in which the outcome is to be decided (Ogino, 2008). Finally there is a confession that Iwamura Ken is the person who has met her in Shirakawa stream and has pointed Mameha to be her elder sister. In the last chapter, Arthur Golden gives resolution portraying the new life of Nitta Sayuri (Putri, 2012).

He also uses both standard and non-standard grammatical structure. The variations between long and short sentences make the novel so attractive. For the diction, because it is based on Japanese culture he puts the Japanese word and some Japanese symbol to support the story on the novel (Svalina, 2018). The author draws the most incredible pictures in the readers mind by using Japanese unique words. The heroine is not flawless, it helps the reader sympathize with her situation. The subject matter is erratic and instruct look at a clandestine culture that is both elusive and seductive. The book ends with an appearance of Sayuri constructs, relating to the elections she made.

The elaboration shows that Arthur Golden has arranged his novel chronologically and in a good unity. *The Memoirs of a Geisha* tells the struggles of a woman to become a geisha and the journey of the major character to accomplish her future. Golden uses first person point of view, employing the traditional plot in telling his story, using both standard and non standard grammatical structure, combining the short and long sentences, and mixing the diction, figurative language, imagery, and symbolism into a good unity. He also uses the setting of time on World War II and setting of place in Japan and America.

From the feminist conclusion, it can be seen that the position, role, participation, and right of woman is neglected. So that, the women are exploited to do whatever the men wants. Arthur Golden shows that a woman has a difficult life. It is seen in the moment when the major character, Sayuri goes to America, she meets American and tells that she is an ex-Geisha. Then the response of American is smile that signs the profession of Geisha is embracing.

The habit and ceremonials of Geisha become the main notice of Golden. The major character, Sayuri is exploited in her life. She must have many problems. It happens when she has conclusion with her Dana, a chairman, that will never marry Sayuri, because Sayuri is only available for him when he wants to have sex with Sayuri (Putri, 2012; Risca, 2019).

*Memoirs of a Geisha* shows the condition of woman as a geisha is seen as prostitute by western. But this novel tries to give knowledge to the reader how the major character Sayuri can play shamisen attractively, and how a tea ceremony is hold, before defining whether woman in Japan call themselves as a geisha. However, the geisha lives in Kyoto and Tokyo and other big cities, which prostitution exist. For the example, when the beginner Geisha is called as *Mizuage*, it happens when geisha must sell her virginity to the highest bidder. After the *Mizuage*, a woman will be failure to be a geisha if she doesn't get a man who will protect and give money to her.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The researcher has some conclusion after analyzing and discussing the data. This shows on how women are exploited in male-controlled civilization. It is founded on the fact in the geisha daily life that woman's rights become number two after men. Golden shows that women's right are not assumed but it must be resisted for. It can be seen from Sayuri's situation in her daily life, she always fights to get her right of freedom even she has to escape from her public. It is defined that women should be clever and brilliant in order to get their rights. They are estimated not only to receive the situation and wait for the marvel but they must fight to get freedom in their life. This also shows that many truths about woman's life especially in term position, part, precise, and contribution in geisha's life. There are many procedures of subordination, domination, abuse, and violence toward woman. *Memoirs of a Geisha* is very interesting novel to analyze it. Therefore, it is very possible to analyze this novel by using another perspective. The writer suggests to the next researcher to use psychoanalytic approach to analyze the psychology of the main character. The researcher wishes that this research can be a usefull reference to the reader and next researcher that will analyze the same topic.

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