

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

So far, Westerners and Easterners think that a *Geisha* is a woman that can be taken for pleasures, especially in sex. In fact, according to the Japanese culture, she is an artisan or artist. A *Geisha* is an entertainer trained in conversation, tea ceremony, dancing, singing, and playing the *shamisen* (a stringed instrument). A *Geisha* is to sit beside a man and be a flower in a Japanese teahouse. This means that a *Geisha* should be attractive, well-mannered, and skilful in communication. Principally, she is entertaining rich men such as politicians, celebrities and businessmen.

Based on the *Encyclopaedia of Japan*, the *Geisha* system emerged around the middle of the Edo period (1600-1868) but the first recorded use of the term *Geisha* occurred in 1751 in Kyoto and 1762 in Edo (now Tokyo) (Kodansha, 14). Originally, a *Geisha* was men, but gradually it became exclusively females. In addition, a *Geisha* remained as the ultimate symbols of traditional beauty and grace. A *Geisha* was part of Japanese traditional culture; and one of the fantastic cultures in Japan.

A *Geisha* had to learn and master the Japanese traditional music, dances, and songs. To acquire these skills, she had to attend a special school and trainings. She had to be able to use Kyoto dialect (*Kyo-kotaba*) well as if she was a Kyotonese;

although actually she came from another province (Aihara, 34). A *Geisha* had to live in a place called *okiya*. The *okiya* resembles a family or home.

To become a *Geisha*, a virgin girl has to pass several stages and hard work; starting as a *shikomi-san*, a novice, an apprentice *Geisha* (*Maiko*) and a full-fledge *Geisha* (*Geiko*). When a girl is ready to make her debut as an apprentice *Geisha*, she needs to have an established relationship with a more experienced *Geisha*. Then, they are bound together as “sisters.” Afterwards, they see each other almost as members of the same family, calling each other “Older Sister” and “Younger Sister” just as real family (128). The “older sister” is responsible to acquire the life in the *Geisha*’s world to her “younger sister.” As an “older sister,” she is both the instructor and the supervisor; and her “younger sister” should respect and obey her. The “older sister” always make sure about the success of her “younger sister’s” career even though her own career is in risked.

To become a successful *Geisha*, she needs a *danna* or patron who is emotionally, sexually and economically involved. A high-class *Geisha* is very selective in her choice of her *danna* since her relationships tends to be a long term. A *Geisha* is forbidden to have a boyfriend since it can cause bad reputation to her career.

The writer was interested in Sayuri’s character because of her perseverance to find independence in the strict world of the *Geisha* and climb to the top of the *Geisha* society. In her way to become a successful *Geisha*, Sayuri had to face the pressures, difficulties, and obstacles but she could face them patiently and wisely. She could accept her fate when she had to be separated from her mother, her

father, and her older sister, Satsu. To analyse Sayuri's character, the writer had used Karen Horney's "Sociocultural Theory of Personality" in understanding Sayuri's feeling, emotion, and action in struggling to become a successful *Geisha*.

The writer was impressed by Sayuri, the main character in the novel, who had made great effort to raise herself from a daughter of a very poor fisherman in a very remote place to a successful *Geisha* in Gion. Chiyo, the main character's name before becoming a *Geisha*, was nine years old, ignorant and naïve; when she was sold to an *okiya*. She merely thought that Mr. Tanaka Ichiro, a wealthy owner of a fish company in Yoroido, Chiyo's hometown, was going to adopt her and Satsu, her older sister. Never had it entered in this little girl's mind that Mr. Tanaka had succeeded to persuade her father to let her be a *Geisha*. She was too young and innocent. At the time in Japan, if you happened to be a girl from a poor family, being a *Geisha* was the only way to be free from poverty. Through the novel, the writer also learned that before a virgin girl could become a *Geisha*, she had to be trained and go through many stages of rituals and ceremonies as well as trainings and schoolings.

Chiyo had almost spent her life as a maid as a punishment for her trying to escape the *okiya*. She remained in that condition for two years, until Mameha, another well-known and most popular *Geisha* took her as her "younger sister" who then led her to become the most well-liked *Geisha* in Gion. The writer was most interested in finding out Chiyo's perseverance in facing all the bad treatments, hardships, humiliations and insults from the people of her *okiya*. As mention previously, before being trained as a novice and then as a *Geisha*, a girl

should act as a maid; since the *okiya* had provided her “everything”. She might be young for her age, but Chiyo was matured in life, especially when it came to sufferings.

While acting as a maid, Chiyo would consider herself most fortunate compared to her friend Pumpkin. Although she was confined as a *Geisha*, Chiyo’s chores as a maid were much “lighter” than Pumpkin’s, a girl of Chiyo’s age. Pumpkin was a novice *Geisha*, who had taken Chiyo’s place as a novice during Chiyo’s punishment, since then, Chiyo should serve her beside “Mother,” “Granny,” “Auntie” and Hatsumomo, the *Geisha* of the *okiya*. It was touching to see Chiyo’s miserable life. And this she bore for two years. However, through Mameha’s and the Chairman’s encouragement Chiyo had regained her will, “Waiting patiently doesn’t suit you. I can see you have a great deal of water in your personality. Water never waits. It changes shape and flows around things, and finds the secret paths no one else has thought about – the tiny hole through the roof or the bottom of a box” (125).

The writer would like to find out how Chiyo, who later became Sayuri, had worked her way out from being a maid to a *Geisha*. The writer noticed that to be a *Geisha* is not as easy as one thinks. A girl should be virgin, work hard as a maid, a repayment for all expenses she spent in the *okiya* before she becomes a novice and then a *Geisha*. However, it was quite exciting to see Sayuri’s struggle before she accomplished as a *Geisha*.

B. Statement of the Problems

Dealing with the preceding discussion, the writer will give an attention on Sayuri's character by proposing problems to analyse into the following question:

1. What does a *Geisha* signify in Japanese culture?
2. How does Sayuri become a *Geisha*?
3. How does she become a successful *Geisha*?

C. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to find the answers for the proposed problems through the analysis. Thus, this study is intended to:

1. To explain what a *Geisha* signifies in Japanese culture.
2. To explain how Sayuri becomes a *Geisha*.
3. To explain Sayuri's effort to become a successful *Geisha*.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is an attempt to give deeper insight into human mind and women's or more precisely a woman character. It also tends to enrich one's knowledge about the literary work, in this case the novel by Arthur Golden under the heading: *Memoirs of A Geisha*. Furthermore, it will hopefully be an input for other further studies concerning this work.

E. Scope and Limitation

In order to avoid the unnecessary and misleading focus of writing, the writer is merely concentrating on the main character, Sayuri. The writer will also enclosed a glimpse of the *Geisha's* world according to the Japanese traditional culture in order to give more information of what a *Geisha* really is.

F. Theoretical Background

Analysing a novel with rich sources of intrinsic elements, especially in the character, the writer used the intrinsic approach such as character, plot, and setting. Since the work involve the sociocultural aspect of society the main character in *Memoirs of A Geisha* will be analysed by using the theory of personality by Karen Horney is needed. She argued that the social relationship between child and parents is the decisive factor in shaping personality development. For Horney, childhood is dominated by the needs for satisfaction and security; parental behaviour frustrating the child's need for security creates basic anxiety. Basic anxiety is a feeling of being helpless in a hostile world and is the foundation for neuroses.

Horney's theory is relevant to analyse the main character, Sayuri as a female character. In reaching her effort to be a successful *Geisha*, she had to be compliant to the traditions and norms of the *okiya*, which finally arrive in her purpose. She also repressed her feeling in facing the hostile world.

G. Method of the Study

In working on the thesis, the writer applies the library research to support the data to complete the analysis of the works. The research here means, a process of finding information, which is useful to help the writer go directly into her research.

The first stage is collecting information from many books, articles, encyclopaedias, Internet with its web-sites and other printed materials related to the work of Arthur Golden, particularly *Memoirs of A Geisha*. The writer also tries to get information from any particular books dealing with literary theories and approaches that will be used in the analysis.

The method, which is later used, is a descriptive analysis. It is applied to give descriptive explanation of the problems found in the work through the dialogues, events, and actions of the story itself. This method is applied based on the work itself and supported by other information concerning the work. The writer also used quotations from many sources to confirm and support the description.

Finally, through this descriptive analysis, the writer attempts to provide a deep understanding on Sayuri's characters based on *Memoirs of A Geisha* to a scientific writing.

H. Definition of Key Terms

- **Apprentice *Geisha* or *Maiko***: literary meaning “woman of dance”; she exists only in Kyoto and has no counterpart elsewhere in Japan.
- ***Danna*** : a patron who supports a *Geisha* or *Geiko* by giving financial assistance.
- ***Geisha* or *Geiko*** : literary meaning “woman of art”; the Kyoto term for female entertainers who are trained in the traditional Japanese art.
- ***Mizuage*** : the occasion on which a *Geisha* or *Geiko* loses her virginity; the term is an anachronism now as sexual matters are the business of the *Geisha* or *Geiko* alone.
- ***Okiya*** : a *Geisha* house, an establishment where *Geisha* are affiliated in order to be registered in their communities.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK