

## The Psychoanalysis of Sayuri's Character in *Memoirs of A Geisha*

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### Abstract

This article mainly focuses on psychoanalysis of Sayuri's character in *Memoirs of A Geisha* by Arthur Golden. Psychologically, Golden expressed about the characters in the novel constantly disturbed by anxiety, psychological clash, and powerless to face authenticity in external of environment. This novel can be analysed by using Freudian psychoanalytic theory because it contains tragic and dramatic psychological method. This article explores about how Sayuri, the protagonist of the novel used the structure of personality such as id, ego and superego led her to experience new things, people and helped to find out her maturity level. She also used defense mechanism to defend her from any kind of clashes that happened in her life.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychoanalysis, Authenticity, Defense Mechanism.

### INTRODUCTION:

Psychoanalysis is a method of psychological theory and treatment which seeks to take care of mental disorders by examining the communication of conscious and unconscious parts in the mind and getting repressed panics and clashes into the conscious mind by methods such as reading dream and free association. Sigmund Freud was the founder of Psychoanalysis theory. He invented the term "Psychoanalysis" with two meanings. One is a particular system of treating nervous disorder and the second meaning is the science of unconscious mental processes, which has also been appropriately described as "depth-psychology."

Freud developed the technique of free association ideas. In this technique patients can express their experiences and feelings freely which come to their mind. This technique helped Freud to study the meanings of dreams, tongue slipping, lack of memory, and other faults and mistakes in everyday life. These investigations helped him out to find a new formation of the structure of personality. They are id, ego, and superego. Freud in his book *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* explained about id, ego and superego:

The id has the quality of being unconsciousness and contains everything that is inherited, everything that is present at birth, and the instincts. The ego has the quality of being conscious and is responsible for controlling the demands of the id and of the instincts, becoming aware of stimuli, and serving as a link between the id and the external world. In addition, the ego responds to stimulation by either adaptation or fight, regulates activity, and strives to achieve pleasure and avoid unpleasure. Finally, the superego, whose demands are managed by the id, is responsible for the limitation of satisfactions and represents the influential of others, such as parents, teachers and role models, as

well as the impact of racial, societal, and cultural traditions. (14-15)

According to Freud defense mechanism is an approach widened by the ego to defend against anxiety. Defense mechanisms are thought to protect the mind in opposition to feelings and opinions that are too complex for the conscious mind to manage with. In some cases, defense mechanisms are thought to maintain unsuitable or unnecessary ideas and desires from entering the conscious mind. The major defense mechanisms are repression, reaction formation, projection, regression, sublimation, denial, and rationalization.

Arthur Golden was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and was studied at Harvard College, where he obtained a degree in art history, concentrating in Japanese art. In 1980 he received an M.A. in Japanese history from Columbia University, where he also gained knowledge of Mandarin Chinese. Following a summer in Beijing University, he worked in Tokyo, and, after going back to United States, studied an M.A. in English from Boston University. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, with his wife and two children. He was one of the prominent American novelists who has written many literary works such as *Geisha* (1999), *Die Geisha* (2000), and *Memoirs of a Geisha* that has been translated into 21 languages.

Golden's debut novel *Memoirs Of A Geisha* was published in 1997. For this bestselling novel Golden spent more than ten years to publish this novel. This novel had been made as a film by the director Steven Spielberg. This novel portrayed the unique life of a geisha. Golden represented the memoirs of his friend who previously served herself as a geisha.

*Memoirs Of A Geisha* depicted about the story of a young girl named Chiyo Sakamoto who was sold into the slavery of a Geisha house by her parents when she was nine years old. She was treated badly and abused by the owners and the head geisha named Hatsumomo who became jealous of Chiyo's beauty. Later, she was saved by Mahema, one of prominent geisha like Hatsumomo. Chiyo was trained in geisha arts and became the well-known geisha Sayuri. However, her fame and wealthy life was threatened by World War II. Not only affected her life, it changed the world of the geisha and Japan forever. Further, let us see the psychoanalysis of Sayuri's character.

## DISCUSSION:

By observing Sayuri's life, it discovered that she had both practical and moral anxiety. Sayuri's practical anxiety came from her family and society whereas her moral anxiety she acquired from her moral consciousness. In the opening of the novel, Golden described Sayuri as child who was sold by Mr. Tanaka. Further, the human nature of Sayuri came up with the question how and why she was sold?

I couldn't stop thinking about Mr. Tanaka. He had taken me from my mother and father, sold me into slavery, sold my sister into something even worse. I had taken him for a kind man. I had thought he was so refined, so wordly. What a stupid child I had been! I would never go back, it would only be to tell Mr. Tanaka how much I hated him. (*Memoir Of A Geisha* 94)

Sayuri has a sister in childhood whom she likes her very much. Unfortunately, She and her sister was sold because they could not afford money for her mother's treatment. Sayuri could not accept and forget about it. She was disturbed and depressed because of her condition of living in geisha house.

This article deals with how the strongest unconscious drive that is id of Sayuri wanted to know about her own self. In fact, it usually occurs to everyone in the world. In this instance, Sayuri always asked to herself every time. This circumstance emerged more intricate when she came to know that she was born for specific reason, to repay her family debts. The inner argument of id and ego took place quickly in the appearance of human's right that should be felt by Sayuri as a human kind. Sayuri was perplexed because she sensed the anxiety after sold by House of Okiya. She could not accomplish her wish to her family any longer. So she attempted to look for away to diminish her hurting reminiscence.

When you begin working as geisha, you'll pay the Okiya back for it, along with everything else you'll owe. Your meals and lessons; if you get sick, your doctor's fees you pay all of that yourself. Why do you thing mother spend all her time in her room, writing numbers in those little books. You owe the Okiya even for the money it cost to acquire you. (88)

Sayuri seldom had her life utterly; she should be geared up when she became a geisha. Other side, Sayuri was a human kind that has a right of life; it was the truth and whatever the motives she had right to posses herself completely. This awareness got from the unconscious world of human kind.

In the case of human ego, the equipment we employ to reject and twist reality and to protect our ego against anxiety known as "Ego Defence Mechanism". It defends us from extreme neurotic anxiety and assures the health, protection and sanity of the personality. The clash of Sayuri's ego instigates when she had known about her survival in this world that being a geisha. She was so mystified about herself; she desired to be free from the routine action to go to the house of Okiya. Further, her ego pushed herself to take an action for herself. Sayuri's ego suppressed on to made decision that what would protect her and made everything secured. Her decision was clearly come from the urge of her ego.

Decision about me is being made, and no one's bothered to ask the one person who most deserves it to speak her opinion. There's way too much to explain, and so I do the best I can. "It's not God. Just me," I say. "I want to sue them for the rights to my own body" (21).

The quotation above demonstrates how the ego of Sayuri suppressed herself completely. Although, she was not confident anymore caused by any contemplated, she was sturdy in her decision and did not adjusted her mind. This inner clash arise more complicated, she thought that she was mature enough to make decision for herself.

Establishment of the superego continued in the internalization procedure of the moral directs to survive in the external self of the individual to the moral directs to survive in the internal self of individual. Subsequently, it is explained that this

internalization procedure continued by the manner of individual recognition. But by means of other way too, that is rationalization, acting out, and defense mechanism of the ego. These approaches are prepared by individual in attempt to conciliation about urges from the id with requirement of the superego. By performing the role of the ego as executive of personality, the individual generates the balance in personality; so that it combines to deal with external world effectively.

Rationalization is one more tool of defense mechanism employed by Sayuri. She rationalized because she faced many clashes, particularly when she chose to be a geisha. Rationalization belongs to the device of dishonesty. It is the manner that an individual provides reasons for the actions of something in order to be socially agreed or to keep away from punishment, such as when taking certain decisions. Rationalization is then developed into an individual's activities as a defensive mechanism. When performing something, a person will approach with believable reasons that she is not be censured from such activities. The user may not recognize that she is interweaving the truths to guard the self-respect by the means of rationalization since it is unconscious. Though, overuse of rationalization can capture a person away from the actual dilemmas that results with disaster which cannot be resolved.

Sayuri employed rationalization so many times throughout her journey when she desired to be geisha. Really, Sayuri planned to be a geisha for some motives.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This article covered how Sayuri followed Freud's structure of personality and prevailing types of defense mechanism, they are repression, suppression, rationalization, and acting out.' Sayuri's repression imitated main character's by replaced their role. Sayuri wanted replacement object and got pleasure of her wish. It helped her to decrease the urge of her past life with her beloved sister Satsu. It happened when she lost her beloved sister in childhood, Sayuri repressed that she disliked her family due to she had family issues. She was sold by Mr. Tanaka to settle down her father's debts. Sayuri's family did not accomplish her desires. She longed for paternal love while her father controlled her as a property. Usually, the family is believed a place for secure and appreciating but in the case of Sayuri, it was the place she acquired painful feelings, particularly by her father. Sayuri had repressed her anxiety because she was compelled to live with Nitta Sayuri.

The repressed urge compelled Sayuri to run away. She met many problems while working at Okiya. She was tolerated physical and psychological burden. Her physical burden was that she had to complete her heavy task of her routine activities whereas her psychological burden was that she was suppressed by Hatsumomo. She never resisted to struggle for her freedom even though she faced many burdens. This could be connected with defense to dream to improve her life and she fulfilled her aim by her endeavour.

Rationalization decreased her anxiety by the group combined to study the positive motion. It helped her to know her situation emotionally so she could decrease the feelings and the urge that annoyed her. Rationalization helped her to wrap herself from people around her who asked about psychological problem. It seeks to help her state and wrapped up the truth. She thought that people should not learn the truth due to people would understand the truth was happened by Sayuri. This kind of defense

mechanism is generally employed to defend people from the actual situation and make them secure. In this manner, people who employ defense mechanism require reasons to make logic or the sensible assertion. Rationalization is usually employed when people find a sudden problem at that time they require sensible thought to answer or neglect the situation.

Finally, the ego defense mechanism that was used by Sayuri was acting out. She employed this defense mechanism in the end of the story. Actually, she was perplexed and irritated when she lost her sister Satsu. Sayuri was protected by transforming as a geisha and it was verified by the events met by Sayuri pursued with the rigid certainty of her new life. Sayuri should accept the certainty that she does not survive with her parents any longer. Sayuri acquired the knowledge about the phases of geisha and also learned instrument music, dance, tea ceremony and etc.

Sayuri was not only brought the gladness but also misery on herself. Sayuri's maturity level has increased in her life. The happiest moments of Sayuri was that she became a flourishing geisha with the highest price, she repaid all of her debts to Okiya and she joined with Chairman. The saddest moment was that willingly she gave up her mizuage to another man.

The reasons for Sayuri used defense mechanism was trauma, stress and anxiety. She employed defense mechanism to decrease or face the agonizing mind from worry to remind her depressed reminiscence. In this manner, it helped protagonist from the painful position. Trauma could be the cause of employing defense mechanism due to she lost her lovable family in childhood, but she could not tolerate this. She thought that she could not survive without them. She sensed anxious due to her trauma. The anxiety came due to Sayuri constantly thought about them and how she led a life with them. It made her anxiety higher and caused stress. Stress changes to anxiety. It was occurred with Sayuri. Thus, Sayuri used the structure of personality to increase her maturity level and she thought defense mechanism was the way to defend her from the painful reminiscent from her trauma, stress and anxiety.

#### **WORKCITED:**

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