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Child Exploitation and Positive Personal Growth in Arthur  
Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997)

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## **Dedication**

*With love and satisfaction, I dedicate this work to:*

*My parents, my brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins  
and friends.*

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First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Most Merciful Allah who guided me in finishing this work and gave me a chance to do my best. I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisor Mrs. Saibi for her unreserved and constructive comments, patience, advice, and support from the start to the completion of the study. I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Benkhoja, Mrs. Mohedeb, and Mrs. Boughani for their moral encouragement during the realization of this project. Special thanks go to my close friends for the unforgettable moments we have shared. Deep gratitude goes to all my teachers.

## **Abstract**

This research investigates the positive legacy of trauma inherited from the different forms of exploitation in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997), taking the novel's main character as a case of study. The study is based on the assumption that adversity helps to build one's personality, as highlighted by Tedeschi and Calhoun's positive psychological theory of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG). It also sheds light on the shift from negative input to positive outcome as it positively affects children rather than adults, and the useful role of suffering in making them purposeful, helpful individuals in society.

**Key words:** American literature, Geisha, Post Traumatic Growth (PTG), adversity, development, child exploitation

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## General Introduction

Childhood, as a concept and motif, did not exist in medieval European literature. Children's issues were absent in all forms of culture at that time; in painting, in literature, and in music, as the French historian Philippe Aries has explained in his work *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1960). According to him, children were seen as little adults. Linda Pullock, in her book *Forgotten Childhood: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (1983), has made the same observation and claimed that children were largely abused and neglected. The theme of childhood, in fact, emerged in the late eighteenth century in England with romantic artists who idealized and romanticized innocence and childhood. Two hundred and nine years ago, William Wordsworth wrote that the “The [c]hild is father of the Man” in his best remembered lyrical poem “My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold” (1807); a line which still reverberates in contemporary literature and modern psychoanalysis.

The literature of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England has provided a gloomy account about child exploitation and child labour. In his collections, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794), William Blake has explored major subjects such as poverty, child labour, and abuse, as well as the right of children to be treated as individuals with their own desires. One of the most symbolic and satiric poems of his collection is “The Chimney Sweeper”, in which Blake tells the sour truth of selling children to clean chimneys at the age of four and five. The speaker ingenuously tells us:

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry ‘Weep! Weep! Weep! Weep!’  
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep



This poem influenced Charles Lamb to write his essay “The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers” in his collection “Essays of Elia”(1823) ; in which he exposed the distress of child workers to the reader by describing a walk on the streets of London where chimney sweepers were a common sight at that time. William Wordsworth, in his works “We Are Seven” (1798) and “Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of early childhood” (1807), shows a child as a creation has a natural piety and wisdom. Charles Dickens explores a Victorian child labour in most of his novels. His memorable novel *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) recounts the story of an orphaned child who was born in a work house and sold into apprenticeship. It is a satirical work that describes the hypocrisies of that time, including child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children. Dickens’s other novel *David Copperfield* (1847) is based loosely on his own experience of starting work at Warren’s Blacking Factory at the age of twelve. We also find the same motif in Elizabeth Barret Browning’s poem “The Cry of the Children” (1843), which examines children’s forced manual labour during the Victorian age. Browning has portrayed children being under harsh conditions of working long hours that can cause them dysfunction of lungs or hearts.

American literature, too, has widely described child abuse in many works. Toni Morrison is perhaps the most known African American writer who has criticized the issue of child abuse in her works. Her novel *God Help the Child* (2015) investigates the abuse and neglect towards children. The main character, Bride, is subject to cruelty and inequity from the nearest persons: her parents. Alice Walker, alike, is the other African American writer who has referred to this issue in her works. *The Color Purple*, for instance, is her 1982 novel which tells the story of a victimized girl called Celie who is raped by her step father and sent to live an abusive life with her husband’s family. Similarly, Maya Angelou, in her coming-of-age autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), describes the difficult life the younger girl of Angelou, Maya, lives dealing with rape and racism. In this story, Maya is

transformed from victim of racism and sexuality into a self-possessed, dignified young woman.

Coming of age novels, which focus mainly on the formative years of the main character and his/her psychological, moral development from childhood to adulthood, generally outline issues related to childhood. Johann Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795), for instance, is a classic coming of age novel, which centres on Wilhelm who undergoes a journey of self-realization and escapes what he views as an empty life. Also, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is considered to be a female *Bildungsroman*<sup>1</sup>. The novel discusses the life crisis of the protagonist and her survival at the end. Similarly, Charles Dickens's novels *David Copperfield* (1849) and *Great Expectations* (1860) recount the memorable passage of the main characters from childhood to adulthood. In *David Copperfield*, the main character faces a life struggle and abuse to get finally established and achieves a high point of maturity. Likewise, in *Great Expectations*, the protagonist lives a complicated life and abusive situations that lead him to a great level of awareness and realization.

American literature is also a prolific realm of this form. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself* (1845) details the oppression the narrator goes through before his escape to freedom, describing the slave holder's culture and how he expands his horizon through literacy and education to become tough and self-assured to free himself. Mark Twain is another American author who has dealt with the struggle of slavery and the exploitation in his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). In this novel, Huck is the matured copy of the character Tom Sawyer in Twain's 1876 novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, that recounts the exploitation and the difficult adventures of a runaway slave. The text under study in the present paper, Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, tells about the main character, Chiyo Sakamoto, who lives a wretched life and experiences traumas that are caused by the different forms of exploitation she faces to have

finally a strong and resilient personality. She becomes aware and mature thanks to the misfortunes she has undergone. Through Chiyo Sakamoto's story, Arthur Golden condemns the state of thousand Japanese children in the period following World War II. The novel, then, is an account of Geisha culture and a representation of a female child who achieves moral growth after a series of calamities from childhood to adulthood.

The present study investigates Arthur Golden's portrayal of child exploitation, trauma, and personal growth in his novel *Memoirs of a Geisha*. The two notions; exploitation and trauma, are recurrent in research and have been widely discussed by writers, academicians, and scholars. However, the concept of identity formation has been unobserved in this field. Our analysis depends on Richard Tedeschi and Laurence Calhoun's positive psychological theory of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) and their detailed ideas in their book *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering* (1995) and their article *The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma* (1996), among others. This attempt stresses on how traumatic situations may affect positively one's identity, as it attempts to study all forms of exploitation, abuse, and violence experienced by the main character in the selected novel as being a child, and how she challenges the difficult circumstances she goes through to have finally a well-built personality. Thus, the present research attempts to answer these questions: How is child exploitation portrayed in the novel? To what extent does the main character achieve the moral development after the traumatic events and the adversity she has passed through?

The choice of the novel is not arbitrary, my first interest in the novel began when seeing the film adaptation. The distressed Japanese children, mainly the protagonist and her sister, during the post world war II era, drives me to inquire about girls who were *subjugated* in a country where culture and law permitted and legalized this practice that we know today as sex-trafficking. Moreover, with Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, I try to prove that exploitation

and traumas lived in childhood may have a positive consequence on one's adulthood. I take the main character as a case to examine the psychological development and identity formation that one can adopt through his life course after living distress and trouble.

### **Review of Existing Literature**

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is a mixture of American style and Japanese fact. It is a picture of Japanese culture seen under western eyes <sup>2</sup> by Arthur Golden, an American writer, to tell something about American cultural taste for the Orient. It signifies the Oriental as a sexualized object to be commoditized and exploited by the West. Hence, the western reader may find the story believable while the Asian may consider it as a distortion of the Japanese culture.

In her thesis entitled *Sayuri's Struggle in Confronting Geisha's Exploitation in Arthur Golden's Memoirs of a Geisha: a Feminist Criticism* (2014), Ninda Arum Rizky Ratnasari explained the kinds of exploitation experienced by Sayuri as the main female character, and the way she struggles to fight against it. Using a feminist approach, the researcher has tried to investigate how women are exploited by men. According to her, Sayuri is exploited both physically and psychologically to become a Geisha, as she is made as a money machine by the Okiya (11). She adds that *Memoirs of a Geisha* depicts the courage of Sayuri as a woman who is able to fight against the exploitation to gain her independence (43). Ratnasari's focus is on the shift of Sayuri's struggle from being a child to become a woman.

Additionally, in their article "Compare the Presentation of the Exploitation of Women in 'Memoirs of a Geisha' by Arthur Golden and 'Falling leaves' by Adeline Yen Mah" (2004), the GCSE<sup>4</sup> Sociology group have studied the approachable affinities of the presentation of exploitation of the young girls in the two novels. They have emphasized how childhood and naivety of the main characters of both novels were destroyed by the

exploitation and suffering they have endured. According to the researchers, *Memoirs of a Geisha* explores the sex trade and shows the wide acceptance of the violation of a woman's body that has been exploited at a young age (GCSE sociology group).

Era Kartika Sari, in her essay "Sayuri's Defence Mechanism in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*" (2013), depicts the defence mechanisms used by Sayuri and the reason behind using it as it is imaged in Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Sari argues that defence mechanisms are necessary for people living in any society as it is important for personality development (3), she adds that trauma can be the reason of using it (8). Her study is based on Freudian theory and analyses the tragic and dramatic psychological process of the main character.

In her thesis "Personality Development of the Main Character Nitta Sayuri in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*" (2004), Fransisca Andriana Titi Rosari has studied the social background in which Sayuri grows in and how it affects the person she would become, using psychoanalysis and sociocultural historical approach. According to Rosari, Sayuri's personality development is influenced by society, constitutional determinants, group membership determinants, role determinants, and situational determinants (53).

Last but not least, Stephen Maren and Andrew Homes, in their article "Stress and Fear Extinction" (2015), base on Golden's quotation " After all, when a stone is dropped into a pond, the water continues quivering even after the stone has sunk to the bottom"(Golden 309 ) to investigate stress as a defining feature of posttraumatic disorder. They mention that children and adolescents also succumb to PTSD after trauma at rates somewhat lower than that experienced by adults. This view over Golden's novel totally differs from ours for that in our study, we base on all the novel's quotations that dictate the usefulness of suffering for the personal development.

The analysis of existing literature makes obvious that the issues of child exploitation and the traumas it causes to influence finally the personal development of the subject in Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* have not been targeted yet. Thus, I chose to draw attention to the *possible* constructive effect of the traumas and prove that trauma does not have always a negative legacy but it can help in building one's personality. Facing many traumas create a crisis in life that might lead to living a kind of adversity and naturally stimulate the affected individual to understand his/her position and role in life then appreciate it.

This dissertation is divided into a general introduction, three chapters, and a general conclusion. The introduction offers an overview of the issues of child exploitation/abuse and personal growth in literature, with more emphasis on Golden's only novel. The first chapter entitled "Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks" proposes a review of existing literature related to the theories of trauma and personal growth. It also elucidates psychoanalytical criticism and proffers examples of contemporary models of theories and their assessment. Concepts and terms are also defined in this part. The aim of this chapter is to show how the theory of trauma, which is our conceptual basis, helps in understanding and analyzing the text. It also limits the scope of the relevant data. Chapter two, titled "Contexts", provides the cultural and historical contexts of the novel. It sheds light on the situation of Japanese children during the Post World War II as well as the basic elements of the novel. The second chapter presents the Japanese Geisha culture and the different views over its significance. The third chapter entitled "Trauma and Personal Growth" presents the findings after an exhaustive analysis of the selected novel. The aim of this chapter is to show how Golden's novel illustrates the connection between trauma and personal development. The first person account reads as a narrative/discourse about trauma and its effects on personality formation. The dissertation ends with a general conclusion that summarizes the main findings.

## **Chapter One: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

### **Introduction**

Probably the most known theory in psychoanalysis is Sigmund Freud's that has been successfully applied on literature. In most of his works, Freud has dealt with trauma and loss, by stressing on the negative impact that may affect. His 1917 significant work *Mourning and Melancholia*, *beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *Symptoms, Inhibitions and Anxiety* (1926), for instance, are based on his experience with the two concepts. Freud has addressed the nature of chronic depression or melancholia as a common, long term outcome of trauma. The present chapter explores the other outcome of trauma and loss led by the American Psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun. It aims at clearly introducing the theory by referring to the pioneers of this field and giving the conceptual foundation pointed out by the theorists.

### **1.1. An Introduction to Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) Theory**

Universally, trauma is thought to have only negative impact(s) on people who are subject to illness, loss of loved ones, economic hardship, natural disasters, war, and exploitative situations. These subjects may develop a post traumatic stress disorder and show the following symptoms: self-mutilation, substance addiction, depression, and sometimes suicidal need. However, traumatic events caused by complicated situation can sometimes help in personal development, as we will see later. In 1990s, the American psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Laurence Calhoun developed the assumption that became popular later known as Post Traumatic Growth (PTG), after a series of clinical studies that were published and became internationally recognized.

This idea of the usefulness of suffering in personal development is also highlighted by the existentialist philosophers who considered wisdom as recognition of the absurdity and meaninglessness of life; life struggles give meaning to the individuals' existence. Long before the emergence of existentialist ideas, philosophers and writers addressed the possibility of good coming from suffering. For example, Christianity has traditionally rested on the central role played by the positive consequences of the suffering of Jesus. In some Islamic traditions, suffering is seen as instrumental to the purposes of Allah.

## **1.2. Post Traumatic Growth: A Literature Review**

Many studies have been carried out by scholars and researchers on the topic of Post Traumatic Growth in the two last decades. The most important studies in trauma theory which addressed the possibility of growth from the encounter were conducted by Maslow (1954), Frankl (1959), Taylor (1983), Schaefer and Moos (1992), Janoff-Bulman (1992), O'Leary and Ickovics (1995), Affleck and Tennen (1996), Park and Folkman (1997), Phillip (1999), and Stephen Joseph (2006). In his book *Motivation and Personality* (1954), Abraham Maslow dealt with the subject of the nature of human fulfilment and the significance of person relationships, implementing a conceptualization of self-actualization. He found that for individuals to thrive and excel, a health fostering culture should be created. Five years later, Victor Frankl published his *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959), in which he explored human survival and motivation. The book tells the distressing yet inspiring story of the writer's detention at Auschwitz and other concentration camps for three years during the Second World War. Immersed in great suffering and loss, Frankl began to speculate why some of his fellow prisoners were able not only to survive the gruesome conditions, but also to grow in the process. Frankl concluded that the most basic human motivation was the will to meaning. He outlined the principles of logotherapy and offered ways to help everybody focus on the purpose in their lives.



Shelley Taylor, in her work *Adjustment to Threatening Events: a Theory of Cognitive Adaptation* (1983), made positive appraisals the main aspect of the theory of cognitive adaptation to threatening events. In her formulation of the cognitive adaptation to threat, Taylor regards PTG as a form of positive illusion with an adaptive function for psychological adjustment. The perception of PTG is one possible self-enhancing appraisal that helps to cope with threat. In 1992, in their chapter “life crisis and personal growth” edited in the book entitled *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application* published by Bruce N. Carpenter, Jeanne Schaefer and Rudolf Moos outlined the determinants of positive outcomes of crises. Environmental factors, according to the researchers, like personal relationships, support from family, friends and social environment as well as financial resources, and other aspects of the living situation and personal factors such as self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, self-confidence, an easy going disposition, motivation, health status, and prior crisis experience shape the life crisis experience and its aftermath.

Another seminal work in the area of trauma studies is Ronnie Janoff-Bulman’s *Shattered Assumption: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (1992), which describes how trauma can change our perception of the world. According to him, all people hold three main assumptions about the world and themselves; the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the world is worthy. The assumptions state that the world is benevolent and as members of this world, we are meaningful and worthy (22). Once the individual has experienced any trauma, it is necessary for him/her to create new assumptions or modify his old ones to recover from the traumatic experience. Therefore, the negative effects of the trauma are simply related to our views about the world, and if we adjust these views, we will recover from the trauma.

In 1995, in their work “Resilience and Thriving in Response to Challenge: an Opportunity for a Paradigm Shift in Women’s Health”, Virginia O’Leary and Jeannette

Ickovics concentrated on women's strengths and their ability to thrive in the face of adversity. They described three possible outcomes following challenge: return to the old level of functioning (recovery), to lower level (survival), or to a higher level of functioning (thriving). In a similar vein, Glenn Affleck and Howard Tennen summarized the prevalence and adaptive significance of finding benefits from major problems, as they show the possibility of positive outcomes arising from the encounter with negative events, in an article entitled "Construing Benefits from Adversity: Adaptational Significance and Dispositional Underpinning" (1996) .

Other influential study which need not be overlooked is Park Crystal and Susan Folkman's which made a distinction between situational and global meaning. Global meaning, according to them, encompasses a person's enduring beliefs and valued goals. Situational meaning, in contrast, is the meaning that is formed in the interaction between a person's global meaning and the circumstances of a particular person environment interaction. A traumatic event threatens global meaning, in this manner initiating the meaning making process. It is the challenge of the coping process to integrate situational meaning with global one.

The results and findings summarized in "A Three- Stage Model of Coping with Loss and Trauma" by Phillip Sigrum-Heide are also important in our review of trauma theory because it is in accordance with the above-mentioned studies and strengthen the argument that Post Traumatic Growth is an interpretive process. This model assumes that people being confronted with loss and trauma pass through three processes in their coping efforts. The first is "perspective reality" and it is construed by attentive and comparative process. This process is followed by "interpretive reality" which evolves as a result of ruminative thinking, finding explanations for the questions "what happened" and "why". The third one is Attentive process that includes the defence of positive illusions, self-enhancing illusions, and hope.

Stephen Joseph is another psychologist who assessed this domain of growth. He spent decades studying human responses to trauma and the significant growth that could result from such trauma. His major ideas of positive psychology and trauma are comprehensively explained in *Growth following Adversity: Theoretical Perspectives and Implication for Clinical Practice* (2006) and *What Doesn't Kill us: the New Psychology of Post Traumatic Growth* (2011). Thus, the theme of suffering, adversity, and the individual's search for meaning is nothing new.

### **1.3. Post Traumatic Growth According to Tedeschi and Calhoun**

Richard Tedeschi and Laurence Calhoun are doubtlessly the most significant researchers who expanded the idea of growth following adversity, by writing more than five books varying between practical tests and theoretical works, to explain the possibility of this theory. In their article "Post Traumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence" (2004), they define Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) as the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises (1). In another article entitled "The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma" (1996), they claimed that women tend to report more benefits than men do, and persons who have experienced traumatic events report more positive than those who have not experienced extraordinary events (468). For that, women tend to experience victimization on a more individual and interpersonal level as sexual assault, while men tend to experience more systemic and collective traumas like military and combat. Simply put, PTG is the positive outcome of many stressors such as life event stressors, discrimination stressors, sexual harassment stressors, and overall cumulative adversity.

In the same article of (2004), Tedeschi and Calhoun relate resilience, hardiness, optimism, and sense of coherence to the concept of Post Traumatic Growth. They explain that

“all these concepts describe certain personal characteristics that allow people to manage adversity well”; saying that “resilience is an ability to go on with life after hardship and adversity or to continue living a determined life after life struggle. It has often been studied in children who manage to remain psychologically healthy in difficult conditions”. They add that “hardiness consists of tendencies toward commitment, control, and challenge in response to life events, and persons high in hardiness are curious and active, believe they can influence events, and expect life to present challenges that can be met with personal development”. They summarize that “optimism involves expectations of positive outcomes to events, and sense of coherence describes persons who are in the best position to manage stress because they can comprehend or understand events, can manage or cope with them, and find meaning in it (4). In the same article, the psychologists discuss the relation between (PTGI) scores and optimism. They argue that “the way optimism may be related to Post Traumatic Growth may again be through the influence it has on cognitive processing. Specifically, optimists may be better able to focus attention and resources on the most important matters, and disengage from incontrollable or unsolvable problems. This ability may be especially important in the cognitive processing that occurs in the aftermath of trauma” (8).

#### **1.4. Post Traumatic Growth Inventory**

In “The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma” (1996), Tedeschi and Calhoun has scaled the possibility of the positive outcome of trauma, in a 21 items survey that assessed trauma survivors’ experiences of post traumatic growth in different areas of their lives. Items include statements like: “I established a new path for my life”, “I changed my priorities about what is important in life”, “I have a better understanding of spiritual matters”, and “I discovered that iam stronger than I thought I was”. These items are used to score the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory. According to Tedeschi and Calhoun, Post Traumatic Growth is manifested in a variety of factors and dimensions: “personal

strength”, “new possibilities”, “relating to others”, “appreciations of life”, and spiritual change”(455).

Meeta Malhotra and Suma Chebiyyam, in their work “Post Traumatic Growth: positive Changes following Adversity- An Overview” (2006), have defined these dimensions in reference to Tedeschi and Calhoun’s 1995 book entitled *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*. The researchers indicate that “personal strength can be defined as perceived changes in self include feelings of becoming stronger, more confident, a new awareness of a genuine self, an improved self, more open, more empathetic, more creative, more mature, more humanitarian, more special, and more humble”. They add that “new Possibilities is the change of the individual’s priorities in life, and one experiences a great appreciation. Some traumas that put a person’s life in danger can set in motion a sense that one has been spared, and that this gift of a second chance should be treated with care”. They complete saying that “new possibilities often involve a greater appreciation for life in general and for the smaller things in life. People who notice growth after trauma may see a difference in their priorities for example: how and with whom they decided to spend their day, their appearance, nature, monetary foods, and their health. They have a new appreciation of life. They start enjoying simple things in life. Their goals in life change. They learn new skills in life” (111).

Relating to others, According to the researchers, includes perceived improvement in relationships with family and friends, neighbours, other trauma survivors and even strangers. The researchers explain that “The individual tries to understand the traumatic situation and to deal with stress. Therefore, they might look for help and support from their family and friends. The individual may perceive a higher emotional connection with others, as well as a feeling of closeness in interpersonal relationships. Eventually, the person starts to accept the

help given by others more readily and makes better use of already present social networks or start making new ones”(111).

Appreciation of life, as Malhotra and Chebiyyam define, “is that after the traumatic experiences, one’s existential awareness increases and he or she may realise the meaning and purpose in life and tries to make meaning from the trauma. The individual may feel vulnerable and suddenly realise how little time he has. An array of cognitive changes regarding fundamental questions about life such as why it is important?, what one can expect of it?, what contribution one can make?, and whether an individual life is more important and meaningful, are often affected by trauma”. Spiritual change, as they add, “is a result of individual confrontation with the stressful and traumatic events, so that the individual experiences some kinds of religious beliefs and perception of growth regarding religious or spiritual matters. The belief in a religion may increase after trauma and also contribute as a coping mechanism in the cognitive process of finding meaning. The survivor discovers new avenues for his life”. The researchers conclude that “most of the people reported a change in their spiritual practices, increase in praying, gratitude to god, strengthening of faith maintained that one does not need to have all five domains to have experienced growth; even one or two domains could indicate the post traumatic growth and the growth may be in existence with distress (111).

Post Traumatic Growth theory was adopted by many researchers. Nazira Mawji, in her work “Post traumatic Growth and Terrorism” (2016), studied the traumas raised by terrorist attacks, basing on Tedeschi and Calhoun’s theory. Her study examined Post Traumatic Growth related to terrorism, stressing on the experiences of recovery for adult of Ismaili survivors of the 2013 Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Nairobi. She aims at finding the positive changes experienced by the survivors after the attacks and how did they make meaning to these changes. Interestingly, “Posttraumatic Growth and Adjustment among

Individuals with Cancer or HIV/AIDS: A Meta-Analysis” (2010) is another attempt investigated by Alexandra Sawyer, Susan Ayers, and Andy P. Field to examine the relationship between PTG following a life threatening illness (cancer and HIV/AIDS) and various indicators of adjustment. The findings of this study suggest that shortly after the event, PTG may be used as a coping strategy to manage and reduce emotional distress associated with the illness threat.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained positive psychological theory of post traumatic growth (PTG) led by Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun. It has provided the reader with a clear presentation that has detailed in giving the instructions found by the theorists in relation to the history of this theory, referring to Sigmund Freud’s insights into the issues of loss and trauma highlighted in his works *Mourning and Melancholia*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *Symptoms, Inhibitions and Anxiety* (1926). The present chapter has shown the Post Traumatic Inventory scores and the five factors of the personal development as it is constructed by the theorists. It has aimed at roofing the method of the study to make the attempt easily understood.

# Chapter Two: Contexts

## Introduction

Japan is a leading country in Asia that has an ancient history and culture. Its most significant part of modern history can be traced back to the Great Economic Depression of 1929 to the Allied Occupation in 1952. Graduated in Japanese Art and history, Arthur Golden meticulously referred to this important period in his novel *Memoirs of a Geisha*, through which he reported chief historical events while pondering on the wretched conditions of Japanese people living and struggling with culture from a young geisha's perspective. The present chapter provides an explanation of the historical dimension of the novel, making a significant reference to the Japanese culture it communicates. The chapter also depicts the literary background of the text, including text's summary and author's biography. The aim is to give a contextualized framework of the text under study.

## 2.1. Historical Background

### 2.1.1. Japan between 1929 and 1952

Japanese history was characterized by two major periods: the Taisho and the Showa. The Taisho Era was reigned by the weak Emperor Taisho from 1912 to 1926. It witnessed the First World War in which Japan joined the Allied powers against Germany. The Showa period, in contrast, was reigned by the Emperor Hirohito who reigned for 62 years, longer than any Japanese Emperor from 1926 to 1989. This era was the complicated time in Japanese history for what it was marked by several crisis and wars, starting with the Great Depression 1929-32, to World War II 1941-45, to end with US Occupation in 1945-52. Notably, the causes of Japanese economic crisis date back to the great Kanto earthquake of 1923 which caused many tsunamis and created catastrophic firestorms that affected in big damage in Japan at that time,



together with the repercussion of World war I in reducing production, and the tariffs imposed by the west. Consequently, Japan fell into an economic depression two years before the global depression began in 1930. This economic crisis is considered to be the major leading event to Second World War, equally with the Second Sino-Japanese war which is a military conflict between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan in 1937 that was mostly caused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria China in 1931.

In 1940, Japan entered the military alliance, Axis, with Italy and Germany, and then decided to attack the United States and British forces in Asia to seize the resources of Southeast Asia. This attack was launched on the United States pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor in 1941. In response, the United States declared war on Japan, and in 1945, its air force dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, there was another attack on Nagasaki. This pacific theatre ended with Japan's surrender in 1945 and United States Occupation of Japan under the General Douglas MacArthur (Holocaust Memorial Museum).

### **2.1.2. Japanese Economic Depression (1929-1932)**

The Great Depression was a large-scale event which strokes the world in the early 1930s. The economic collapse started in the United States as a consequence of the profligacy of the roaring twenties. Like other countries, Japan was economically, politically, and socially influenced by this global economic catastrophe. Indeed, the economic impact appeared in the fall of the rice price in October 1930 and the devaluation of the Yen by 60 percent in 1932, after the government fell and left the gold standard in December 1931. At the same time, the Japanese army came with an aggressive policy of expansion and invaded Manchuria in September 1931 without the approval of Japanese government. These events were paralleled by deep social tensions in Japan to produce cotton textiles at a profit, and Japanese workers had to be exploited. The textile mills worked with the labour force composed mainly of young

girls who were paid minimal wages. The employees by and large lived in barracks on the premises of the mill. Above all, some Japanese poor peasants were obliged to sell their daughters in the cities (Rothermund 116-17).

However, Japan did not witness this international financial crisis till the end on account of the master finance Takahashi Korekiya who saved the situation by adopting the economic policy of the Germany Schacht (Rothermund 116).

### **2.1.3. American Occupation of Japan (1945- 1952)**

Eventually, the Second World War was ended with Japan's signing of concession in August 1945, and, thus, another age in Japanese history started, which was known as the Post War Era or Allied Occupation. The American Occupation of Japan led by the supreme commander Douglas MacArthur before he was replaced with Matthew Ridgway in April 1951. In essence, this Occupation aimed at demilitarizing and democratizing Japan (Molasky 5). Additionally, MacArthur's government section worked on creating a new Japanese constitution that followed several guidelines, which were summarized in: giving the right to vote for women, encouraging labour union, regulating child labour, liberalizing education, eliminating government fear tactics, and promoting a wide distribution of income as well as ownership (Koch 12). Thus, the US occupation has had a profound effect on numerous aspects in Japan; for instance, the status and the empowerment of women have greatly improved. Still, the US Occupation had also a lasting effect on the modern education system of Japan as well as art. Besides, the reforms imposed by the United States on Japan indirectly propelled its economic growth (Koch 14-15). Despite the fact that this positive impact had been set, US Occupation traced a path over prostitution and eroticism so that the GLs<sup>3</sup> military force would exploit poor Japanese women. Therefore, the Japanese government officials created an authorized system known as Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) to protect the pure women

of Japan's middle and upper classes (Molasky 109). By 1952, the Occupation of Japan was brought to an end in light of San Francisco Peace Treaty (Molasky 6).

#### **2.1.4. Children and Exploitation**

In Japan the years from 1929 to 1952 are generally regarded as sinister and bleak. Prior to the time of Great Depression, the conditions of the peasants remained pathetic in contrast to the growing bourgeois capitalists. Peasants, accordingly, found themselves waging a bitter struggle for survival (Hane 27-31). As we shall see, the only other avenue available to the desperately impoverished peasants was to send their children, especially their daughters, to work in the silk and cotton factories that were springing up, or to brothels in Japan and overseas (Hane 27). These innocent girls were sent by conditions either to brothels or Geisha houses. To be sent to a Geisha house, the girl should be beautiful and educated. Under those circumstances, the Japanese children were not only sent to work at an early age, but also they lived a wretched life. Their daily meals consisted of rice gruel and pickles for breakfast; rice gruel, dregs of soybean cakes, and pickles for lunch; and rice mixed with barely, vegetables, and pickles for supper, and their clothes were ragtag and patched up old clothes handed down from their older siblings (Hane 41). During the American occupation, the young girls were seen as sexual properties belonging to American military forces and were known as "Pan-Pan girls", "Comfort girls", or "Flowers of the willow world", directed by the organized prostitution association RAA (Molasky 109). This contemptible condition lived by the Japanese children in the pre- and post war Japan inspired many authors to display it in their works like Tamura Taijiro's *Gate of flesh* (1946), Mizuno Hiroshi's *The Chastity of Japan* (1953), Liza Dalby's *Geisha* (1989), and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997), among others.

Many Japanese families were underprivileged and engaged in a bitter struggle for survival; thus, they relied on farming to gain food and earn income. Because farming alone barely provided sufficient profits, most of the families turned to other activities for additional income like raising silkworms for the burgeoning silk industry and producing straw sandals. It must be mentioned here that many parents sent off their youngsters to the cities to work in shops, restaurants, and factories or to serve as maids in the homes of the wealthy, and even selling their young girls to brothels which were regulated (Hane 31).

As the only possibility to escape paucity, Japanese peasants sold their girls to the brothels of big cities (Rothermund 117). In fact, children of that age sang special songs, related to this issue:

I am glad we won  
A flower for a dollar  
I am mad we lost  
A flower for a dollar (Ramseyer 89)

In this song, “win” means buy, and “flower” means girl. It indicates that these children were happy to have a sister for a dollar, as they were sad to lose a sister for a dollar (Ramseyer 89). This song, among others, describes the upsetting state of the young girls. Many other families practised infanticide; burying some of their children to make others survive (Hane 81-82).

During the US occupation, Japanese government created three overlapping hierarchical tiers in sex industry: licensed geishas, licensed prostitutes, and unlicensed prostitutes (Ramseyer 96) that were all about entertaining and selling sex to American military forces. All these ranks used teens and young girls as articles of trade. These young women were tricked by usuries brothel owners into the life of vice (Ramseyer 93), using conventions. In fact, the brothel owners exerted violence, lie, and falsity on these Pan Pan

girls. Effectively, as one historian puts it: “the licensed prostitute ended her life as a sexual slave” (Ramseyer 100). Nevertheless, the higher wages earned in the brothels rather than elsewhere pushed the Japanese families to send their daughters to gain extra amount of money. As shown above, in this exploitative mood, the Japanese female children had been raised during the post war time.

### **2.1.5. A Reference to a Geisha Culture**

Geisha, according to William Johnston, had a history that reached back to the earliest Kabuki performers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At that time, geisha included both men and women who not only performed on stage, but also freely sold sexual favours. He specifies that the term (gei) means arts or skills and (sha) refers to person. From medieval times, gei suggested a broad range of skills, including many crafts and fine arts. It was not until the late eighteenth century that “Geisha” came to signify the female performers from whom today’s geisha directly evolved. By then, these women were known primarily for their performing skills, especially in singing and dancing, rather than sexual skills. They were allowed into the government controlled brothel district under agreements that kept them from competing for customers with the house professionals (38). The main function of the geisha is to provide an atmosphere of chic and gaiety for her wealthy clientele (Schliesinger 9). A successful geisha can entertain her male customers with music, dance, and conversation. (Schliesinger 2).

The struggle adopted by a woman to be a geisha, according to Julia Layton, starts by applying and be accepted into an Okiya; a geisha house owned by the woman who will pay for her training. The mother of this house called Okami or Okasan in Japan. Layton adds that training to be a geisha takes long time in which she spends studying the arts of music, dance, tea ceremony, language, and hostessing in the Okiya. A geisha’s attitude towards the house,

as Layton says further, is to pay a percentage of her earnings to maintain it and support the people living there who are not working geisha, including apprentice geisha, retired geisha, and house maids.

Layton, in the same article, mentions that Geisha, during the course of her studies, learns how to play the shamisen that is a three-stringed instrument that is strummed with a large pick. Specifically, she plays it at parties and in performances, usually accompanying another geisha who is singing, as she studies singing traditional Japanese dance, and tea ceremony to be a proficient entertainer, as she must study flower arrangement and calligraphy to be artist in all fields. She learns, also, the proper way to speak in the accent of the district where she works, to walk in a floor-length kimono without tripping over her hem, and to pour sake so that her kimono sleeve doesn't dip into the cup. In a group of men and geisha, Layton details, geisha learns who to greet first and how low to bow when greeting each person. She learns how to flatter a shy man, an arrogant man, and a disinterested man with equal success. These less formal aspects of her training take place while she is a maiko, an apprentice geisha. The apprentice period begins when a young woman finds an Onesan who is the older sister geisha who will serve as her mentor. The ceremony that binds them together is the same ceremony that marks the marriage of a geisha and her danna: each takes three sips from three cups of sake. In this transition to maiko status, the young woman takes a new name that will be her geisha name. This name is typically derived from the name of the Onesan.

Layton appends that as a part of her work, Oneson brings her maiko to parties where she will not entertain, but she will remain quiet and observe, learning how geisha interacts with men and how they use their wit, attention and attractiveness to keep everyone happy. This way, the older sister introduces the maiko into geisha society, making sure everyone knows who she is, and like this the maiko makes her debut as a geisha, having relationship with the customers and teahouses that will be her livelihood.

A good part of a geisha's work, according to Layton, traditionally involves parties attended by businessmen who are trying to strike a deal together. A man throws a geisha party to show his potential associates a good time and to impress them with how wealthy, cultured and well-connected he is, because geisha parties are exclusive and expensive. Precisely, this party can cost \$200 to \$300 per guest for every two hours the geisha are present. Japan's most popular geisha district or flower towns are located in Kyoto and Tokyo; the teahouses, inns, and restaurants where geisha entertain are concentrated in these areas. Expressly, geisha are exclusive hostesses for that you don't just call up a geisha and hire her. When someone wants geisha to host his party, he can go through one of two avenues, as Layton explains, he can call the Okasan of a geisha house, or he can call a teahouse where geisha entertains. The Okasan or teahouse mistress then calls the central office for geisha affaires, which handles all geisha bookings and charges the client for geisha services. Every geisha must register with the central office in order to work in her district.

Layton concludes saying that "geisha never eats with her guests when she is working. She must be on her toes at all times, making every guest feel welcome and happy, having a perfect story to tell when the conversation starts to lag and keeping an eye on every sake up to make sure it's never empty. If two men appear to be having a conflict, she will smooth it out, preferably without anyone knowing she is doing so. A party is not a relaxing experience for her, it is her work place". Geisha's kimono can cost thousands of dollars each, Layton goes on, and "a maiko wears a kimono that has extra long sleeves, colourful, intricately adorned with embroidery or hand-painted designs. Her collar is red, and her Obi is long and wide. She wears tall wooden clogs called Okobo to keep her kimono from dragging on the ground. Learning to walk in this outfit without falling is part of her training". Unlike, a geisha kimono is simpler in appearance and easier to deal with. It has shorter sleeves and does not require high clogs to keep it off the ground. Layton maintains that "geisha wears Zori, which are like

flip-flops, and a shorter Obi tied in a simple knot. After working for several years, a geisha may choose to wear lighter; a western style makeup instead of the traditional, she wears variations on the shimada hairstyle typically with a series of wigs instead of styling her real hair". The difference between gaiko and geisha is determined by Mizuage; a maiko's first sexual experience. Geisha is always a single woman, if she decides to get married, she retires from the profession. In level of appearance, geisha makes a white makeup made of a white powder, using oil and a layer of wax to make the skin perfectly smooth, geiko applies red lipstick only to her lower lip as a sign that she is an apprentice, whereas geisha colours both her lips.

In describing this mysterious world, many writers discuss this culture in different genres of literature; fiction, autobiographies, and historical books. Among them, we mention Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* (2003), John Gallagher's *Geisha: A Unique World of Tradition, Elegance and Art* (2003), Kyoko Aihara's *Geisha: A Living Tradition*(1999), Iwasaki Mineko's *Geisha, A Life* (2002), Sheridan Prasso's *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls, and Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient* (2005), Liza Dalby's *Geisha* (1983), and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997). Also, it is delineated by many great films like *Sisters of the Gion* (1936) and *A Geisha* (1952) by Kenji Mizoguchi, "In the Realm of the Senses" (1976) by Nagisa Oshima, "The Barbarian and Geisha" (1957) by John Wayne, among others. Among these forms and ideologies, the view differs from East and West, each with his interpretation to geisha realm.

The Orient's view of geisha culture is typically clear for it is their traditional culture and a mark of their identity. So, whenever they describe it, they deeply give the exact property of this wide range. By all the Asian opinions about this world, Mineko Iwasaki is considered to be the prominent voice who profoundly portrays geisha fact in her autobiography *Geisha, a Life* in (2002), reacting against western view represented by Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a*



*Geisha*. In her parody, Iwasaki refers to geisha girl as a flower, beautiful, and willow tree in flexibility and strength, who professionally works as a female artist in aesthetic pleasure (1). As the best geisha of her generation, she, in her written story, confirms that geisha profession is totally far from prostitution, and it has to do with art and willow world. Still, Liza Dalby, in her book *Geisha* (1983) contributes by saying that “Japanese regard geisha as “more Japanese” than almost any other definable group” (xiii), what is made geisha to be one of the chief images associates with Japan and its culture.

After several years of isolation, Japanese borders were forcedly opened by Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy. In effect, the image of the Japanese culture became widely well-known and consumed, comparing to other Asian countries, so that the west gets to view and judge it and compare it to itself (Jarosova 29). Eliska Jarosova, in her paper “the Unique and the Oriental: Japan in Translation” (2016) claims that “the West views itself as civilized, rational, hygienic, and virtuous, meanwhile the Oriental other falls into the categories of irrational, dirty, and promiscuous. The otherness of the Orient contributes to its image as mysterious, exotic, and exciting (29). The western view of geisha culture is interpreted by Arthur Golden’s bestseller, through which he spoils the image of this unique world, confirming that the geisha offer sexual services. Yet, he symbolizes the Americanization through the main character of his story (the chairman), as being kind, charming, and wealthy. This is seriously regarded as Orientalist discourse by the East. The movie adaptation of Golden’s novel went even further; not only did it distort the concept of the nature of the profession, it also distorted the very image of physical appearance of the geisha themselves; the actresses often wore their hair down, their kimono were cut in nonexistent asymmetrical shapes and on top of that, the actresses were not of Japanese origin (Jarosova 38). Also, Liza Dalby, the American only ever become a geisha, is another western who equated geisha with prostitution in her 1983 book *Geisha*. She differentiates geisha from

wives, concerning freedom, as she labelled them feminists (xiv). Overall, the idea of geisha is frequently misunderstood by the west, regarding how it is conveyed by Hollywood movies and fiction, and the perpetuation of Oriental femininity over time.

## **2.2. Literary Background**

### **2.2.1. Arthur Golden: Life and Work**

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is full of surprises, especially to western readers unfamiliar with the mystifying Japanese Geisha. Perhaps the biggest surprise, however, is the novel's author, who is American, Arthur Golden. Golden was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in December 1956 as a member of Ochs- Sulzberger family (owners of the New York Times). He was educated at Harvard College, where he received a degree in art history, specializing in Japanese art. In 1980, he earned his M.A in Japanese history from Columbia University, where he also earned Mandarin Chinese. Following a summer at Beijing University, he worked in Tokyo where he met Mineko Iwasaki; a retired Geisha who agreed to numerous interviews with Golden in preparation for his novel. After returning to the United States, he earned another M.A in English from Boston University.

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is Golden's only novel. In writing it, he depended on Iwasaki Mineko's true story in Geisha profession, blending fact and fiction. As a condition, Iwasaki agreed with Golden to not reveal her identity. Golden, though, credited her by name in the book's acknowledgments, for which she sued him in the court, where he defended himself by arguing that his book was fiction and not a retelling of Iwasaki's factual life story (Tegler). Perhaps this is the direct reason that prevented Golden for writing another work. Although he is still alive, no announcement about any other work written by him was made so far. He actually lives in Brookline, Massachusetts, with his wife and two children.

### 2.2.2. Some Facts about the Novel

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is a romance. It is the bestseller that was published using Vintage Contemporaries in 1997. The novel is a result of six years of work and research; Golden threw out the first two drafts, changing the point of view before finally setting on the first person. In 2001, it was translated into 32 languages. The text is made of thirty five chapters, starting with Jacob Haarhuis's notes (the reporter of the memoirs). Golden's debut sold over 4 million copies and lingered on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 58 weeks. As a primary source, Arthur Golden consulted Mineko Iwasaki, a retired Geisha, to provide him with exhaustive information about Geisha culture and life.

After its publication in 1997, *Memoirs of a Geisha* received wide-ranging views from Eastern and Western audiences. For westerners, Golden's novel was a roaring success and a genuine novel. They easily accepted it as a semi fictional account in a non-fictional setting. Particularly, Michiko Kakutani (1997) wrote in *New York Times* that "*Memoirs of Geisha* is part historical novel, part fairy tale, and part Dickensian romance, as it immerses the reader in an exotic world". Kakutani added that "Golden gave not only an abundantly sympathetic portrait of a woman, but also a delicately observed image of an inconsistent and largely gone world". Japanese readers, in contrast, saw Golden's novel as a vulgar and erroneous story. According to Jennifer Hanawald, the Japanese audiences see that the writer put light on sordid rather than the cultural side of the matter, as its topic was not new for them. Moreover, there was suspicion because the book was written by a foreigner on a world so closed off to even the average Japanese person. He adds that "Japanese readers are not interested in having their culture explained to them from westerners". The most significant disapproval and condemnation in Japan came from the former Geisha, Mineko Iwasaki, who wrote a parody to clarify the reality of geisha profession.

*Memoirs of a Geisha* opens a window into the furtive world of the Geisha. It describes the way a Geisha applies her makeup, the way she walks, the way she makes her hair, and the way she sleeps. Furthermore, Golden crosses three great boundaries: gender, nationality, and history. In response to Golden's novel, Iwasaki Mineko wrote her autobiography titled *Geisha, a Life* in 2002 to spell out the reality of Geisha culture. Iwasaki's autobiography is a satire which targets Westerners. *Geisha, a Life* is the printed version published in America, whereas, in Britain, it was published under a different title: *Geisha of Gion* (Suntornatirnan 13). It differs from Golden's novel in many detailed points, and the most important one is time; Golden links his Geisha story to the era before and after World War II, but Iwasaki elaborates her life narratives in post war around 1960-1970 era. In this light, Iwasaki and Golden's works are entirely contradicted novels which are considered as the well-known sources that depict the Geisha realm in worldwide literature. Basing on its date of publication (1997), *Memoirs of a Geisha* is a contemporary novel that commonly follows the standards of post-modern literature. First, the novel is written in a way that cultivates the impression of taking a trip over history; Golden refers to Japanese history and links it to the fictional story he recounts, which is known as historiographic metafiction. Second, Golden's depiction of Sayuri's story is very dreamy, concerned with the idealist love and reverie. Sayuri's lover is an ideal man who represents the American identity. Third, Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* takes the form of a real memoir, however, one must pay attention to the writer's "Acknowledgement" in which he states that fancy and fact are brought together. Fourth, this memoir contains analepses or flashbacks, which take us back to Sayuri's childhood. Allusions are also common; for instance, in page 173, the author refers to Thomas Mann, Charlie Chaplin, San Yat Sen, and Ernest Hemingway.

In 2005, the film version was released in the United States under the same title, written by Robin Swicord, directed by Rob Marshall, and produced by Steven Spielberg. The movie

provoked a chorus of disapproval in Japan because most of the leading Japanese characters were casted by Chinese actresses like Zhang Ziyi, Gong Li, and Michelle Yeoh. One can also add that the movie director took many liberties by modifying the beginning and the ending of the original text. Consequently, the adaptation was relentlessly criticised. It received many awards for its design, cast, and voice.

Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* tells about a female child of an aged fisherman and an ailing woman who live in the small fishing village of Chiyo Sakamoto in Yoroido. When Chiyo was nine, her father sold her and her sister (14 years) to a local businessman named Mr. Takana, for easing his financial burden; then, Mr. Tanaka himself sold the girls into slavery; the pretty Chiyo is sent to a Geisha house in Kyoto known as Okiya, and her sister to a house of prostitution. From Yoroido to Okiya, little Chiyo finds herself a maid in Okiya house working day and night without mercy. To express that she doesn't like the place, she continues to rebel and escape until she accepts her fate when she learns the death of her parents and the escape of her sister without her. Through her life in the house, Chiyo knows a friend called Pimpkins who lives the same situation like she does. Chiyo's strong partnership with Pumpkins doesn't prevent her for having an enemy; Hatsumomo, an apprentice Geisha in the house, feels jealous and hatred over Chiyo. She abuses her in many ways to show envy and detestation towards her beauty and intelligence. One day, through her walk in the street, feeling lonely, hopeless, and helpless, she meets a handsome western businessman called Chairman, whose kindness and charm have captured her heart. Although he is older than her with more than a decade, little Chiyo falls in love with him at the first glance. After years in the Okiya, Chiyo becomes named Sayuri as the beginning profile to start as an apprentice Geisha. To do so, she is adopted by Mameha; a former Geisha in Kyoto, to be raised to become the Japanese most celebrated Geisha, endures the War and the Occupation. In the course of training to become a Geisha, Chiyo must learn ways to sing, dance, and serve tea as

well as the art of conversation. In the daytime, there are gruelling classes in the evenings, parties, and banquets, where Chiyo is introduced to potential patrons; identifiably, Mr. Nobu and Dr. Crab who negotiate her virginity in the auction's mizuage party. At the end, Chiyo wins the affection of the man she loves, and leaves Japan to live a wealthy life in New York. There she recounts her memoirs to the Japanese history professor, Jacob Haarhuis.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the main points of Japanese historical events during the pre and post World War II, basing on the important issues the era aware of, as it has roofed Golden's biography and a brief summary of his novel, referring to the narrative techniques that shape the text. It has also looked into the Geisha realm and the different views from which the culture is regarded.

## Chapter Three: Analysis of Chiyo's Trauma and Personal Growth

### Introduction

Surprisingly, Golden's only novel examines the issue of child abuse and the fate of the traumatized individual. In his narrative, he provides us with detailed description of the tragic life circumstances of the main character, portraying all kinds of exploitation she lives, including servitude, neglect, emotional and physical harm as well as sexual assault. This chapter analyses the positive outcome of trauma caused by the trigger events, to put the reader in front of another perspective from which we can visualize the other effect of trauma. Clearly, this part studies the tragic way the novel figures the main character's life and the positive change in her performance in her society, by relying essentially on Richard Tedeschi and Laurence Calhoun's proved theory of the positive transformation of trauma.

By and by, *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997) and Post Traumatic Growth theory (PTG) (1995) were edited in the same period. The shared interest in Japanese people between the two establishes the idea that Golden might have read Tedeschi and Calhoun's theory. Golden made no clear statement about reading on the matter, but one can feel the resemblance of Tedeschi's and Golden's ideas, which are subtly in play in the narrative. The writer's interest is foregrounded in his novel which revolves around a Japanese family and its destiny guided by poverty and bereavement. Let us remind at this stage that Tedeschi and Calhoun, to test their theory, worked on a sample on Japanese students, then compared it to the one tested on Americans. The claim made by Tedeschi and Calhoun "if we don't know suffering, we remain shallow" (7), depicted in their significant book *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering* (1995), is very palpable in Golden's novel; adversity, we are

told, “is a strong wind that tears away from us all but the things that cannot be torn, so, that afterward we see ourselves as we really are, and not merely as we like to be”(405).

Chiyo Sakamoto is the main character in Arthur Golden’s novel. Her life is similar to Jane’s in *Jane Eyre*, Wilhelm’s in *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, or Pip’s in *Great Expectations*. She lives an orphaned life far from her tippy village, in a house of a Geisha known as Okiya where she is abused by everybody except her friend Pumpkins who shows empathy toward her since she lives the same situation Chiyo does. The exploitative situations and the traumatizing events she confronts in the course of being a Geisha increase the sense of adversity in her life. The evil Chiyo receives from the former Geisha of the house, Hatsumomo, worsens her days and provides her with pain and grief. Golden pictures Chiyo Sakamoto, as a sexual object who is auctioned to the highest bidder to lay on the line her virginity, as she is bereaved of all the beloved persons in her life, mainly her lover, the Chairman, whom she wishes to stay with, and her sister Satsu who runs away from Gion District, where they are sold to without her, regardless of her parents who die without being there. In response to these tense events she undergoes, Chiyo adopts a flexible personality and becomes a positive, useful individual in her society.

### **3.1. Forms of Child Exploitation in *Memoirs of a Geisha***

Child exploitation is a global issue that has for a long time been recorded in literature, art, and science, and discussed by many scholars and writers with no social, ethnic, and racial bounds. This concept is the umbrella of the concept of child abuse for which it embodies all the forms of abuse and other kinds of exploitation like economic profits. Boswell Gwyneth’s *Trauma Experiences in the Backgrounds of Violent Young Offenders* (1996), Jonathan Bradshaw’s article “Poverty: the Outcome for Children” (2001), and Arthur Kemoli and Mildred Mavindu’s article “Child Abuse: A Classic Case Report with Literature Review” (2014),



among others, are examples of studies that profoundly treated the issue of child abuse and its impact on the health of children. Tedeschi and Calhoun, in contrast, although they did not handle this issue in their works, they indirectly referred to it by dealing with the positive shift from negative events to positive transformation. Yet, in an influential book entitled *Trauma and Transformation: Measuring the Aftermath of Suffering* (1995), they hypothesised that “[t]raumatic events can be made to have meaning and be an opportunity for growth” (11).

In their article “Child Abuse: A Classic Case Report with Literature review”, Arthur Kemoli and Mildred Mavindu define child abuse as a harm or threat of harm that is made to a child by someone acting in the role of caretaker. They add that it can be in the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and child neglect (256). In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the main character; Chiyo Sakamoto, during her childhood, faces all kinds of exploitation that contribute in the integration of misery in most stages of her life. This abuse takes different forms. What follows is a display of the detailed points of the abusive situations she passes through.

### **3.1.1. Physical Abuse**

According to Mildred and Kemoli, physical neglect can be seen when the child suffers bodily harm as a result of a premeditated effort to harm the child, or brutal discipline or physical punishment unsuitable to the child’s age (256). Concerning the novel, physical abuse is largely experienced by Chiyo, starting from the course when removing her and her sister from her village to the Okiya house; both are subject to brutality and meanness from Mrs. Fidget, who buys them to examine their benefits for the possibility of being Geishas. In doing so, Mrs. Fidget takes them by the shoulders and seats them on the platform completely unclothed and then puts her hands on their knees and spreads them apart to check their virginity through which Mrs Fidget loudly slaps each one of them the same, that triggers in making them crying

and sniffing (28-29). What's more, Chiyo is beaten with a pole by Auntie and Granny who lead the Okiya house, as to punish her for something she doesn't steal, sometimes these beats hurt a way that break Chiyo's hips (87-89). From the same perspective, Hatsumomo herself beats Chiyo and slaps her across her face just to show her jealousy towards her beauty and intelligence (209). Again, as to express her rebellion in the house, Chiyo tries to flee from it to meet her sister in the other street of the district to run away together, but unfortunately Auntie detects her while trying to get outside and starts beating and slapping her sadistically. Auntie uses all forms of violence to express her fury towards Chiyo's behaviour, as a result to the fear and beating she receives, Chiyo falls from the courtyard and her arm gets broken (113).

Furthermore, in a course of being a geisha, little Chiyo gets tortured by some determination of geisha profession, including the pain of styling her hair, the pain of sleeping on a special pillow to keep the hairstyle, the pain of the heavy kimono she wears, the pain of the gross makeup on her face, and the torment of cutting her skin. In styling her hair, the hairdresser puts Chiyo over a large sink in a complicated situation, and then pours a bucket of warm water over her hair and begins to scrub it with soap like a workman does in a field using a hoe, after that, he tears a wooden comb through her hair until the muscles of her neck become sore from pulling against him as we read: "The hairdresser may have had the best motives, but after while my scalp felt so raw, I was almost in tears from the pain" (189-190) . To keep her hairstyle shape, Chiyo should sleep on a special pillow called Takamakura which is not much better than putting your neck on a stone (191). The pain is further intensified with the weight of the kimono she wears as she says in one of the most unforgettable scenes: "I had the strange sensation of having lost all feeling in my face; every time I touched my cheek, I could feel vague sense of pressure from my finger" (193). Harsher, before a geisha starts her work as an apprentice, she has to put a cut in her skin. Chiyo Sakamoto, who becomes later

named Nitta Sayuri, also, is brought by Mameha; the former geisha who adopts her apprenticeship, to Dr. Crab to put a cut as to start her geisha profile: as a slave having no choice, Chiyo cannot deceive the act of her experience of the cut. As much as she is pained, her big scare is much shown when she sees the blood on her thigh without any reaction from Mameha, in describing how much she gets hurt in this scene she says: “So you can probably imagine how I felt when I twisted around and saw a rivulet of blood snaking down my leg onto a towel Mameha held against the inside of my thigh” (250).

In addition, the violence that Chiyo is subject to worsens later. The scenes are so graphic and unspeakable; Dr. Crab, the doctor, cuts her skin as he is attracted by its colour and negotiates her virginity. The Baron and Dr. Crab practise sexual violence to express their attraction to Chiyo’s beauty and uniqueness; the Baron’s attraction over Chiyo is clearly displayed when he continually demands to achieve Chiyo’s sexual marks, insisting to satisfy his *appétit*. Here, Chiyo receives a kind of sexual violence for what she is harassed by the Baron despite her reaction that dictates her upset. To portray this distress Chiyo says: “I kept trying to stop him with my hands, but he pushed them away and finally succeed in removing my *objime*...I tried to stop him several times, but the Baron pushed my hands away as he’d done earlier” (304-5). Similarly, Dr. Crab, also, has assessed the same behaviour towards the pretty Chiyo as to interpret his charm and he sexually violate her to transmit his sexual greed to prove that he is truly fascinated by her beauty. After Dr. Crab terminating his act, he rudely reminds Chiyo that this is the second time he collects her blood together with the blood collected in the experience of the cut, saying “This is the second time I have the opportunity of collecting a Specimen of your blood” (328).

### 3.1.2. Emotional Abuse

For Kemoli and Mavindu, emotional abuse appears in coercive and constant belittling, shaming, humiliating a child, making negative comparison to others, frequent yelling, threatening, bullying of the child, rejecting and ignoring the child as punishment, having limited physical contact with the child (eg; no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection), or exposing the child to violence or abuse of others or any other demeaning acts (256). In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the main character is victim of tyranny that make her traumatized; starting from the way her father accepts to sell her easily, to the cruelty she faces from Mrs. Fidget who brings her to the Okiya house where she becomes victim of emotional mistreatment from her rival Hatsumomo. Many times she is dehumanized and by compared to awful things like garbage, like when Hatsumomo complains saying: “Mr.Bekku, could you take the garbage later? I’d like to be on my Way...there was no garbage in the entryway; she was About me...but she gestured for Mr.Bekku to pull me onto the Street again, which he did” (42). The dehumanization that Chiyo comes through in the Okiya house not only comes from Hatsumomo, but also from the mother of the house who coercively behaves with little Chiyo by giving unhelpful answers to her naive questions as in the following exchange:

“What are you looking at” (Mother asked) “Iam very sorry, ma’am. I was looking to your kimono” (Chiyo replied) “So you like it, do you? do you have any idea what it cost? (Mother added) “No, ma’am” (Chiyo replied) “More than you did, that’s for certain” (sarcastically Mother replied). (48-9)

In many other situations, Hatsumomo humiliates and calumniates Chiyo to express her detestation to her because Chiyo’s beauty is seen as a threat to Hatsumomo’s future career. For instance, Hatsumomo intentionally slanders the little girl by accusing her of stealing her

obi brooch to be added to her debts (106). Harshly, she punishes her for finding her in her room touching her makeup and pushes her to repeat the reason for that Hatsumomo hates Chiyo to approach her stuffs, hesitantly Chiyo repeats “because it will start to smell like me” (54). In addition to the resentment Chiyo receives from Hatsumomo, she also suffers from her permanent threats that exacerbate and create a big apprehension to the point that she begins to her as an ogre in the house and a menace to her eagerness. Hatsumomo threatens Chiyo to make her life miserable when she discovers that Chiyo knows her affair with her boyfriend (78). In a similar situation, Hatsumomo steals Mameha’s kimono and tarnishes it with ink and then she directly reveals her to Auntie to punish her (81-87). These problematical situations influence Chiyo’s childhood and make her live adversity alone.

### **3.1.3. Sexual Abuse**

In their work, Kemoli and Mavindu define sexual abuse as arising from subjecting the child to inappropriate exposure to sexual acts or materials or passive use of the child as sexual stimuli or actual sexual contacts (256). In his novel, Golden details in drawing the main character as a sexual object through which she is used many times to satisfy the sexual appetite of some wealthy men like Dr.Crab, the Baron, and Mr.Nobu. At fifteen, Chiyo’s virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder by highest bidders since she is the most beautiful apprentice Geisha of her generation. Dr. Crab is the highest bidder who bids quite aggressively for Chiyo’s mizuage, compared with Mr.Nobu and the Baron who cannot bid as much as he does. During the night of her mizuage, Chiyo is traumatized by the sexual treatments Dr. Crab has assessed on her in which he practises his monstrous sexual greed, taking advantage of her naive knowledge about sexual relations (329-330). Similarly, the Baron has harassed little Chiyo by imposing all kinds of violent and vicious acts without taking into consideration her age. She passes them with fear as she reports: “I felt a burning in my throat that told me I was on the point of crying...my skin was hot and quite damp from fear...I dressed again as best I could,

with my hands trembling” (306). The sexual assaults that Chiyo undertakes to become a Geisha are more harrowing and disturbing than any other thing she may have lived. It teaches her a lesson that life is more difficult than she thought it would be.

#### **3.1.4. Neglect**

According to Mavindu and Kemoli, “child abuse as a form of neglect is shown when an able caregiver fails to provide basic needs, adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision shelter, supervision, medical care and support to the child” (256). Similarly, Chiyo Sakamoto, in *Memoirs of a Geisha*, lives most of her life far from her parents, but at a young age she experiences lack of warmth and care when she begins serving as a maid in the Okiya under abusive conditions. While children of her age enjoy their childhood life, we see little Chiyo cleaning the rooms and going on errands to the pharmacist to fetch liniment for the cook’s scabies, or to a shop on Shijo Avenue to fetch the rice crackers Auntie was so fond of (5).

Hans van de Glind and Joost Kooijmans, in their work “Modern-Day Child Slavery” (2008), see child slavery as a kind of exploitation. They point out:

Child trafficking is an internationally recognised form of slavery because it reduces victims to mere ‘commodities’ to be bought, sold, transported and resold. Separation from families and communities, sometimes in places where they have no legal status or do not speak the language, make trafficked children especially susceptible to mistreatment by deceitful and devious owners. (155)

In the novel under study, both Chiyo and her sister are sold by their father to a local businessman called Mr. Tanaka who himself sells them into slavery, as the narrator tells us: “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” (94). Both are sold as goods to be exploited. During the course of their selling, the little girls are mistreated by the

buyers; Chiyo describes in one scene how “Mr. Bekku led [them] by [their] elbows again, as if [they] were a couple of buckets he was bringing back from the well” (39). As a slave in the Geisha house, Chiyo has to bow as low as possible to the house rulers, and avoid looking them in the eye as it is determined by Geisha profession (46). In addition, she is a servant who serves, keep away the food, clean the table after they eat, and who massage Granny (52-53). Determined to become a Geisha, Chiyo feels defenceless as any other slave, concerning the fact that she has no free choice to choose her danna: “Nobu-san speaks as if I have any choice over who my danna is. The only choice I can ever make is what kimono I’ll wear” (366), either her desires are respected. Another key point, as a businessman, Chiyo always carries a name card for she has to be available each time she is needed as a property (357).

Another kind of exploitation experienced by the novel’s main character is the economic exploitation through which she is commercially negotiated as any other product in a highest bidder auction. Likewise, everybody in the house benefits from Chiyo’s fees, as they consider her as a money machine that should earn portions of her fees to the Okiya since her beauty attracts many customers to come to Gion to spend money (150-7).

In the light of all these kinds of exploitations, Chiyo Sakamoto goes through a series of traumatic events. From the age of six, little Chiyo experiences shock after each exploitative act. Particularly, the way Mr. Tanaka and Chiyo’s father, Mr. Sakamoto, negotiate the matter of selling the girls surprises Chiyo who overhears the conversation, she especially hears Mr. Tanaka tells her father: “so, Sakamoto, what do you think of my proposal?” (23), then she feels upset because she expects something horrible is coming to her life as she tells us: “but in my head it was as though an explosion had occurred. My thoughts were in fragments I could hardly piece together” (24). Also, the way Mrs. Fidget checks the girls’ health and virginity

shocks her. In the way to the Okiya house, too, Chiyo is taken aback by the state of calm the crew adopts; they refuse to answer her question about the destination (37). Again, detaching Chiyo from her village and family causes her big throbbing that affects later in making her lives in a state of seclusion and purposelessness (39). More important, the separation that profoundly affects Chiyo is seen when she is detached from her sister Satsu in Gion district. She is troubled by this matter considering it the most evil thing she has experienced so far (41), and through looking at her sister's eyes in the time they take her away, Chiyo feels totally wrecked; she aggressively reacts saying: "I was on the point of throwing myself onto the street" (41). In the house, Chiyo sees nothing except malice and callousness, and in due course she tries to run off from the wretchedness the house provides (110). Unfortunately, Auntie brings her back; the girl lays "curled up in a ball in a state of shock" (113). According to geisha culture, the trainee's name must be changed. Chiyo Sakamoto's name is changed to Nitta Sayuri which is felt by her as an ordeal and total detachment from her origins:

I thought Sayuri was a lovely name, but it felt strange not to be known as Chiyo any longer. After the ceremony we went into another room for a lunch of "red rice", made of rice mixed with red beans. I picked at it, feeling strangely unsettled and not at all celebrating. The mistress of the tea house asked me question, and when I heard her call me "Sayuri", I realized what was bothering me. It was as if the little girl named Chiyo, running barefoot from the pond to her tipsy house, no longer existed. I felt that this new girl, Sayuri, with her gleaming white face and her red lips, had destroyed her. (195)

Innocently, Sayuri feels uptight and shaken when Mameha teaches her feminine and masculine sexual marks (cave and eel), at the age fourteen (270).



### 3.2. Adversity

Adversity can be defined as the experience of a range of stressful life events an individual may live after higher cumulative states of abuse, neglect, loss, and bereavement. In other words, it is the result of many years of distress. Arthur Golden provides a good definition of the term in his text saying that “adversity is like a strong wind. I don’t mean just that it holds us back from places we might otherwise go. It also tears away from us all but the things that cannot be torn, so that afterward we see ourselves as we really are, and not merely as we might like to be” (405). The novel’s main character goes through adversity as a consequence of a series of painful events she has borne.

These traumas do not come only from the obnoxious situations she suffers from, but they are also dictated by her destiny. To remind the reader, Chiyo was only six years old when she began experiencing foreseeable traumas. We are told by the narrator how she reacted when she learnt the big difference of age between her parents; it “took [her] a while to understand that [her] father had been married before, a long time ago, and that his whole family had died. [She] went back to those graves not long afterward and found as [she] stood there that sadness was a very heavy thing. [Her] body weighed twice that it had only a moment earlier, as if those graves were pulling [her] down toward them”(10). Together with the sense of powerlessness she feels when seeing her mother sickly suffers without being able to do anything may help her (11). Her mother’s illness and the terrible situations she used to see established the idea of death in Chiyo’s mind and developed in her an everlasting apprehension of expecting her mother’s death at any moment. In fact, many things contribute in widening this grief-stricken feeling: paucity, sickness, and vulnerability. Such examples are indicative of prior traumas experienced before going to the Geisha house. There are many similar examples in the text, but I think that the following one abridges what has been said so far; in one poignant scene, the narrator recalls her childhood anxieties:

Most nights when I lay on my futon I was sick with anxiety, and felt a pit inside myself as big and empty as if the whole world were nothing more than a giant hall empty of people. To comfort myself I closed my eyes and imagined that I was walking along the path beside the sea cliffs in yoroido...and I was left where I'd started with nothing but my own loneliness. (116)

Chiyo goes through a state of loss, too, through which she feels dejected as she described: "I feel like a child lost on a lake in the fog...but of course we can never flee the misery that is within us (122). This feeling inside Chiyo is repeatedly felt, varying from situation to another, she adds "trying not to think too much about my feelings of misery, i had a sudden thought of a child lost in the snowy woods" (345). Finally, the affective trauma that breaks Chiyo's heart and gravely traumatizes her is the day she receives a letter from Mr. Tanaka that conveys the death of her mother, her father, and the hopelessness of her sister at once:

Long before Auntie had finished reading this letter, the tears had begun to flow out of me just like water from a pot that boils over. For it would have been enough to learn that my mother had died, or that my father had died. But to learn in a single moment that both my mother and my father had died and left me, and that my sister too was lost to me forever...at once my mind felt like a broken vase that would not stand. I was lost even within the room around me. (120)

This traumatic moment is considered as a turning point in Chiyo's life for it tears away the little hope of reuniting with her family again. In this case, from the depths of loss and pain, growth and gain may come forward; Chiyo Sakamoto, then, successfully gets through her tribulation and realizes a big positive change.

### 3.3. Studying the Shift From Negative Input to Positive Outcome

The uncontrollable events that Chiyo sees in her first stage of life traces a deep psychological exhaustion in her, and make her perceived as she lives more than her age. In describing her deep discomfort in her difficult life, she says “I may have been no more than fourteen, but it seemed to me I’d lived two lives already” (187). Tired of adversity, at an early age, Chiyo is impatient to convert her personal tragedy into accomplishment. From this, we suggest that in face of distress and suffering, the possibility of growth may come forth. In this matter, in their theory, the psychologists Tedeschi and Calhoun, as carefully explained in the first chapter, have made it clear that adversarial growth and positive transformation are possible after experiencing distress. In their book entitled *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, they sustain their view of positive change with significant examples of “steel is iron plus fire, soil is rock plus crushing, linen is flax plus the comb that separates, and the flail that pounds, and the shuttle that weaves”(7). In the same work, they add that “suffering tends to plow up the surface of our lives to uncover the depths that provide greater strength of purpose and accomplishment” (7). In the novel, the main character’s personally appreciates the value of hardship she struggles with in making her resilient and aware:

My new life was still beginning, though my old life had come to an end some time ago. Several years has passed since I’d learned the sad news about my family, and it was amazing to me how completely the landscape of my mind had changed... Yet I had never imagined such a thing could occur within our very selves. When I first learned the news of my family, it was as though I’d been covered over by a blanket of snow. But in time the terrible coldness had melted away to reveal a landscape I’d never seen before or even imagined... it was an image of the geisha I wanted to become. (187)

Taken together, their idea elaborated in their 2004 article entitled “The Foundations of Posttraumatic Growth: New Considerations”, Tedeschi and Calhoun claim that:

The confrontation with great difficulties in life, perhaps including reminders of one’s morality, can lead the individual to become actively engaged with issues related to a variety of questions that for many individuals have central and highly important significance existential issues about purpose and meaning, self-assessments of the degree to which personality integration is evidenced by the degree to which one is living according to one’s fundamental values and goals. (96)

In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, a deep transmutation occurs to the main character from being named Chiyo to being named Sayuri. As a trauma survivor, she questions her existence to seek out a goal in her life, as she closes the window of the past and opens another for the present as she expresses in the story: “my mother and father were dead and I could do nothing to change it...I’d turned around to look in a different direction, so that I no longer faced backward toward the past, but forward toward the future. And now the question confronting me was this: what would that future be?” (124).

In another article entitled “The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma” (1996), Tedeschi and Calhoun categorize growth into three general domains: changes in the perception of self, changes in the nature and experience of relationship with others, and changes in one’s general philosophy of life. Then, through factor analysis, they came up with a five factors approach to PTG: personal strength, new possibilities, relating to others, appreciation of life, and spiritual change (455-8). Alike, in the

novel under study, the protagonist achieves a high level of maturity and insight. She realizes a great change in the second stage of her life by being strong and self-assured, as well as compassionate with those who surround her. She becomes more responsive and able to fix any problematical situation she encounters as she is already trained to deal with such issues. Thus, she shifts from being cynical and belligerent to being positive and appreciative; for instance, the repugnance she feels towards Mr. Tanaka who buys her turns into appreciation and grace after being matured. After just buying her, she claims that she profoundly hates Mr. Tanaka:

I couldn't stop thinking about Mr.Tanaka. He had taken me from my mother and father, sold me into slavery... I had taken him for a kind man. I had thought he was so refined, so worldly. What a stupid child I had been! I would never go back to Yoroido, I decided. Or if I did go back, it would only be to tell Mr.Tanaka how much I hated him. (94)

Whereas after being wise and psychologically developed, young Sayuri seems graceful and appreciative towards Mr. Tanaka. She honestly reveals her new impression saying:

I'm sure you'll recall my saying that the afternoon when I first met Mr.Tanaka was the very best afternoon of my life, and also the very worst... It's true that up until this time in my life Mr.Tanaka had brought me nothing but suffering; but he also changed my horizons forever... If I had never met Mr. Tanaka, my life would have been a simple stream flowing from our tipsy house to the ocean. Mr.Tanaka changed all that when he sent me out into the world. (121)

That is to say, that Nitta Sayuri's psychological growth is manifested in a five dimensions just like Tedeschi and Calhoun have explained in their theory. Her personal development is reliably shown in each factor. What follows is a display of Sayuri's character development.

### **3.3. 1. Personal Strength**

In "The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the positive Legacy of Trauma" (1996), Tedeschi and Calhoun point out that:

living through life traumas provides a great deal of information about self reliance, affecting not only self evaluations of competence in difficult situations but the likelihood one will choose to address difficulties in an assertive fashion. They add that persons coping with a traumatic event often draw the conclusion that they are stronger, a confidence which may generalize to all kinds of situations, including future traumas. (456)

Similarly, Golden shows clearly this shift from living life crisis to realizing self competence. The main character Nitta Sayuri adopts a strong personality after being weak and neglected. At this stage, she feels fearless and poised when speaking with her enemy Hatsumomo who extremely has abused her in the past as reported by the narrator: "and then for the first time of my life, I spoke back to her without the fear that she would punish me for it" (320). Again, biologically speaking, the young Sayuri accomplishes extreme maturity after her first sexual experience; she feels different just because she has changed to a woman. This feeling is perceived as a kind of development to the character:

It's strange and very hard to explain, but the world looked different to me after mizuage. Pumpkins, who hadn't yet had hers, now seemed inexperienced and childlike to me somehow, even though she was older...Iam sure all apprentices feel changed by the experience of mizuage in much the same way I did. But for

me it wasn't just a matter of seeing the world differently. My day-to-day life changed as well, because of mother's new view of me. (332)

Yet, in another situation, Sayuri seems strong and brave in the way she reacts when she finds Hatsumomo in her room reading her diary; she assertively dismisses her and reveals the event of the brooch that Hatsumomo accuses Chiyo for stealing (370-74). Sayuri herself admits that she starts being appealing: "but now at last the season had changed; Hatsumomo's brilliant career was dying on the branch, while mine had begun to blossom" (375). She reaches a highest point of personal success, as she tells us: "even though it's quite true that my mizuage lifted me onto a high shelf where Hatsumomo could no longer reach me" (376). More specifically, Sayuri's personal strength is also demonstrated in her feelings of pity towards Hatsumomo while she can maliciously retaliate for all the evils she assesses on Chiyo over the years. This balance in her personality shows her resilience and wisdom:

Considering how cruelly Hatsumomo had treated me over the years and how very much I hated her, I am sure I ought to have been elated at this plan. But somehow conspiring to make Hatsumomo suffer wasn't the pleasure I might have imagined... I felt the same pity toward Hatsumomo. During evenings when we trailed her around Gion until she returned to the Okiya just to get away from us, I felt almost as though we were torturing her. (380)

### **3.3. 2. Relating to Others**

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) argue that "when people are confronted with traumatic events, the continuing need for discussion of these events can lead to persons becoming more self disclosure than they may have been before. They add that part of the positive development of social relationships come from the increased sensitivity to other people and efforts directed at

improving relationships” (457). This area of growth is also shown in Sayuri’s personality and behaviour. Her relationship with the chairman can be read as a defining moment in her life, and in a brief encounter with him, she changes from a lost girl facing a lifetime of emptiness to a girl with purpose, just because his kindness easily attracts her (131). Willingly, she expresses her feelings to her lover to show how much she sacrifices for him and that is the way to get married (484-5), that what is proved by the theorists Tedeschi and Calhoun in their empirical book *Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth: A Clinician's Guide* (1999): “The increased sense of freedom in emotional expressiveness is also a manifestation of posttraumatic growth in persons who face major life crises” (12). In another article entitled “Positive Outcomes Following Bereavement: Paths to Post Traumatic Growth” (2010), they claim that:

Crises and losses can produce negative changes in relationships; but many bereaved persons also describe positive changes in their relationships with others. One of the items of the *Posttraumatic Growth Inventory* reflects this dimension –the experience of an increased sense of closeness with others. This closeness is often expressed about significant personal others, such as members of one’s family and close friends”. (128)

In face of loss and bereavement of her family members, Sayuri adopts a sense of closeness with others, starting with Pumpkins who shares the same despair with her and almost the same story. Sayuri feels love and empathy towards pumpkins from the day she sees her in the house, considering her as her sister (45-61), to the day they become geishas in which they are separated. Here, Sayuri feels pity towards their relation despite the big difference between them in terms of success (426). Sayuri does not lose any opportunity to fix her relation with her mate, Pumpkins (427). Another profound relation in Sayuri’s life is her connection with Mameha that is determined by Geisha culture. Despite the professional relation between them,



Sayuri feels a strong affection over Mameha considering her as one of her family members; mainly her older sister: “When two girls are bound together as sisters, they perform a ceremony like a wedding. Afterward they see each other almost as members of the same family, calling each other “older sister” and “younger sister” just as real family members do” (149). Concerning the sympathy, Sayuri is considerate not only towards her friends but also towards anybody in a difficult situation; Etsuko, for instance, is a new maid in the house, so she receives care from Sayuri who remembers “how many years had passed since [she] first came to Kyoto as a nine years old girl, Etsuko herself was nine. She seemed to regard [her] with the same fear [she would] once felt toward Hatsumomo, even though [she] smiled at her whenever [she] could” (416).

### **3.3. 3. Spiritual Change**

Tedeschi, Calhoun and al (2010) point out that “bereaved persons, because of their experience with the death of a close other, may experience changes in the way they understand themselves, their existence as mortal human beings, and, for some, their connection to something transcendent” (128-29). Nitta Sayuri, in the novel, similarly, experiences this trauma of death of a close person in her life, and in response to the quest of her existence has been arisen. In this case, Sayuri transcends in understanding life saying: “I wish I could believe life really is something more than a stream that carries us along, belly-up. All right, if it’s a stream, you’re still free to be in this part of it or that part, aren’t you? The water will divide again and again. If you bump, and tussle, and fight, and make use of whatever advantages you might have.” (367). Moreover, a spiritual sensation comes across her selfness due to the adversity and misfortune she encounters in her life. Accordingly, Tedeschi and Calhoun, in their book *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, indicate that “suffering is the discipline that produces a deepening of the spiritual life” (7).

Here, Sayuri bracket together incidents and destiny saying “my destiny, whatever it was, awaited me there” (415).

### **3.3. 4. New Possibilities**

In another book entitled *Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth: A Clinician's Guide* (1999), Calhoun and Tedeschi argue that “some individuals report a greater appreciation for life, a changed set of life priorities, and positive changes in religious, spiritual, or existential matters”(16). This area of growth is slightly shown in Sayuri’s maturation. It requests the experiencer to postulate for new priorities and paths in life. Sayuri, for instance, freely opts for being a geisha and spending the rest of her life serving men’s desires. Basically, Sayuri’s choice comes from her desire to book the chairman in her life that one day may be her danna dealing with the context of geisha tradition. Although she learns how hard this path is going to be, Sayuri bravely chooses this avenue for getting the chairman attracted as she says later in the novel: “I would suffer through any training, bear up under any hardship, for a chance to attract the notice of a man like the chairman again” (132). Again, as a sign of her success, Sayuri chooses to live in New York to enjoy her wealth and learn new things (325-339).

### **3.3. 5. Appreciation of Life**

Laurence Calhoun and Richard Tedeschi (1999), state that:

When a person has faced extreme stress (e.g., the death of a loved one or life threatening illness), he or she must confront the reality of death. That confrontation can lead to a greater appreciation of the value of everyday things. Perhaps one of the most frequently reported manifestation of posttraumatic growth is an increase in one's appreciation of life.” (14)

Equally, the main character in *Memoirs of a Geisha* actualizes this shift from loss to appreciation and wisdom. From the pain of bereavement, awareness and wisdom may appear. Sayuri, then, becomes indebted of small and big things in life. Firstly, she appreciates the act

of buying her by Mr. Tanaka that causes in changing her horizons over a new vision in life (121). Then, she appreciates the death of her parents as it is the reason behind her change; she tells us: “several years had passed since I’d learned the sad news about my family, and it was amazing to me how completely the landscape of my mind had changed” (187). Moreover, she appreciates the struggle she undergoes; she ties her development with the conflict she bears within the Okiya saying:

Because I’d lived through adversity once before, what I learned about myself was like a reminder of something I’d once known but had nearly forgotten... namely, that beneath the elegant clothing, and the accomplished dancing, and the clever conversation, my life had no complexity at all, but was as simple as a stone falling toward the ground. (405)

As being positive, Sayuri becomes wiser than any old age may suggest. Her speech turns into sacral discourse, speaking with proverbs and examples. In delineating her appreciation of the wave of life, she says:

In the instant before that door opened, I could almost sense my life expanding just like a river whose waters have begun to swell; for I had never before taken such a drastic step to change the course of my own future. I was like a child tip-toeing along a precipice overlooking the sea. And yet somehow I hadn’t imagined a great wave might come and strike me there, and wash everything away. (472)

In the book *Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth: A Clinician's Guide*, they add that “in some ways, individuals who experience posttraumatic growth appear to show an increase in life

wisdom. Individuals who have had to face major challenges in life may be changed by their struggle with difficulties in ways that increase their expertise in the "fundamental pragmatics of life" (21). As an outcome to the triggering events she encounters, Sayuri becomes a wise woman with a profound vision of life, and her tragic life prepares her soul for a vision. In (1996), Tedeschi and Calhoun indicate an idea that persons coping with traumatic events often draw the conclusion of being able to deal with the future traumas (456). As similar case, young Sayuri achieves this stage of feeling confident and aware to deal with the future obstacles in her life, yet she discovers the meaning of her existence through the struggle. In describing this confidence, she says:

I'd done nothing but worry that every turn of life's wheel would bring yet another obstacle into my path; and of course, it was the worrying and the struggle that had always made life so vividly real to me. When we fight upstream against a rocky undercurrent, every foothold takes on a kind of urgency. (488)

Again, she accepts stressors of life and optimistically believes in the triumphs of life that automatically comes after tragedy. She confidently explains this belief saying:

As a young girl I believed my life would never have been a struggle if Mr. Tanaka hadn't torn me away from my tipsy house. But now I know that our world is no more permanent than a wave rising on the ocean. Whatever our struggles and triumphs, however we may suffer them, all too soon they bleed into a wash, just like watery ink on paper. (499)

Calhoun and Tedeschi (1996) maintain that "the PTGI was positively correlated with optimism, religiosity, and all the major dimensions of personality except neuroticism" (463).

After several traumatic events, Sayuri adopts a positive spirit and vision over what is coming in life. She used to predict her future and associate it to positive news, as her words show “I can’t imagine any package that might free a little girl from slavery; I had trouble imagining it even. But I truly believed in my heart that somehow when that package was opened, my life would be changed forever” (117). Also, with deep feelings of satisfaction, she compares the different insights of her previous and present worlds by which she adopts the positive personality that holds the impression of optimism, which she recognizes “but my feelings were strangely different. I felt as though I were looking at a world that was somehow changed from the one I’d seen the night before peering out, almost, through the very window that had opened in my dreams” (123). Still, she believes in finding something special in her life, and fortunately at last she finds it; she marries her lover and lives in New York with her children happily ever after: “that next morning I looked carefully at my almanac in the hopes of finding some sign that my life wouldn’t live without purpose” (406).

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has shown how adversity and traumatic events could help in building one's personality, as it is demonstrated in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*. It has also explored all the forms of exploitation lived by the main character as the stimulus to the positive state she achieves. This chapter has studied the main character as the experiencer of the positive shift from negative input to positive outcome, basing on Tedeschi and Calhoun's ideas of growth following adversity constructed in their numerous books and articles. The conclusion that can be understood from the analysis is trauma not only has negative impact but also positive one. However, this result does not formally mean that the coped trauma is

eventually healed, but it has long-term effects rather short-term ones. For, in the short-term, the experiencer may still be in touch with that trauma but the long-term overcomes.

## General Conclusion

*Memoirs of a Geisha* is the result of Arthur Golden's interest in Japanese history and culture. He reports the most important events of Japanese history in a fiction work that reveals the concern of Japanese children during the era of Second World War. Golden's only novel arouses oriental interest for what it embodies the western view over oriental femininity. Thus, it receives several critiques, mainly by the Orientals.

This paper has examined the positive outcome of trauma inherited from different forms of exploitation in Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, depending on Tedeschi and Calhoun's ideas of Posttraumatic Growth theory embodied in their books *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering* (1995), *Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth: A Clinician's Guide* (1999), and articles "The Foundations of Post-traumatic Growth: New Considerations"(2004), "The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma" (1996), and "Positive Outcomes Following Bereavement: Paths to Post Traumatic Growth" (2010), among others. It has highlighted the other impact of trauma and studied the shift from adversity to maturity, taking the main character as the case of study to end with a general judgement that dictates the possibility of growth in the context of grief. Indeed, as it has been revealed in this thesis, trauma can add a value to one's life.

Golden's novel is the relevant text to study the different forms of abuse the child may encounter. As it is found in the text, the main character fights the horrible events in her life to overstep the powerlessness and the misery to build up her future. Nitta Sayuri is the example of survival; she firmly challenges negative life experiences to set up a landscape in which she lives the other stage of her life. This case might encourage the reader who lives the same situation to patiently adopt the same attitude.

As has been noted above, the theory and the text under study are relevantly applicable as seen in the analysis. The two together validates a claim that suffering prepares a soul for a vision, what justifies the early maturity of some victimized and bereaved individuals in society. Ultimately, our study has treated *Memoirs of a Geisha* from the psychological perspective. This view is not the only present aspect in the narrative for there are other interesting themes that may construct good researchable works. For instance, Marxism and Imperialism are noticeable topics from which the novel can be discussed.



## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bildungroman is a novel that traces the development of the character from childhood to adulthood through a quest for identity that leads him/ her to maturity. Literarily, it comes from German word that means “formation novel”.

<sup>2</sup>I am using Joseph Conrad’s title of his novel *Under Western Eyes* because Golden and Conrad explore the cultures which were not theirs.

<sup>3</sup>GLs is an acronym used to describe the United States armed forces.

<sup>4</sup>GCSE is an abbreviation of “the General Certificate of Secondary Education”

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