

Tribhuvan University

Resistance against the Subjugation in Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*

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This is to certify that Mr. Pramod Subedi has completed his dissertation entitled “Resistance against the Subjugation of a Geisha in Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*” under my guidance. I recommend this thesis to be submitted to the research committee for final examination of viva voice.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Resistance against the Subjugation of a Geisha in Sayo Masuda’s *Autobiography of a Geisha*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Pramod Subedi has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

The research on Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* entitled "Resistance against the Subjugation in Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*" has not only unveiled the subjugated position of the geisha in bourgeois patriarchal Japanese society, but also explored the subtle but powerful resistance against such patriarchal and bourgeois culture. The unjust and discriminatory socio-economic and cultural system is the most responsible factor for the commodification, exploitation, alienation and subjugation of the geisha who are compelled to become a geisha for being a female from an economically poor family. The geisha have attempted to resist against the existing socio-economic and cultural system in one way or another. However, these attempts of resistance seem to be insufficient and not working until and unless they replace the false consciousness of the capitalist patriarchal ideologies with gender and class consciousness which is necessary to dismantle the capitalist socio-economic system with patriarchal underpinnings.

Content

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Sayo Masuda and Geisha Culture in <i>Autobiography of a Geisha</i>	1-11
II. Feminism to Feminisms: A Socio-Politico-Cultural and Literary Resistance against Different Forms of Patriarchal Ideologies in Different Cultures	12-31
Marxist Feminism: A Resistance against the Capitalistic Patriarchal Ideologies	20
III. Critique on Treating Geisha as Commodities in Masuda's <i>Autobiography of a Geisha</i>	32-73
Geisha as Hegemonic Cultural Construction of Gendered Capitalist Ideology	38
Alienation of Geisha	57
The Geisha's Resistance and Resolution	65
IV. Conclusion	74-76
Works Cited	

I. Sayo Masuda and Geisha Culture in *Autobiography of a Geisha*

This research on Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* explores the subjugated position of the Japanese females who are forced to become a geisha because of being a female from an economically poor family. With an attempt to explore the subjugated position of geisha in the patriarchal capitalist Japanese society, this research has analyzed how the prevalent socio-economic system becomes successful to commodify the poor females in the name of geisha culture by ideologically hegemonizing and economically entrapping them to become a geisha. To enhance the exploration, the research, along with the commodification of the geisha, has also discussed their sexual, economic, social, cultural and psychological exploitation and their alienation in different ways. The geisha's direct or indirect attempts or thoughts of resistance against the oppressors have also been discussed.

The status of the poor women in Japanese society, as shown in Masuda's autobiography, is very pathetic; and it becomes worse when they are sold to a geisha house. The poor parents have always been economically pressurized who once become ready to sell their little daughters to the landowners or to the geisha house. To make more money, Shijuka's parents were going to:

... sell her to another geisha house in a different locale. [...] the parents who'll trade a child for money once will continue to wring money from her somehow or other. [...], even if they don't sell her again, they're almost certain to turn up at least once or twice to wheedle a bit more money by extending her contract.

(50)

Masuda herself was sold many times in her life. When she was 5 she was sent to a land owner's house to work as a nursemaid. Then, when she was 12, she was sold to a geisha house. After four years, Mother of the geisha house sold her virginity not only to Cockeye, but also to "four more men and made a pile" (60). After a few years, Cockeye, her danna

bought her out of geisha house to make her his mistress and to have a complete possession upon her. Even after she was freed from Cockeye she had to sell her body or sexuality for many times when she faced grinding poverty. This showed that the geisha are mere commodities to be sold, bought and used.

Though most of the geisha hated the geisha life, sometimes, they realized themselves that it was better alternative for them. Before Masuda was sold to the geisha house she had already been prepared for that. She said, "Yet even if I had not been sold as a geisha, for someone like me, there could never be any road to happiness" (18). Here the patriarchal capitalism has become successful to hegemonize the dominated class by imposing the capitalist and patriarchal ideologies and making them feel that it was their own fate to be in such a pathetic condition. All her past experiences made Masuda realize that there was no way to escape such a pathetic situation except accepting to be a geisha. Hence she got "convinced that mastering these arts was essential to my survival" (57). Similarly, the hegemonized geisha compares themselves with the commodities. Karuta making an analogical comparison between chestnuts and geisha says, "Customers are children and geisha are chestnuts" (61). One of the Elder Sisters compares a geisha with kimono that is once bought, used and then thrown away.

The prevalent society of Japan not only commodified the body or sexuality of the poor females in the name of geisha system, but also exploited and oppressed them sexually, economically, socially, culturally and psychologically. As a nursemaid and as a novice geisha, Masuda served the rich people as an unpaid laborer. When she was an apprentice or a full-fledged geisha, she had to serve them her sexuality. But "wages were passed from restaurants to the geisha registry office, and from there they came to the geisha house" (43). The poor female even after being geisha, neither could they overcome their economic status nor they could live a free life. Venereal diseases, unwanted pregnancy and miscarriages were

some of the outcomes of the geisha system which was similar to prostitution. On the other, because of her poor economic status Sennari had to go alone to work for a fish-monger who raped her when she was only fourteen. Though the geisha system exploited the poor females and it involved a form of human trafficking it was culturally and socially permitted and legalized. Therefore, as a geisha Masuda and other geisha were exploited at least sexually, economically and culturally at once.

Because of Mother's mistreatment, Masuda had her leg cracked; Karuta was beaten with a hot iron, burned her skin with the cigarettes and "pushed her face down into water" (32). A novice from another geisha house was killed for eating a sweet cake worth 1 sen. Michiko killed herself when her lover Hii-san denied to accept her when she was already been pregnant. The geisha would be treated as a social out cast even after the end of their geisha life. The people would look at a geisha through the different eyes. As a result, a geisha in that discriminatory society felt alienated from her own work (her sexual service), from herself, from other human beings and also from nature. Hence all the geisha as portrayed in the autobiography are subjugated and exploited sexually, economically, culturally, physically, socially and even psychologically.

Despite their pathetic condition, sometimes, the geisha attempted to keep themselves away from the exploitation and oppression. Once Karuta said to Masuda, "No matter what they do to you, the only way defenseless people like us can resist is by not resisting" (33). Therefore the geisha often became passive. Sometimes they would cry or isolate themselves from the others. Sometimes they would indulge themselves into drinking and smoking. These were the strategies to get rid from the mistreatment and get peace in their minds for a short period. Some of them attempted to commit suicide in order to be not exploited further. Michiko killed herself. Masuda herself attempted suicide at least for three times. At the end of this autobiography Masuda comes to realize that all these ways of resistance were

insufficient to come out of the geisha system or to end it. The legal documents like Prostitution Prevention Act also became unsuccessful to end the geisha system or prostitution. Masuda says:

Prostitution isn't something that will simply disappear just because you have passed a law against it [...]. Nobody becomes a prostitute because she enjoys it. It's human instinct, is it not, to fill your belly when you're hungry, even if you have to steal to do it ? Just passing laws banning prostitution is not going to accomplish anything. (158-59)

It seemed that the legislators forgot the reality that until and unless the poverty is ended, there will exist the prostitution.

In this way, Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* shows the subjugated position of geisha in the patriarchal bourgeois Japanese society which treated them mere as commodities and exploited them sexually, economically, physically, socially, culturally and psychologically. Studying Masuda's depiction of the pathetic life story of a hot-springs-resort geisha in a patriarchal bourgeois society in Japan, it is hypothesized that the geisha have the subjugated position in the society because of being a female from an economically poor family. Therefore, to research on this issue in the text, Marxist feminist perspectives are being applied to explore the geisha's gender and economic subjugation.

Marxist feminism is one of the many feminisms which analyzes the oppression of women using the framework of Marxism and provides resolution from Marxist viewpoint. It invites us to understand women's oppression and exploitation "as the product of the political social and economic structures associated with capitalism" (Tong 39). It believes that women's situation can not be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context. For Marxists, capitalists treat the labor of the proletariat class as a commodity which can be sold and bought as the means of producing surplus value or capital. Capitalism intensifies

alienation and generalizes it throughout all levels of society. Marxist feminists focus upon the issues of proletariat women.

Regarding the issues of prostitution, Marxist feminists see it as a class phenomenon and describe as severely victimized women who are more biased, more exploited and more alienated in the society than the any other groups of women. No one is born prostitute. Rather, they are made prostitutes by the socio-economic and cultural circumstances. For them 'prostitution' is an evil of capitalist patriarchy which exploits and subjugates a woman or a prostitute. Prostitution, for them, has its base on capitalism. Therefore to end prostitution we have to fight against capitalism first. Bryson concludes that "women's oppression is or has become necessary to capitalism so that patriarchy can no be ended without fundamental economic change" (258). Marxist feminism suggests to end the subjugation and exploitation of any groups of proletariat women; like prostitutes by changing the capitalist system of economy.

The geisha are economically and culturally forced to involve into sexual relationships with many men for money. Hence there is a very thin or almost no distinction between the geisha and the prostitutes. Masuda herself says: "If a geisha or a maid sleeps with a customer and gets paid, isn't that prostitution ?" (158). Since the issues and socio-economic bases of prostitution and geisha are similar, the same frameworks of Marxist feminism, used to analyze the issues of prostitution, can be used to analyze the issues of geisha. Therefore, this research has used Marxist feminist perspective as a theoretical tool to analyze the subjugation of geisha depicted in Masuda's autobiography.

Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* is a fascinating and heart-rending story of the life of a geisha. The present version of Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* is G.G. Rowley's English translation based on the version edited by Oda Mitsuki and published in the Heibonsha Library series in 1955. Being attracted by the prize money she wrote an

account of her life which was awarded second prize by the editors of *Housewife's Companion* and that was later on published in the February 1957 issue of the magazine under the title *Account of Wanderings of a Country Geisha*. Being inspired by the achievement Masuda, an ex-geisha, wrote an autobiography which earned a world wide fame as well as critical attention.

This autobiography itself is a type of social criticism upon the geisha life and culture which differs from the other perspectives to geisha life and culture. On the other hand this text has drawn the attention of several critics.

Geisha literally means 'art person'. Geisha are traditional female entertainers who provide singing, dancing, and conversation, games and companionship to customers in certain restaurants. There are many stereotypes about geisha. There are two classes of geisha. The first kind geisha are 'high-class geisha' who are highly appreciated and romanticized in literature. The second kind geisha are 'low-class geisha' as represented by a hot-springs-geisha in *Autobiography of a Geisha*.

Martha Feldman says that the "abjectly impoverished families had to sell their daughters into prostitution. In this way, geisha were a by-product of the imperial endeavor, as well as resource for it" (245). As shown in *Autobiography of a Geisha* "for daughter from destitute families, becoming geisha was their best alternative" (245). On the other hand, Feldman talks also about the glorification and aestheticization of geisha and geisha culture in *Snow Country* by Kawabata Yasunari in which lower-class geisha or prostitutes were transformed into symbols of 'authentic Japanese beauty'. He says:

Thus geisha [...] deployed as figures of cultural authenticity in imperial Japan, helping to energize wartime nationalism. Through the provision of sexual-cultural entertainment to soldiers and workers, geisha contribute the projects

of modernization: capitalist development militarist expansion and empire building. (246)

Feldman's explanation shows that there is not distinction between high-class geisha and low-class geisha in terms of their contribution to energize wartime nationalism. But, G.G. Rowley translating *Autobiography of a Geisha* explains:

The romanticization of geisha life as dedicated principally to the pursuit of traditional arts ignores the poverty that drove many parents to indenture their daughters to geisha houses [...]. At the glamorous high end of the geisha world in the Pontotoc and Gion districts of Kyoto and Shinbashi in Tokyo, sex may seem a less obstructive aspect of the geisha business. But at the lower end, in a hot-springs resort like Suwa where Masuda worked, sex with geisha was the expected end of every evening. (6-7)

Rowley's interpretation shows that Masuda's autobiography opposes the glorification of geisha life and explores the distinction between high-class geisha and hot-spring resort geisha. This distinction leads us farther to think about the comparison between hot-spring resort geisha and prostitute. In Jodi Cobb's photographic account of 1990s, a geisha named Mayumi describes the differences in this way:

In the past, a daughter would be sent to a geisha house to keep her family from debt or starvation, just as in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand today parents are selling their children. But there is mere prostitution, just the selling of bodies. There is no pride for the girls, no skills to call their own, nothing to emerge with. But in the geisha world, the saving grace is that even though you may enter with nothing, you will come out with your own skill, your world of art. That's a huge thing you again. (112)

Mayumi however, she herself is a geisha, has got paradoxical opinion about geisha. On one hand she compares geisha with prostitute and on the other she becomes proud of the skills she gained in her geisha life.

Though Iwano shows that the contemporary Japanese women are not the submissive females typically portrayed; rather they hold positions equal to and sometimes more powerful than those of men, she accepts the submissiveness of the Japanese women in the prewar period. For her:

In prewar period of famine, very poor farming families were often forced to sell their daughters into prostitution (the number of cases increased sharply around (1934). The prettier ones' might be snapped up by the geisha houses, but the less lucky ended up in ordinary brothels. (153-54).

It shows that she agrees that poverty is the real cause of prostitution in prewar Japan.

However, she found the prostitutes and geisha luckier than the other wage laborers.

Therefore, she seems to be trivializing the sexual exploitation of geisha and prostitutes. To some extent she also glorifies the geisha and prostitutes.

On the contrary to this Edward G. Seidensticker, the translator of Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country* remarks:

If hot spring geisha is not a social outcast, she is perilously near being one.

The city geisha may become celebrated musician or dancer, a political intriguer, even a dispenser of patronage. The hot spring geisha must go on entertaining week –end guests and the pretense that she is an artist and not a prostitute is often thin one needed. (vi)

Hence, a hot spring geisha, for Seidensticker, is near to social outcast and a prostitute rather than an artist.

Similarly, Rowley claims that there is not elaborated distinction between hot springs-resort geisha and prostitute in *Autobiography of a Geisha*. For him:

If Masuda found some sustenance in the arts she learned she does not tell us about it. She recalls only the way in which they were beaten into her. But Masuda's years of experience in the art of entertaining did make her an accomplished storyteller. [...] *Autobiography of a Geisha* is at once the superbly told tale of a woman whom fortune never favored yet never defeated and a panorama of life in a little known world which for most of its inhabitants is one of constant 'pain and struggle'. (9)

Rowley's analysis of his autobiography shows that it is about pain and struggle of a hot geisha.

In this way the geisha life and culture has been a subject of cultural and socio-political studies and a matter of great debate. In this debate, Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* opposes the glorification and aestheticization of geisha life and culture and explores the pathetic situation of a hot springs – resort geisha. There have been many critical interpretations on this non-fictional text from multiple perspectives. However, the present research will explore the subjugation and resistance against the subjugation of a hot-springs-resort geisha in Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* which is about the pathetic life story of a female from an economically poor family.

Great many literary contributions on geisha and geisha culture have often glorified and aestheticized the geisha and geisha culture. But Masuda's autobiography is probably the only one literary text which equates the geisha and geisha culture with prostitutes and prostitution. Similarly, the critics who read Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* have either underestimated the issues of geisha by failing to recognize the socio-economic system of the society as the base of the oppressed and subjugated position of geisha or they have paid no much

critical attention to such a marginal autobiographer, an almost illiterate ex-geisha. Unlike other texts written on the same subjects; geisha and geisha culture, this text, on which this research has been based, has realistically taken the issue of geisha culture. Rather it has showed the ugly aspects of it. This is the autobiography written by Masuda, who had herself been sold to a geisha house for an indentured service for more than 10 years. On the one hand the text itself is a kind of social criticism upon the geisha life and culture which differs from the other perspectives to geisha life and culture. On the other hand there are no adequate critical works upon this non-fictional text. Even if there are a few critical works upon this text, none of them have analyzed it from the Marxist feminist perspective.

This text shows the subjugated position of hot springs resort geisha who have been forced to become geisha because of being a female from a poor family in the patriarchal bourgeois Japanese society. Therefore, the issues of commodification exploitation, alienation, and many other mistreatments of the geisha by the bourgeoisie in the patriarchal capitalist society have been researchable. Marxist feminism not only analyzes those issues on the basis of socio-economic context in a more reliable way, but also provides a better solution for those issues than any other perspectives. Therefore, this research has analyzed the subjugation of the geisha on the basis of Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha* by appropriately choosing the Marxist feminist perspective as a theoretical tool.

The research has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter has explored the issues of the text. It has discussed about the textual bases of the issues. This chapter has included the brief introduction of the theoretical perspective that the research is going to apply. It includes the literature review and a discussion of the researchability and significance of the topic and hypothesis. The second chapter has dealt with the discussion of theoretical tool that is applied to analyze the text. The research has used Marxist feminism for analyzing the commodification, exploitation and alienation of the geisha in the patriarchal capitalist

Japanese society. The third chapter has applied the theoretical perspectives to the text and proved the hypothesis, and it has also discussed about the resolution to the problems that the geisha have been facing. Finally, the last chapter 'conclusion', particularly on the basis of chapter three, has concluded the research by discussing the findings.

II. Feminism to Feminisms: A Socio-Politico-Cultural and Literary Resistance against Different Forms of Patriarchal Ideologies in Different Cultures

Feminism is a socio-political movement which aims to privilege the rights, status, and power of women in order to bridge the gaps of inequalities between women and men. The argument of feminism has the premises that the women in the patriarchal society have been subjugated physically, psychologically, economically, culturally and academically. Not only that, they also have to “struggle condemning them to virtual silence and obedience, as well as male literary establishment that poured scorn on their literary endeavors” (Habib 667). On the one hand, the patriarchy treats the women only as subordinates, and deprives them from many rights and power. On the other, the depiction of women in male literature has established the most contradicting and extremist stereotypical images of women- as angels, goddesses, whores, witches, obedient wives, and good mother. Therefore, feminism attempts to dismantle the patriarchal norms and values to liberate women from any kinds of exploitations and subordinations in the family and society, and from misrepresentations in the literature.

For Hooks, “feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression [...] a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination” (Hooks 26). Actually, feminist criticism is primarily the criticism of male ideology which constructs gender and gender discrimination. To treat “gender as construction, as ideology, is to say that it must be understood not as a real attribute of individuals but, rather, as a (socially enforced) ideal animating and regulating the behavior of individuals” (Longino 26). Since sexual exploitation is based on ideologies constructed by patriarchy, feminists believe that such exploitation and domination can be ended by dismantling such ideologies. Feminist movement, as Hooks opines is:

A new ideological meeting ground for the sexes, a space for criticism, struggle, and transformation. Feminist movement can end the war between the

sexes. It can transform relationships so that alienation, competition, and dehumanization that characterize human interaction can be replaced with feeling of intimacy, mutuality, and camaraderie. (35)

Feminism, now, has been a world-wide cultural movement for the equality of women with men regarding all human rights, moral, social, religious, political, educational, economic, legal, and many others. There is not any fixed and single definition of feminism. Rather, feminism itself has been a subject of a debate which draws different theories and perspectives to study the subordination and exploitation of women in different spheres of life. Therefore, Rosemarie Tong says:

Feminist theory is not one, but many, theories or perspectives and that each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. The more skillfully a feminist theory can combine description, explanation, and prescription, the better that theory is. (1)

Feminism, hence, studies not only the causes and consequences of oppression of women but also describes the strategies to end it. Feminism, though itself is a theory, may draw the ideas from many other theories and perspectives.

Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for educational and social equalities for women. For her "business of various kinds, they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution" (60). In *A Vindication of Rights of women* (1792) she views that she wanted women to be treated as, and to act as, autonomous decision makers. But this book "was not so much a plea for political and economic liberty for women as an arrangement that women share the same rational human nature men do" (Tong 16).

John Stuart Mill a supporter of feminism also advocates equal access to education, employment, and politics for women as for men. But he is charged of being failed “to explore the critical questions of economic dependency and the decision of labor, nor did he really examine the interrelationships of class and sex oppression” (Bryson 65).

Several feminist issues concerning the social and economic context of women’s writing, the gendered nature of language, empowerment of women as writers, and the societal construction of gender are raised by Virginia Woolf. For her if a women gains psychological and economic independency she, in order to exercise her creative potential, can produce good literature as a male writer does. But their creative potentialities are obstructed due to the lack of private property and freedom. She supports androgyny, the balance between male ‘self realization’ and female ‘self-annihilation’.

Simone de Beauvoir, who rejected domesticity and conventional female roles, integrated existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. In *Second Sex*, she writes:

Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. [...] Man can think of himself without woman. She can not think of herself without man. And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other. (146)

As a solution to this problem, she encourages every woman to take control over their own lives. Her proposed solution sees “women as independent, fulfilled and liberated through their career” (Bryson 155). Hence she has been criticized for “providing individualistic

solutions to collective problems, ignoring the needs and problems of working-class or peasant women, and effectively blaming the victims of patriarchy for their own oppression” (155).

The several feminists viewed upon the subordination of women and the ways to get beyond of that. But there was not any significant feminist movement in the socio-political and literary scenario, especially, before the 1960's. After 1960's, particularly, women's movement in many countries, and gynocriticism are noticed as significant achievements of feminism. 'Gynocriticism' was developed by Elaine Showalter, which refers to “a criticism concerned with the specificity of women's experience and women's writing” (Habib 691). In spite of following the patriarchal values or protesting against them, it discusses only about female values and experiences, and it seeks to develop the separate world and history of women literature. Hence, Elaine Showalter is charged of being a 'separatist'. For her, women write differently not because they are different psychologically from men but because their social experiences are different. In the same line, Gilbert and Gubar developed a model of feminist psychoanalysis as a counter model to Bloomian patriarchal model. Their *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) rejects Bloom's theory of 'anxiety of influence' in which women do not fit. For them, women writers do not have to experience 'anxiety of influence', rather they experience 'anxiety of authorship' because they do not have female literary tradition' rather they suffer anxiety of being author. Hence Bloomian model for them is mere masculinist and exclusive.

Some feminists like; Kate Millet sees sex as political. Sex is political, primarily because, all power relationships, are based on male-female relationship. The male- female relationship is constructed by the patriarchal ideology which always “justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that most women internalize a sense of interiority to men” (Tong 96). She wants to destroy the sex/gender system - the real sense which men and women are equals at every level of existence. But Millet, in *Sexual Politics*

(1970) seems to be an androgynist or integrationist because she said that an ideal human should have an integration of separate masculine and feminize traits.

There are many feminists who borrow the ideas from different other theories and perspectives to analyze the feminist issues. For example, Michele Barrett integrates Marxism with feminism. Similarly, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous integrate psychoanalysis and deconstruction with feminism. Hence, there are multiple feminist theories and perspectives to approach the issues of female subordination and exploitation. Therefore, the term 'feminism' cannot address:

The growing diversity of feminist theories -'feminisms'- as they engage with biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, post-structuralist, and cultural studies, as well, as ethnic and race studies, postcolonial theory, lesbian and gay studies and gender studies [...] it (feminism) is definitely no longer merely the "ism" of white, educated, bourgeois, heterosexual Anglo-American women, as it once seemed to be. (Guerin and et al, 222)

The 'feminism' and feminist movements have often been the weapon of only the white bourgeois educated Anglo-American women to have property rights, quality education, individual freedom and political rights. Hence, such trend of Western feminism has been exclusive to the issues of the proletarian women, black women, Third World Women and of the lesbians. For Stevi Jackson:

The analysis of women's oppression which shaped feminist debate were formed almost entirely from a white Western perspective. By the end of the 1970's white feminists found themselves confronted by black women, and women of color, angrily denouncing those who had excluded them or unthinkingly subsumed them under the banner of sesterhood with out allowing them to speak for themselves. (23)

Similarly, Andersen also views that all the feminist perspectives as liberal feminism socialist feminism are inadequate to explain “the intersection of race oppression by gender and class” (290).

When ‘feminism’ was defined, it raised the issues of women’s subordination in the society, family, and politics, and their misrepresentation in literature. But it came to centralize “the experiences of woman, especially the woman whose social condition have been least written about, studied or changed by political movements” (Hooks 27). Such a bourgeois feminism and bourgeois feminists encourage the exploited and oppressed groups of women to feel that they are in hopeless situation and they can do nothing against it. They have hegemonic dominance over the feminist theory and movement. They want other groups of women as black women or Third World Woman to develop their own ideas about feminist theory and movement, but to be silent and accept what the white Anglo American feminists say. Hence, Bell Hook says:

Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of woman, any particular race, or class of woman. It does not privilege women over men. [...] Since bourgeois white women had defined feminism in such a way as to make it appear that it had no real significance for black women, they could then conclude that black women need not contribute to developing theory. (28-33)

It seems that such a single, hegemonic and centralized concept of feminism is inadequate to include or address the multiple issues of women’s experience. Hence, there emerged many ‘feminisms’. Among them Marxist feminism, black feminism, and Third World feminism are some that attempt to analyze the feminist issues in relation to class, race, and culture. The universalistic assumptions of western feminisms, liberal feminism and radical feminism constitute all the women from all classes, cultures, and race as a homogenous group of

'women'. Where as Marxist feminism, Black feminism, or Third World feminism pay attention to the material reality of different groups of women.

The different approaches or perspectives to the issue of 'prostitution' illustrate this conceptual differences between or among the different 'feminisms', for example, liberal feminists and radical feminist, who have homogenous perspectives, do not look the prostitution from different perspectives. Either they, accept prostitution as a universal and inevitable social evil necessary to satisfy male sexual desire and as a "safety valve against the rape of 'innocent women' [...] because man have another outlet for sexual relief" (Lim 12), condemn it as a "violent, thankless and grim occupation that degrades not only the prostitutes themselves but the whole feminine gender as well" (Bromberg 3). Lauri Schrage, while making a case for the radical feminist perspective, says:

Female prostitution oppresses women, not because some women who participate in it 'suffer in the eyes of society' but because its organized practice testifies to and perpetuates socially hegemonic beliefs which oppresses all women many domains of their lives. (qtd. in Bromberg 3)

On the other hand, Tong Rosemarie notices, how a white Western feminist, particularly Simone de Beauvoir, misinterprets the issues of a 'prostitute.' She says:

de Beauvoir's analysis of the prostitute was complex. One the hand, the prostitute is a paradigm for women as Other, as object, as the exploited one. On the other hand; the prostitute, like the man who purchases her services, is an exploiter. She prostitutes herself, suggested de Beauvoir, not simply for the money but for the homage men pay to her otherness [...], de Beauvoir argued that, as compared to wives and girl friends, prostitutes get something for yielding their bodies to men's dreams : wealth and fame. (208)

Now a question arises about the appropriateness and adequacy of such perspectives to analyze the issues of prostitution which, in most of the cases, is related not only with sex/gender rather more importantly also with class and culture. Mixing poverty and prostitution together as one thing may give prostitution a different appeal than it were analyzed on its own.

Rather than seeing prostitutes only within a homogenous term 'women', it would be appropriate to see them as one of the different groups of women. Since 'prostitution', primarily, is "a clear consequence of both male sexuality and the unjust economic system", a different theoretical perspective, like Marxist feminism should be used to analyze and solve the issues of 'prostitution' (Bryson 43).

Marxist Feminism: A Resistance against the Capitalistic Patriarchal Ideologies

Marxist feminism is one of the many feminisms which believes that "women's situation cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context, and that any meaningful improvement in the lives of women requires that this context be changed" (Byson 232). Marxist feminists analyze the oppression of women using the frameworks of Marxism and provide resolution from Marxist view point.

Marxist feminism invites us to understand women's oppression and exploitation "not so much as the result of the intentional actions of individuals but as the product of the political, social, and economic structures associated with capitalism" (Tong 39). Marxist feminism is the application of Marxism to analyze "how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically, politically, and socially oppressed as an under class" (Tyson 93). Similarly, for Judith Lorber, Marxist feminists argue for the "equal importance of gender and class oppression and analyze the ways in which two parallel institutions- the economy (capitalism) and family (patriarchy)- structure women's lives" (2).

For Marxist feminists, gender oppression or women's subordination is a form of class oppression. Hence Marxist feminism believes that women's situation cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context. While reading Mitchele Barrett, Habib says:

In general terms, suggests Barrett, the object of Marxist feminism must be to 'identify the operation of gender relations' as they relate to the 'process of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism'. Marxist feminism must 'explore the relations between the organization of sexuality domestic production ... and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation' such an approach will stress the 'relations between capitalism and the oppression of women'. (693)

Marxist feminism, to analyze socio-economic context, uses the Marxist theory of economics which condemns capitalism as a system of exploitative power relations. For Marxism:

The exchange between capital and labor, which produces surplus value, and hence capital, is highly specific. The worker gets a wage; the capitalist gets the things the worker has made during his or her time of employment. If the total value of the things the worker has made exceeds the value of his or her wage, the aim of capitalism has been achieved. The capitalist gets back the cost of the wage, plus an increment-surplus value. (Rubin 229)

In this way, 'surplus value' constitutes wealth for the capitalist and this 'surplus value' further becomes the cause of wider economic gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and of further class oppression and exploitation.

Most of the women in the patriarchal society are often confined in household activities. They are not allowed to work outside the home, rather they are compelled to inferiorize themselves that they cannot do job outside the houses and that what they do in the house is not productive and important work. Hence, their household activities/works are

unpaid. In fact women do productive and important work before the men because they paved an easy way for men to enter into outward activities/works and make base for industries. This is why, Tong says:

No woman has to enter the productive work force, for all women are already in it, even if no one recognizes the fact. Women's work is the necessary condition for all other labor, from which, in turn, surplus value is extracted. By providing current (and future) workers not only with food and clothes, but also with emotional and domestic comfort, women keep the cogs of the capitalist machine running. (54)

Therefore, some Marxist feminists insist that the women should be paid for their household works because their works contributed the production of commodities. The capitalist government and employers, not the individual men (husbands and fathers), should pay women from the 'surplus value' "because capital ultimately profits from women's exploitation" (55). But there are other feminists who argue against waged house work for it confines women only within the four walls for eternal. The idea of waged housework is debatable, but the fact that, the women's house work plays an important role to produce 'surplus value', the nutrition for capitalism, is unargued.

When World War I began, a large number of men went in the army. As a result there was the scarcity of laborer in the factories and agricultural works. Hence, the women in a number of millions went to work as a laborer. Especially during and after World War II, there was a high demand of women worker in labor market particularly for two reasons. First, the increasing number of factories and industries needed more laborers. And, second, the women would be ready to work for a lower wage. Since then, on the basis of double exploitation of women's labor, capitalism has been getting fatter in a geometric progression. On the one hand, the lower is the wage paid for laborer the greater is the surplus

value. Woman laborers contributed greater profit for the capitalist. Women did double works; household works and waged labor.

Similarly, another evil of capitalism is 'alienation'. For Tong, in capitalism, "human existence loses its unity and wholeness in four basic ways" (40). First, workers are "alienated from the 'product' of their labor" because the commodities they produce do not belong to them (40). Second they are "alienated from themselves" because their work dehumanizes them (40). Third they are "alienated from other human beings" because the capitalist economy "encourages— indeed forces – workers to see each other as competitors for jobs and promotions" (40). Fourth and finally, they are "alienated from 'nature' because the work they do and the conditions under which they do it make them to see nature as an obstacle to their survival" (40).

In capitalism labor is treated as a commodity which can be sold and bought. Capitalism intensifies alienations and generalizes it throughout all level of society. The woman workers are alienated to each other and from the male workers. The male workers often have hostile feeling towards the female workers. They think women workers as their competitors who cheapen the wage of labor. On the other hand, the housewives are also alienated because their work is not counted as productive work. A proletariat woman who works both as a house wife and a laborer is more alienated then her male counterpart. What about bourgeois women then? For Rosa Luxemburg:

Aside from the few who have taken jobs or professions, the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but consumers of the surplus product their men extort from the proletariat. They are parasites of parasites of the social body. (qtd. in MacKinnon 68)

It shows that Marxist feminists often focus upon the issues of proletariat women and the women who work either in the house or outside the house. But they find similarities between

male-female in the family and bourgeoisie-proletariat in the society. Marxist feminists such as Heidi Hartman, see capitalism and patriarchy as “two separate but interlocking sets of social relations [...], each with a material base each with its own dynamic” (qtd. in Ruthven 28)

If capitalism as well as patriarchy is the oppressors of the women, why not do they throw such system of inequalities? What makes such systems running with out being threatened? To these questions Marxism has an answer that is an ‘ideology’ which helps to legitimize the prevalent system by manufacturing the consent even from the victimized people. An ideology, for Marxism, is a belief system and it functions to make its own failure. Hence, it is “a false ideal or ‘false consciousness’ whose real purpose is to promote the interests of those in power” (Tyson 55). Louis Althusser uses the term ‘ideology’ in the sense that it is ‘never fully articulated system of assumptions by which a society operates and which permeates everything it produces” (Ruthven 31). The function of ideology, for Ruthven, is to “justify the status quo and to persuade the powerless that their powerlessness is inevitable” (31). Such type of persuasion, in Antonio Gramsci’s term is called ‘hegemony’. Because of ideology and hegemonized mentality, the women in patriarchy think that they are inferior to the men in every term. Hence the housewives become ready to be confined only with in the household activities which are never paid. Similarly, the women who go for work outside the house become ready to work for lower wage. Hence, women in capitalist patriarchy are exploited economically, sexually, politically, and even psychologically.

Marxist feminists compare sex to work, men to capitalist, women to worker, women’s body to commodity, and male sexual desire to capitalist accumulation. There is no place for women’s sexual desire in patriarchy. Hence some of them see marriage as a form of ‘prostitution’. Not only the sexual services but, “housework, child care, and emotional support are also services sold by the prostitute-wife” (Tong 64). Therefore, in patriarchy

husband-wife relationship is like 'pimp prostitute' relation which is similar to the bourgeoisie – proletariat or employer – employee relationship. Tong quotes from Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

Prostitution is only a 'specific' expressions of the 'general' prostitution of the labor, and since it is a relationship in which falls not the prostitute alone, but also the one who prostitutes – and the latter abomination is still grater the capitalist etc. also comes under this head. (64)

Most of the Marxist feminists see suffering of exploited workers and oppressed wives and/or prostitutes in the same way and the only difference is the amount of suffering. Similarly, they see the difference between a prostitute and a wife as merely “a difference of degree, not of kind. Both sell themselves-that is, their sexual services and, in the case of wives, also their domestic and nurturing services-for economic livelihood” (64).

However, to analyze marriage as 'prostitution' will trivialize the pain and suffering of a real prostitute. Even the homogenization of prostitute under the term 'proletariat women' will bulldoze the many separate and secret realities of a 'prostitute'. For example, a Marxist feminist may argue that a housewife does an important work to create a base for the production of commodities and they advocate that she should be paid by the state. Similarly, they may argue that a women worker who produces commodities must be paid a good and equal wage to men. But, unlike a housewife and a factory laborer a prostitute does not produce commodities; rather she herself becomes a commodity produced by the capitalist patriarchy to be consumed by bourgeois men to fulfill their sexual desires. The main difference which is neglected by the mainstream Marxist feminism, between housewives and women workers, can be compared with commodities but prostitutes need not be compared with commodities, because they have already been commodified or reified. Hence, the issue of 'prostitution' should be looked from a different perspective. Jean Bethke Ekshtain admits

that “there is no single Marxist feminist perspective but several, depending upon which dimension of Marx’s thought is being turned to feminist purpose and why” (256). Therefore, a different perspective of Marxist feminism will be appropriate to analyze the issues of ‘prostitution’.

‘Prostitution’ is a practice of engaging in sexual activity, usually with individuals other than as a spouse or friend, in exchange for immediate payment of money or other valuable things. Prostitution may be of either sex and may engage in either heterosexual or homosexual activity, but historically most prostitution has been by females with males as clients. Prostitution has its history from the ancient time and it has been a universal phenomenon. Prostitutes are universally condemned but not the ‘prostitution’. Rather many countries or countries or communities force the women from poor economic background to involve into prostitution directly or indirectly either with the promise of livelihood and economic prosperity or in the name of culture and customs. Hence, prostitutes are severely victimized women who are more biased, more exploited, and more alienated in the society than the other groups of women.

No one is born prostitute. Rather they are made prostitute by the socio- economic and cultural circumstances. Marxist feminist, like labor, see prostitution as a class phenomenon. The unemployed and underemployed sell their bodies or become prostitutes when they and their family get stricken by grinding poverty, and when they feel that “it is their duty of moral obligation to pay their parents by earning money in any way they can” (Lim 2). Disusing about the causes of prostitution, Tong says:

Inequalities of wealth, then, are the cause of prostitution, just as they are of wage labor [...] the typical prostitute is an unemployed or underemployed female and the typical patron is an upper- or middle-class male- because only these men have enough to purchase the sexual services of women other than

their wives. As long as there is a bourgeois demand for prostitutes and as long as most women are paid no wages or inadequate wages economically dependent women will sell their bodies to man in order to support themselves and, in some instances, their children. (65)

Similarly, Emma Goldman also accepts the fact that prostitution is a widespread evil, for which capitalism is mostly responsible. She says, “Exploitation, of course; the merciless Moloch of capitalism that fattens on under-paid labor, thus driving thousands of women and girls into prostitution” (102).

In capitalist patriarchal society prostitutes are alienated not only simply as the wage laborer. Because what she sells is not her labor but it is her own body. Even her body does not belong to her. Tong, while talking about the alienation of prostitutes says:

Selling one self, whether as a wife or a prostitute, alienates one from one's work because that work is being done for another not for oneself. The concept is particularly appalling in the case of the prostitute, for what she is selling is what is closest to her: her body her sexuality. So, under capitalism a woman's sexuality becomes a commodity. [...], the wife prostitute and the prostitute proper become dehumanized and their value as persons is reduced to their market value. (64-5)

It is a bitter reality that a prostitute is alienated, dehumanized, biased, and exploited in the society. But it is amazing fact that the prostitutes are increasing at a rapid rate. Even the attempt of the feminists (or ‘bourgeois feminists’ in Marxist term) in the form of ‘Prostitution Prevention Act’, is not doing any progress. Because “where ever there is poverty, there is prostitution; and when poverty is careless so does prostitution” (Levine 5).

Until and unless this economic system of capitalism is changed there will be oppression and exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalists, and the poor women will not

stop to go into 'prostitution' for their own and their family's survival. Some of the critics see prostitutes as revolutionary figures. For them they dismantle the traditional gender role that defines male as a bread winner and female as subordinates who depend on their husbands and fathers for survival. Prostitutes in this sense are brave and responsible who become ready to sell even their body or sexuality for the survival of their family members. They sell their body while still preserving their soul. However, it is accepted that whether it is free or voluntary or coerced or involuntary prostitution, it is "violation of women's human rights and sever discrimination" (Lim 14).

Similarly, like housewives and laborers, prostitutes also contribute to create surplus value for the bourgeoisie. The brothels or many other institutions buy the girls in their early age from their poor parents at a lower price. They make those girls work for nothing. The girls are given low quality of food and lodging. They get physically psychologically and economically exploited from their early age. When the girls gradually enter into their teenage they start being exploited even sexually. They have to engage in sexual activities with clients in order to pay back their masters for their food and lodging. Their works during their childhood do not count at all. The master who kept the poor girls may sell them to the other persons for prostitution. Then get back all their investments on girls with the increment of surplus value. But the cost for the girls and the investment for their fooding and lodging are already paid by their unpaid child labor. The prostitutes, dance girls or bar girls who have to sell their sexuality constitute a great amount of surplus value for the capitalists. The lodges, restaurants, bars, and brothels who keep such girls and women sell not only their sexuality but also the different things like; foods and drinks at the twice or thrice price than their normal price in the other places. The customers or the clients pay a higher price not for things but for the entertainment they get from the girls and women working there either as a prostitute, a dance girl or a waitress. But those who really contribute high profit is paid

nothing or only very little of it. Hence, there is higher degree of sexual and economic exploitation of women in the brothels, bars, restaurants, and discos.

Anyway, what makes the system of 'prostitution' continuing is the ideology of patriarchy and of capitalism. Patriarchal ideology makes the women to feel themselves inferior in all terms. Similarly, capitalism forces them to earn money for survival at any cost. Sometimes, capitalism aestheticizes and glorifies 'prostitution' through the means of culture, customs, literature, and media. Actually capitalist knit a trap in which the women mostly from poor family, get trapped and involve into prostitution to serve their sexuality to bourgeois men.

Marxist feminist analyze 'prostitution' as an evil of capitalist patriarchy which exploits and subjugates a women or a prostitute economically, sexually psychologically, socially and even culturally; and they want to end it. They are against the patriarchy, and more aggressively against the capitalism which is the root of all sorts of unjust social relations. In this context, Ruthven writes:

Marxism identifies capitalism (and the modes of production which support it) as the material base of a class system which is the source of all oppression, and holds that the specific subjugation of women will end necessarily in that general demise of oppression which is to follow the destruction of capitalism. (28).

Since 'prostitution', for Marxist feminism, has its base on capitalism, to end prostitution we have to fight against capitalism first: "To fight capitalism is to fight prostitution" (Tong 65). Such a view takes patriarchy and capitalism as interrelated systems that assist each other.

June Levine, an expert on the prostitution studies, shows dissatisfaction with the feminist groups who externalize the problems of prostitutes "in an unconscious effort to avoid the painful confrontation of prostitution" in their lives, but neglect to dig out the causes

of prostitution (8). Hence she makes an appeal that “we must, as women, individually and collectively, claim economic independence, fight for it, believe in it” (8). ‘Exploitation of the women’ is the main motto of patriarchy, where as exploitation of the poor is of the capitalism. Capitalism is system in which most men as well as most women are oppressed and exploited. Hence, Bryson also concludes that “women’s oppression is or has become necessary to capitalism so that patriarchy can not be ended with out fundamental economic change” (258).

To conclude, the Marxist feminists’ view, regarding the ways to get the women, including the prostitutes, beyond the economic and sexual exploitation is that primarily the women most fight against the capitalism which forces women to work for no wage or low wage and even force them to become prostitutes. Until and unless the capitalist system of economy is changed, the women get exploited sexually, economically, and culturally even in the future, and the member of prostitutes will be increased in a faster rate.

III. Critique on Treating Geisha as Commodities in Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*

In Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*, the research unveils the subjugated position of economically poor women in a patriarchal capitalist society in Japan which entraps and use them as commodities in the name of cultural practice. And even compels to become a geisha or a prostitute. In the hands of patriarchal capitalists, a geisha, a cultural nomenclature of prostitute, is treated mere as a commodity. But exploitation and oppression of a female from an economically poor family begins right from her early childhood. In this autobiography, Sayo Masuda memorizes her past experiences that she experienced when she was a nursemaid, a novice geisha, an apprentice geisha, and a full-fledged geisha. Apart from her own experiences she documents the experiences, of the other geisha that also reinforce her realization that an economically poor female is no more than a commodity to be consumed by the bourgeois men. Such a commodification of female bodies results into subjugation economically, sexually, psychologically and culturally.

In capitalism, money, property and profit are the prime concerns. Even a human being is sold and bought if he/she becomes the source of profit. In a patriarchal capitalist society, poor females become the main victim to be commodified. Capitalists are always after the unpaid or low paid labor. They do not sympathize even a child of 5 or 6 years, if they get any profit from them. Born in 1925, Masuda was sent to work as a nursemaid at the age of six. She had to work very hard for the landowners without being paid. They would ill-treat her there. Despite of her hard working she had to live in hunger. She was provided neither a proper bed and clothing nor any wage for her work. Rather she would be punished severely for no crime at all. Neither had she any way to escape away nor could she bear the burden of work laden upon her. She was treated as a machine who worked constantly without being fed and paid.

When she was about 11 or 12, Masuda was sold to a geisha house (*okiya*) in Upper Suwa called the Takenoya. She was sold by her own mother because her family was in grinding poverty, and her mother needed money for the treatment of her husband. A girl from a poor family, in the capitalist economy becomes mere a commodity which is tradable. The commodification of a female or particularly, the commodification of a female child is one of the most disgusting evils of geisha system. Masuda writes:

When you were sold, your approximate worth was calculated in *tama*, meaning “jewels”, the euphemism used to describe the units in which geisha’s wages were calculated. At most it would be 100 yen, although plain creatures like me would have fetched only 30 yen. At that time, 1 *sho* [1.8 liters] of polished rice cost somewhere between 20 and 22 sen, the same as a pair of tabi socks, as I recall; so in today’s money that means. I was sold for about 20,000 yen. (43)

In this way, in the hands of a patriarchal capitalist society a poor girl is tradable commodity. But the more disgusting and bitter fact is that the parents would engage in that trade of their own daughter not only when “they must have been rather badly pressed financially to have sold their own child” (50), but also they would sell her time and again in one way or the other. In this context, she says;

Parents who’ll trade child for money once will continue to try to wring money from her some how or other. Once they hear their daughter’s become a fully fledged geisha, even if they don’t sell her again, they’re almost certain to turn up at least once or twice to wheedle a bit more money by extending her contract. (50)

So, in a capitalist society which always privileges money over all other things makes the poverty stricken parents sell their daughter in her childhood for the sake of a little bit amount of money.

‘No pay or low pay’ is one of the effective strategies of capitalist economy. Being indentured to a geisha house, Masuda had to follow all the commands of Mother, the owner of the geisha house. Along with the hard training to learn the geisha arts, she had to work very hard; “wipe down all the wood work, wash the clothes of all nine people in the house, run errands; [...] traipse after my Elder Sisters carrying their shamisen; and [...], fetch a change of clothes for them” (20). However, her work wouldn’t be counted at all, because neither she was paid nor did they lower down the credit account of investment upon her including the money given to her parents and the cost of her lodging, food, and training . Rather Mother sold Masuda’s virginity in order to payback her investment on her. Mother sold Masuda’s virginity first to Cockeye and also “to four more men one after another, and made a pile” (60). Mother would teach her to show the virgin like gestures while engaging in the sexual intercourse. Masuda just kept quiet and bent herself to the Mother’s will. Thereafter she realized that she was treated mere as a commodity. Hence she says, “From then on, I, who knew nothing of the value of money, was launched on the sort of life that could be bought and sold for money” (60).

In a patriarchal capitalist society the rich men possess more than one woman. Apart from a legal wife; they keep other women as mistresses to fulfill their sexual desires. Where as a woman and particularly a poor woman is mere a sex object or commodity to be bought, possessed and consumed according to the will of the bourgeois men. Masuda’s danna Cockeye, a rich but a morally degraded man, was “dreadfully possessive”. So with the efforts of the wealth and masculine power, he bought and possessed Masuda and became her danna. He would treat her mere as a commodity. Hence;

When he'd go on a trip, he'd sometimes book me out for the whole day, twenty four hours straight, and take me along. It was on these trips that the true misery of being a body for sale really hit me. It was obvious to anyone – such was the difference in our ages – that we couldn't even be parent and child; I was young enough to be his granddaughter. And yet Cockeye would speak me quite nonchalantly as if he were my husband. (65)

Being a dreadfully possessive man, Cockeye was not satisfied for being mere her danna. Rather he wanted to have every right upon her by buying her out of the contract and make her his mistress. Masuda found it depressing, because she was not free at all because only the possessor was changed. Therefore she realized that “either way there was a rope around your neck; what difference did it make who held the other end of it?” (81-82). No matter about who becomes the possessor it is always true that a geisha is possessed as a commodity.

The trap of capitalist system is so powerful and pervasive that it does not let any one to get out of it. It always entraps the poor people economically where as it may still promise the rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. But the capitalists do not realize that the economic liberty does not guarantee that no one would die of starvation. Where is hunger there is will not be happiness. Hence, the promise of capitalism is a false promise for poor people who do not have any property or money. The proletariat have nothing expect their own body. Hence, in order to survive they have to sell either their labor or their own body (sexuality). Even after she was freed from Cockeye, Masuda was not free in a real sense. She was still under the trap of the patriarchal capitalism which puts the poor people always in grinding poverty, and compels a female member of the family to adopt even the most humiliating profession like; prostitution. When Masuda and her little brother had nothing to eat and no money to move even a step, she had no option but only to sell herself. Hence, she begs her past enemy Hii-san to buy her for only 10 yen for a night. Hii-san becomes ready to

buy her but in a condition that she had to be prepared for anything he likes. He said, “I’ll buy you because I want to see you dance naked” (103). Though it was the most humiliating and disgusting thing, she becomes ready to do whatever he asked for. Hii-san made her not only dance naked, but also exploited her sexuality. Hii-san, who would treat a woman or a geisha mere as a plaything and a source of pleasure, once promised Tukiko, a geisha, to marry her but later on he denied when she was already pregnant. Being betrayed in love she did suicide. But that did not touch him anymore. Despite of lamenting upon his own bad treatment to a girl who loved him very much, he advocates of whatever he did. Hence he says;

I can’t stand gloomy women. I’ve always been looking for a little bird who can sing me a happy song. If you want to be loved, you better make an effort. Women who don’t make an effort who don’t get on with things they’re like birds that don’t sing. (79)

It shows that Hii-san compared a woman with a pet animal which serves for the pleasure of the possessor. Masuda shows how a poor female was dehumanized and commodified by the bourgeois men in the name of geisha system. But this ugly reality is hidden under the painting of culture.

In a patriarchal capitalist society poor women are tradable and consumable thing. In this text, the geisha have compared themselves directly with the things or commodities that are to be consumed. Elder Sister Karuta makes an analogical comparison between chestnuts and geisha. She says;

Customers are children and geisha are chestnuts [...], so you mustn’t just pop out of your shell of your own free will and say, ‘Oh, do come in’ [...] if they think there’s something delicious inside that shell, they’ll do anything to get at it, even if they have to bloody their hands on the burrs. (61)

As chestnuts are eaten or consumed by the children the geisha or their sexuality is consumed by the bourgeois men. Similarly, one of the Elder Sisters compares a geisha with kimono that is once bought used and then thrown away. She, in a bitter tone, says, “Suppose we buy a cotton kimono and then we decide we don’t like it. When we take it back, does the kimono get angry?” (64). As a kimono is once bought, used and the thrown away by a user, a geisha is also bought, used and thrown according to the will of bourgeois men.

A poor woman is commodified mainly for her sexuality which fulfils the sexual desire of bourgeois men. The money that is given for the 'virginity' or sexuality of a geisha does not go to the geisha herself, rather it goes to the owner of the geisha house. Geisha, for Masuda,

was a form of indentured service which meant that if you were popular and sold well, the geisha house had money and if you didn’t, it lost. Girls who didn’t sell well were 'shifted', as the expression goes and quickly sold to another geisha house. (44)

On the one hand the owners of the geisha house commodified the geisha. But, on the other hand, they did not pay any wage for their service. Hence, a geisha is exploited not only sexually rather she is exploited even economically. On the other, the patriarchal capitalist society legalizes such an unjust and disgusting inhuman system in the name of culture. Hence, geisha are exploited or subjugated politically and culturally by the society and the state mechanism. Because of the massive exploitation and oppression, the geisha are always alienated in many ways. The geisha are treated as an outcast in the society. All the human virtues of a person regarding the relationship to each other are automatically vaped and vanished. In such an unfair socio-economic system all have become dehumanized. Because of all these things a geisha lives with traumatic experiences even after she comes out of geisha life.

Therefore, by depicting the pathetic life story of a hot-springs-resort geisha in patriarchal capitalist society in Japan, main project of this autobiography is to explore how a geisha is subjugated sexually, economically and culturally for being a female from an economically poor family. Masuda in this autobiography shows her strong resentment towards such as unjust socio-economic system and expresses her strong desire to end this patriarchal capitalist system which exploits and oppresses the poor women sexually, economically, politically and culturally by commodifying their sexuality.

Geisha as Hegemonic Cultural Construction of Gendered Capitalist Ideology

A patriarchal capitalist society is based on both patriarchal ideology and capitalist ideology. Being a product of the position and interests of men patriarchal ideology always privileges masculine qualities and power over the feminine.

It inferiorizes, subjugates and exploits the women in one way or the other. Similarly being the product of the bourgeoisie, the capitalist ideology always privileges money and property over the human virtues and qualities. Hence, it automatically privileges the economically rich people over the poor. It always exploits and oppresses the proletariat class in one way or the other. In a patriarchal capitalist society patriarchal ideology and capitalist ideology are interrelated that assist each other. These ideologies are imposed upon the dominated classes even through the cultural practices. Women from an economically poor family, for they belong to dominated classes in both systems: capitalism and patriarchy, are exploited and subjugated in various ways. Being entrapped into the trap of patriarchal capitalism, the economically poor females internalize the patriarchal and capitalist ideologies and take them as granted. Then they become hegemonized so that they give consent to be exploited and oppressed further. To be ready to become a geisha or a prostitute is not her own interest of a poor female rather it is mere an acceptance of her subjugated position in a patriarchal capitalist society.

In Autobiography of a Geisha Masuda shows how the patriarchal capitalist society has strategically been successful to impose the patriarchal and capitalist ideologies according to the interests of the bourgeois men. Being unable to feed even a 5 year daughter her parents sent Masuda to work as a nursemaid in the land owners' house where the things she knew was "only that hunger was painful and human beings were terrifying, that was all" (12). Since the very beginning of her life, Masuda was taught how painful it was to be in poverty. To make her learn the hazardous life in poverty she was forced to work very hard without proper food and clothing. When she was a nursemaid in a landowner's house the details about how did she faced the hunger and cold can be seen in the following lines:

As for filling my stomach, I was entirely at the mercy of others for my meals. [...] If there were left overs, then even with just that one bowl I'd be full; but if nothing had been, then that was that.[...] It was not only the nights that were cold. When I was minding a child, even though my back would be warm from carrying it, my feet would be as cold as ice. In winter no matter how cold it was, I was never allowed to wear socks; and so I would lift on leg, doing this over and over again so that I was always standing on one leg. That's how I got the nickname 'Crane'. (12-13)

Since Masuda had to face the grinding poverty from the time she can remember, she automatically realized that she was born poor. It is first ideological impression upon her. While facing the pangs of hunger and shivering cold, Masuda had to endure the burden of hard work and severe punishment for no crime. "They woke me up at about five in the morning and made me do the washing in the stream.[...]. When washing was finished, I'd do the cleaning and then at last it was the time for breakfast; after that the actual child minding began" (14). The imposition of overload works gradually weakened her not only physically, but also psychologically she began to interiorize herself. Once, the landowners, to test her

honesty, “had left 2 sen some place where she was likely to see it, and the money had disappeared” (14). Masuda, who had not even seen it, was accused of stealing that money. She was told to kneel down and apologize. But she denied. Then,

I was locked in the store house, and they didn't let me out for two days. There were bales of unhulled rice piled up in the store house. By poking my fingers into them I managed to extract a bit of rice, which I chewed up, but for two days I didn't have a single drop of water to drink. [...] I simply endured whatever was done to me and live in constant fear. (14-15)

This event taught her the pain of hunger and punishment. Similarly, when she got hungry, Masuda would go to the melon field despite of the constant threatening and punishment. Gradually, all these behaviors to her were making Masuda to know the pain of hunger and punishment. For a person the prime concern becomes to fill his/her stomach when he/she is very hungry. But, in spite of providing her proper food and clothing, they discharged Masuda from the child minding job to tougher job, “weeding the fields and in the autumn, driving home oxcarts loaded with unhulled rice from the rice paddies” (16). It shows the cruelty of bourgeoisie towards a female child from an economically for family. The continuous on durance of all these cruelties made Masuda hegemonized.

By forcing the poor girl to face such a grinding poverty and endure the pangs of extreme hunger, cold and severe punishment, the patriarchal capitalist society filled up all the cooked beliefs and values of capitalism within her childish mind. Since her childhood she began to believe that it was her own and her parents' fault to be in poverty. The bourgeois society succeeded in its tactics because the victims of the prevalent socio-economic system. Being enmeshed into the trap of the patriarchal capitalism, Masuda began to internalize all the patriarchal capitalist ideologies since her early childhood. Because of the constant imposition of such ideologies, she is hegemonized at her early ages. Before she was sold in a

geisha house she had already been prepared for that. Remembering those painful days she says, “Yet even if I had not been sold as a geisha, for someone like me. There could never be any road to happiness” (18). Hence, the patriarchal capitalist ideology gets success to entrap the dominated class socially and economically, and even to hegemonize them.

Sometimes in such socio-economic system the ideology comes to work through “cultural productions- literature, film, painting, music, television programs, commercial advertisements, education, popular philosophy, religion, forms of entertainment and so on” (Tyson 57). The cultural production plays a significant role to make the ideology influential in a socio-economic system. Hence, in this text, the patriarchal capitalist ideology is practiced through the geisha culture or system. In the name of art and a source of entertainment, geisha are glorified and aestheticized. There is the promise of luxurious and happier life for a geisha. The patriarchal capitalist society, to hide the ugly sides of the geisha system, has painted this system with the color of culture. On the other hand to make the poor girls or children engage in this profession it uses different strategies.

When Masuda was recently sold in a geisha house as a novice, she was first taught about the importance of beauty in the world of geisha. Hence, she reflects:

In my heart, child though I was, I was ashamed of myself and longed to be beautiful. I'd come to believe that to be beautiful was the most important thing in the world, and the most beneficial. A beautiful girl sold well, which meant that she could do just as she pleased lord it over everyone else. (22)

It shows that 'beauty' was an ideological obligation for a geisha. Similarly, Mother's treatment to a novice or a geisha would differ according to her beauty and popularity. Hence, being ideologically driven that she had to become beautiful, cute and sexy she would prepare herself for that. Memorizing how she eagerly devoted herself to the preparations, she says;

I had to study how to make them feel that I was cute and sexy. First, you watch a customer's face and wait until your eyes meet. The moment your eyes meet, you flutter your eyelashes two or three times, then lower your eyes, and look at him again.[...]. You have to pretend that your cheeks are blushing uncontrollably put your hands to your face, stand up and rush out into of the mirror. (56)

It shows that she was hegemonized by the ideology, which created the discourse that to be beautiful, cute and sexy is good and beneficial for a geisha.

In order to hegemonize the poor girls, the capitalist patriarchy uses many other strategies also. Masuda as a novice had to do many works, but she was still unpaid. She was ill-treated by Mother and by the Elder Sisters as well. In comparison to her life, the life of the Elder Sisters, who were the geisha, seemed to be luxurious and happier. This fact had a strong impact on her child mentality. Hence, "I, too, though I couldn't have admitted it, felt the same longing to be a geisha. Because they wore pretty kimono and didn't have to do the washing, and they didn't have to run errands either" (25). In this way, he childish mind got hegemonized.

To get the poor girls hegemonized their own parents also played a great role. When Masuda's mother came to visit her in the hospital she made her daughter realize how pathetic condition was it in which they were living. She said "If I don't get back to work, everyone at home'll starve. I can't stay with you any longer. There is an invalid at home and four children waiting for me [...], do as they say and make them like you" (37). It seemed that her mother came there to persuade her to obey her masters rather than to visit the sick daughter. Similarly, even the Elder Sisters who have already become a geisha and the other women who are now ex-geisha play the role of the agents of the patriarchal capitalist society. Mother was once been herself a geisha. But, now she has become the owner of a geisha house. Now

she forgets the painful days of her past. Being totally affected by the capitalist ideologies, she evaluates everything in terms of profit and loss. Hence, she herself is exploiting and oppressing the novices and geisha. Sometimes, in order to make more and more money.

The retired geisha are employed as the teachers in the geisha school. They also become the agent of patriarchal capitalism. The retired geisha may have the false conscious that being a geisha has been beneficial even in their retired life. However, they forget that they were retired because the clients and customers disliked them. The fact is that the male customers prefer the younger and younger girls to the older ones, because they believe that they can “rejuvenate themselves by having sex with very young virgins [...], protect themselves from the threat of HIV (AIDS) by selecting children” (Lim 176). It is type of superstition flourished on the patriarchal capitalist ideological beliefs. The ideological beliefs about having sex with virgins and the younger girls drive the interest of the customers. It is said that, “Any geisha over the age of twenty was branded a has-been and there weren’t many of them” (44). Unknown about this reality, the retired geisha, by being the geisha teachers or Mothers of the geisha houses, easily accepted to play the role of agent of the patriarchal capitalism, and assist to exploit oppress or torture the novices or younger sisters. The domineering and torturing behavior of Elder Sister Takechiyo, who “would wake me up in the middle of the night and send me out to buy cigarettes” (26), made Masuda very puzzled. It is all because the unjust socio-economic system taught everybody that the domination of a poor by a rich, a female by a male, younger by an elder and a weaker by a stronger is natural. Hence, such practice is no more than an ideological obligation.

If a person is influenced by certain ideologies, his/her horizon of thinking, imagination and even of dream is narrowed. When she worked as a nursemaid, she thought that she faced such troubles of hunger and cold because she had no parents there. Hence, when her uncle came there to take her to he mother’s place she thought “other children have

parents, and so they go to school. They get sweet. They get to wear socks. Maybe I'll get to wear socks, too" (17). The discriminatory society teaches you that if you are poor and if you are an orphan it is your fate to suffer throughout your life. Masuda "was a fatherless child and thus a social embarrassment" (17) and her family had no money or property at all. Hence, she realized that there was no way to escape such a pathetic condition except being a geisha. She gets "convinced that mastering these arts was essential to my survival" (57). In this way, she is hegemonized and becomes ready to live her life as geisha.

To dominate or exploit the subjugated class, the indirect way of entrapping through the imposition of ideology and hegemony does not become always successful. Therefore, sometimes the state directly participated such domination and exploitation either as witness or by legalizing them through different mechanisms. In this context, Masuda writes;

When you became fully –fledged geisha, there was an exam that was attended by the dance teacher and shamisen teacher, your Mother, and Elder Sister from your geisha house, the head of the geisha association, the police and the people from the geisha registry office. When you were sold, too, the police and someone from the registry office were called as witnesses. (44)

In that Japanese society, the geisha system is legalized by the state itself though it was the human trafficking in real sense. To keep the ugly sides of the geisha system unseen, the patriarchal bourgeois government managed a complex mechanism. In such mechanism the geisha would be mere the commodities to be handovered from one to another. The customers would contact to the restaurants to get a geisha for sexual service. The restaurants would contact to the geisha registry office where "the nameplates for all the geisha hung in the registry office, arranged in order to popularity. On the one side it said 'free' and on the other 'engaged'. So it was easy to see who was available" (44-45). The registry office, on the other, would contact to the geisha house. Even the "wages were passed from the restaurants to the

geisha registry office, and from there they came to the geisha house” (44). In this way the geisha system was given a form of complicated mechanism.

For, it was the patriarchal capitalist government; it always supported the bourgeois men and always went against the poor people, and more inhumanely against the poor women. While being exhausted and frustrated of being a geisha, they wanted to escape from the geisha houses in search of their freedom; the government would not let them to do so. Rather, “there were plenty of geisha who had run away, but the police always picked them up immediately; not one of them had ever managed to get away even for two days” (68).

In this way, by imposing the 'repressive ideologies' and hegemonizing the dominated class the patriarchal capitalist society in Japan compelled the females from economically poor family to involve into such a humiliating profession as a geisha or a prostitute. To get the proletariat females ideologically imposed and hegemonized the oppressors entrapped the poor females economically and culturally from the very beginning of their life. Nevertheless, once when they were entrapped into such a pathetic condition they would never come outside of it, rather they followed the ideological beliefs and values in order to survive. In addition, some of them themselves became the agent of such unjust socio-economic system. Even some of the geisha who wanted to escape from such a pathetic condition, the bourgeois government directly interrupted them and forced them to go back to their geisha life where they were treated mere a commodities.

In the patriarchal capitalist Japanese society, a poor female is commodified in the name of geisha system. A geisha is exploited sexually as a sex object, economically as an unpaid or underpaid service provider, socially as a social outcast, culturally as a victim in the name of culture, and psychologically as an alienated self. Such exploitation and oppression of a poor female are practiced upon them even from their early ages.

When Masuda was sent to the landowners as a nursemaid at the age of five or six, she had to work very hard. However, neither had they paid for her work nor they provided her proper fooding, lodging and clothings. She had to live in extreme hunger and shivering cold. In addition to that, she was punished severely for no crime at all. She would go to the melon field when she got very hungry. She would forget all their warnings and her promise or apology when she got hungry. Hence, they would punish her slapping her on the cheek or “thrusting a child’s nappy under my nose” (15), for her disobedience. How a disgusting and inhumane behave to a child! They made her work without pay and often gave physical and psychological tortures upon her, but always neglected her needs. When their 2 sen was disappeared, they severely punished her without any evidence. For Masuda, they did so because, “with no evidence, they couldn’t very well accuse an adult of stealing it, so most likely they bullied me as a warning to other servants” (15). In this way, she was made a scapegoat. Once when they thought her to be untrustworthy to look after their children, they made her work in the field. The work in the field was tougher and unbearable to such little child. However, they did not care about it. Rather they had severely beaten her just because she was helped by a neighbor. Hence, it shows that the rich men always exploited the child labor for no wage. Not only that, but, by beating and scolding her severely and frequently, they dominated and subjugated her physically as well as psychologically.

Sayo Masuda, for she was a girl from a poor family, was the victim of sexual exploitation even since her early childhood. The form of sexual exploitation was a bit different from the way a young woman is often exploited. She memorizes,

I suppose it was then that the children would ask. 'Hey, nurse, are you a boy or a girl?' And I would pull up my skirts and show them my bottom. In the end they found it so funny that whenever they saw me they would jeer, 'Pull in up! Pull it up!' When I turned eight or nine, although no one taught me, I came to

understand, by instinct I suppose, what it was to feel shame. And then if I tried to escape them, they would bar the way and tell me through 'Nurse, Crane monkey baby!' they would jeer. 'Is your bum bright red?' (13)

It shows how she was made humiliated sexually by the other children. All these acts done upon her indicate that the oppression by gender and class is seen even among the children. The children from the rich or middle class family would dominate Masuda sexually and physically, because she was a poor female child away from her parents. The other children would enjoy her sexuality by making her show her sexual organs. The children treated her as a sex object, a source of sexual pleasure. Such a discriminatory and shameful practice among the children enhances us to understand that the gender and class oppression was very deeply rooted in that patriarchal bourgeoisie Japanese society.

The series of exploitation and domination falls upon her throughout her life in one way or the other. When she was sold to a geisha house the way she was exploited and oppressed was different to some extent from the way she had been when she was nursemaid. The geisha house and the geisha school were like the work camps where she had to learn many things for she was a would-be geisha. Apart from the imposed hard training, she had to work a lot in the geisha house, like; cleaning the house, washing others clothes, running errands and serving the Elder Sisters and Mother. When she was a novice, she was no more than a servant or in a more valid term as slave who provided services for no wage because she was sold to them.

Masuda memorizes some anecdotes that she experienced, witnessed, or heard when she was a novice. The money- minded people the owner of the geisha house were so cruel and treacherous that they severely punished the novices for no causes or for minor causes. After being depressed of Takemi's death, when Karuta denied go to work, Mother beat her severely. Masuda says:

Mother was so angry she stuffed a snowball down the front of her kimono and finally pulled the kimono right off her. [...] She grabbed Karuta by the hair and pushed her face down into the water. [...] On her feet were lots of little bun marks. They were scars where Mother had stubbed out her cigarettes. [...] Mother was holding Karuta's feet down and pressing a hot iron against them. Karuta was gritting her teeth and glaring furiously at Mother. (32-33)

However, no matter how much she was punished severely, Karuta did not attempt any resistance, but endured them all. While Mother was beating Karuta severely, Masuda could not stay still without doing anything. Hence, she says, "I blindly flew at Mother at the top of my lungs" (33). However, the cruel and treacherous Mother, the owner of the geisha house poured out her anger even over the little girl Masuda. In her rage, Mother flung Masuda down the stairs. Then, her legs got cracked and she was hospitalized. Because of the cracked leg, she was in so much pain that she could not bear. The rumor that her leg should be amputated kept her in agony, sorrow and fear. Being so much depressed of their condition, worried about future and fed up with life, Masuda and Karuta decided to suicide. However, at the very last moment of suicidal attempt, because of Masuda's fear to die, they jumped off the railroad tracks. That made Masuda's condition worse. She says, "My leg was much worse from the fall, and a huge ugly scar would remain for the rest of my life" (36). The ugly scar on her leg always reminded of her painful past days. The ugly scar is a symbol of her pain suffering and tortures she faced in the past.

The practice of severe physical punishment and mistreatment did not result only into physical pain and suffering. Rather such acts sometimes caused even the death. Masuda memorizes an anecdote she heard when she was a novice, which reveals how a child was killed for eating a sweet cake worth 1 sen. She says;

Around that time, I heard a child from another geisha house, with whom I'd often trained at the geisha school, had been killed [...], for all she'd done was eat one sweet cake worth 1 sen. Her mother had caught her eating it and stuffing a rag into her mouth, said, "If you are so hungry then eat cupboard. Then everyone just forgot about her. By the time they remembered and dragged her out, her body was cold. How she must have suffered! (30)

It shows how disgusting and degraded such a money-minded person can be. The owners of the geisha house not only punished the novice severely but also killed her only because she ate one sweet cake worth 1 sen when she was very hungry. The life of poor child for the rich people counted nothing more than a cake. They should have been given the penalty according to their crime. But the parents of the child were summoned for 100 yen. Hence, they did not do even reporting to the police about the murder. The rich people took the life of a poor female child for 1sen and escaped the convict of murder just for 100 yen. This anecdote helps us to understand how the bourgeoisie exploited, tortured and oppressed the working class people with the power of their capital or money.

Masuda herself and other geisha experienced the most painful and unbearable exploitation, oppression and torture when they were an apprentice or a full-fledged geisha. Experience of sexual exploitation and sexual violence is almost identical to all geisha. A geisha enters into her geisha life when she makes her danna, or patron. A rich man, who wants to become a danna of a girl, buys her virginity in a certain amount of money fixed by the owner of the geisha house. In geisha system, a girl's virginity is sold in her childhood, before the age of 18. Then the girl should engage in the frequent sexual activities for her survival and extra earnings. Hence, the child prostitution is the main aspect of geisha system. Here, Masuda and many other geisha became the victim of capitalist patriarchy that exploited their sexuality since when they were children, below the age of 18.

Mother of the geisha house sold Masuda's virginity not only to Cockeye; rather she sold her virginity to several other men. She instructed her to show the virgin-like gestures while engaging into sexual intercourse. Once when Karuta was teaching Masuda about the ways of showing virgin-like gestures suggested her to prick on her vagina with thorns. Apart from being sexually exploited, how troublesome and painful would it be to hurt or wound such a sensitive organ on one's self? It was their compulsion to engage into sexual intercourse though they felt so much disgusted to sleep with others. In this context Masuda talks about Tsukiko (Miciko) and says;

Tsukiko seemed to find sleeping with danna the most painful thing of all. On mornings after she'd spend the night with someone, she'd jump into the bath as soon as she got back and scrub her whole body with soap so many times it was as if she were trying to cleanse her very sins. (75)

However, how much they disliked or disgusted to have sex with others did not matter at all because they were compelled to engage in such activities in this exploitative socio-economic system.

Masuda documents the sexual exploitation not only of the geisha; rather she keeps the records of how a poor girl, who was not even in this field, was raped by an adult man. It was Sennari who experienced such a painful and dreadful event herself. Sennari said to Masuda;

I finished school when I was fourteen and right after that I was sent into service at a fish monger's in Kawasaki. I'll never forget the fourteenth of December, when his wife took the children to her parents for a visit. That same night the old man had his way with me. Even when you're sold as a geisha, they leave you alone until you're sixteen, but I was only fourteen! Don't you think that was cruel? Then he gave me 50 sen and told me not to tell anyone. (66)

Hence, Sennari would take the 50- sen coin in her palm and stare at it. It shows that no matter either a girl is geisha or not, if she is poor child she is victimized sexually by a rich man with the power of his money and masculinity. The fish monger exploited her sexuality and damaged her whole life, because Sennari was a girl from an economically poor family and she had to go into service at him alone.

Though she was out of geisha life, Masuda had to prostitute herself when she was in trouble of money crisis. Once when she had nothing to eat, no fare to go to meet Karuta for help and no one to help her, she became ready to sell herself for a night for only 10 yen. Hii-san, her former enemy, became ready to give her money in the condition that she should dance naked. She danced naked according to his will, but when she finished dancing and moved for her kimono, “the man lunged at me like a wild animal. Without resisting or reacting in any way I lay down. Feeling the tears stream down my cheeks, I thought of my little brother who would be waiting for me, shivering with cold” (104). Masuda gets trapped into an economic trap. So she agrees to dance naked in front of Hii-san, a rich man and her former enemy, she had not only to dance naked, rather he also exploited her more by having sexual intercourse with her forcefully in a wild manner. Next time, when the money that Masuda and her brother saved was finished on the brother’s treatment, and when they needed extra money for medicine and other needs, Masuda once again went into prostitution. She “went to work in a place called Hasuike, the local 'flower-and-willow' district [...] Nights I worked and the days I spent with my brother in the hospital” (129-30). Hence, in a careful analysis we find that it is the unjust socio-economic system particularly, the bourgeois patriarchy, that always entraps and exploits the female, either a child or an adult from an economically poor family.

The sexual exploitation and violence did not end mere into a short span of pain and suffering, rather they brought so many other negative consequences in their health aspect as;

unwanted pregnancy, miscarriage, venereal disease and even the death. Because of having sex with several men, “Elder Sister Takemi was apparently suffering from peritonitis brought on by gonorrhoea [...] Her whole body would be swollen when she woke up in the morning” (27). When Takemi was hospitalized for treatment, it was too late. Hence, “six days after she was admitted, she went to paradise” (31). Takemi, who “was sacrificed by her parents and then this greedy hag” never enjoyed anything in her whole life (32).

Once, Masuda herself was in trouble when she became pregnant. Being pregnant was the most troublesome state for a geisha. So Elder Sister Karuta, who said, “You know, there’s nothing so pitiful as the sight of a geisha who’s pregnant. You can’t dance with that big belly” (65), advised Masuda to have miscarriage herself by doing physically difficult activities. Then, when she followed Karuta “the creature that should have been born as my child had turned into a mess of blood and miscarried” (66). She suffered physical pain and bleeding for few days even after her miscarriage. These are a few examples of negative consequences brought by the sexual exploitation and violence upon the geisha by the bourgeois men.

One of the most remarkable consequences of the severe physical punishment and sexual exploitation was the traumatic experience with long term effects. Elder Sister Shizuka “was moody one moment she’d be patting you on cheek, the next she’d slap it. And once every month she’d cry uncontrollably” (28). Actually, she had a crying disease because of her psychological trauma. Similarly, because of the traumatic experiences caused by rape in her childhood, Sennari would always “take a silver 50- sen coin out of an amulet case she kept at her waist, place it on palm of her hand, and stare intently at it” (54). Hence, she is psychologically traumatized by that single event throughout her life. Similarly, because of the ugly scar on her leg Masuda was always ashamed, and she developed an inferiority complex on her own mind. That was also a traumatic effect of her exploitation and torture in her past.

Usually, the geisha would remain unmarried throughout her life. Some times, even when the geisha got married with someone else, the conjugal life would end very soon. Masuda talks about a geisha who would go with a man “then, six month or a year later, she’d be back, working as a geisha again” (157). It was because the men should leave her when the money she had was finished. Masuda talks also about another geisha who was accused of transforming the sexual disease to the customer. She had loved that man very much; but he made her to pay compensation of 50,000 yen. Therefore, she “was so mad I got a carving knife from the kitchen and tried to stab him, but I couldn’t do it” (158). This reveals how a male customer would blackmail a geisha, and exploit her not only sexually but also economically.

The massive burden of work for no wage or under wage, as faced by the poor females, and as documented by Masuda in her autobiography, reflects the physical as well as economic exploitation of the poor females. Masuda was not paid for her hard working when she was a nursemaid and a novice. Her work did not help her to reduce the contract either. Even when she began to go to the parties “all my earnings- no matter how much I might make- would go to the geisha house; not a whit could be put toward reducing her contract” (42). While mentioning about the earnings of a geisha and the facilities given to her Masuda says:

The two years after you’d made your debut as a fully fledged geisha were on 'full keep', *marugakae*: everything you made both wages and tips went to your house. And the house still provided your clothing and food. The two years after that, you were a 'tip taker', *goshugidori*, because the geisha house received your wages but you got to keep the tips. Your formal Kimono were made for you, but you had to provide your own everyday wear. (44)

The owners of the geisha house became richer and richer because of the labor of the geisha who are unpaid or underpaid. The geisha house made money by selling the geisha's sexuality. On the other hand, the exploitative capitalist patriarchy used a trick to exploit them. The wages "were passed from the restaurants to the geisha registry office, and from there they came to the geisha house" (44). However, the girls who provided the service were deprived of any wages.

The geisha are indentured at least for ten years, so they have to work for 10 year and one more year to show gratitude towards the owners of the geisha house, but for no wage. As a novice, they had to work hard for no wage. When they grew older and earned by going to the restaurants that earning also went to the geisha house. The customers gave the apprentice geisha only "sponge cake" or "chocolate" (52). Her virginity would be sold for a pile of money, not only at once, but for many times. The danna who bought a geisha once would get free sexual service. In this way, in the bourgeois capitalist Japanese society the poor girls were exploited sexually as well as economically.

Sometimes the parents would buy their daughter out from the geisha house, but they would sell her again with a profit or surplus value. Elder Sister Shizuka's parents redeemed her not to make her free but to sell her to another geisha house for more prices. It is the capitalism, which made all people believe that money is the greatest of all things. Hence, the poor parents sold even their own daughters for money. Even after the indentured period was ended, because of the greed of money, the parents "would sell her again to another house or "wheedle a bit more money by extending her contract" (50). In this way the parents themselves exploited their daughters economically by selling them for profit or surplus value.

Even after they were retried from the geisha life, they would not be free from the exploitation of many kinds. Masuda, in her ex-geisha life, was frequently been in starvation. Despite of their hard working, there was always the lack of proper food, clothing and

accommodation for the poor people. When Masuda reached the house of her aunt, there she not only saw the live picture of poverty, but also experienced it herself. Masuda went to work in a saw mill but “by the evening of my first day of work, I was always exhausted I felt as if the bones of my arms and legs had been pulverized” (100). There the workers were given very low kind of dishes. Because of the low quality of food and hard working, Masuda got not only the physical pain; rather she suffered a high fever also. When Masuda returned to the town, there too, she had to work very hard. Sometimes she worked as street stall operator, and as a peddler. However, it was very hard even to survive. Sometimes, Masuda and her brother would go early in the bed without eating anything in order to avoid hunger. Her brother believed that “once you’re asleep you forget you’re hungry” (112). At least twice again, Masuda had to sell herself as a prostitute when she was in trouble because of the scarcity of money.

Therefore, in this way, with the power of money in the Japanese society the bourgeoisie always exploited, oppressed and tortured the poor working class people. Since the society was patriarchal, the main victims were the females. The geisha system, therefore, was given the form of cultural practice so that bourgeois patriarchy could exploit a poor female not only sexually and economically, but also socially and psychologically.

Alienation of Geisha

Commodification and exploitation of the poor females have their causes rooted in the socio- economic system, which is exclusively bourgeois and masculine, and, hence, discriminatory. Such an exclusive and discriminatory society always not only commodified, but also exploited, oppressed and tortured a poor female, either a child, a young or an adult. The society not only compelled them to become a nursemaid, or a geisha, but it also behaved them as a social outcast. Hence, another consequence of the patriarchal capitalist society was the alienation of the economically poor females in different ways. In this autobiography,

Sayo Masuda shows how she and the other geisha felt alienated in the bourgeois patriarchal Japanese society.

In such a discriminatory society, as Rosemarie Tong believes, “human existence loses its unity and wholeness in four basic ways” (44). Masuda herself and other geisha as prostitutes, a kind of wage laborers are alienated no less than a laborer in the factory. For Tong, the workers are first alienated from the product of their work. It is because, he says:

Not only do workers have say in what commodities they will or will not produce, but the fruits of their labor are snatched from them, so that the satisfaction of determining when, where how and to whom these commodities will be sold is denied to them. In short, what should partially express and constitute their being –as workers confronts them as a thing apart, a thing alien. (44)

As geisha are sold and bought mainly for sexual service, there is no difference between a geisha and a prostitute. Masuda herself admits this reality, hence, questions: “If a geisha or a maid sleeps with a customer and gets paid, isn’t that prostitution?” (58). To look from Tong’s perspectives, selling oneself or being sold as a prostitute or a geisha, a female gets alienated from her own work, because the work, the sexual service, is done for the customers or for the geisha owners, not for oneself. Mother determined to sell Masuda’s virginity when she was 16. Masuda was also ready to become a geisha for her survival-so she went into bed to offer Cockeye her virginity. However, neither she was paid, nor she would enjoy sex, her work. Rather she says, “It wasn’t a matter of liking it or disliking it; I was just determined that would get him to like” (60). In a consumerist capitalist society, the costumers are taken as the gods who would be offered different products and commodities according to their will and interest. Here, in this text the poor females are offered to the rich men as the commodities to be consumed to satisfy their sexual desires. The fact that the geisha had no say even in her

own body or sexuality shows that the geisha are alienated from their own work, sex. The poor females are compelled to be involved into the prostitution for their survival. All the things about when, where, how and to whom their body or sexuality would be sold was determined by the owners of the geisha house, not by themselves. Even their earnings would go to the geisha house and geisha registry office, not to the geisha themselves. Hence, they are alienated from their own work, sex.

The geisha are alienated also from themselves, because the profession they do has dehumanized them. Instead of being called by their own name, she was called by different other names like, 'Nursie', 'Crane', 'low', etc. She says: "At the age of twelve after coming to this hospital, I was told my name for the first time" (39). Until she was twelve, Masuda herself did not know her name. The people, both the children and the adults, treated her not as a human being, rather as an animal or as an object or a plaything. She was always being called "Monkey baby!" (17). So once, when she was six, Masuda herself was confused whether her mother was a real human being or not. Being depressed of her own pathetic condition, Masuda realized that she had grown up as abandoned dog. Such a sense of alienation was aroused in her since her childhood, because she was dehumanized in the discriminatory society.

The sense of alienation from oneself exceeds throughout the life of a geisha, especially because of the discriminatory socio-economic system. Cockeye, who was allowed to have many mistresses, made Masuda his own mistress as his Number Three. However, Masuda, who fell in love with Matoyama-san, was not allowed even to meet him. Knowing about their relationship, Cockeye treated Masuda very badly and gave her many troubles. Cockeye could buy several girls and make his mistresses, but Masuda had no right even to meet a man whom she loved. She was not allowed to love and to be loved.

Because of the constant physical and sexual exploitation on Elder Sister Takechio had turned out to be “bad tempered and domineering” (26). Being highly affected by the capitalist thinking, when she was a pedlar Masuda became so much money minded. She says “In those days I’d become a perfect demon for money: anything I thought would make money. I’d do” (127). She was so materialized and money minded that she was less careful about her own sick brother whom she loved most. She says:

And so I managed to save up a bit of money, little though it was and it looked as if our hopes were just on the point of materializing. Then, in the summer of 1952, my brother suddenly said that his stomach hurt and took to his bed. At first I was so engrossed in making money that I did not pay much attention but he seemed to have a fever, too, [...] if he was not admitted to hospital soon, he could die. (128)

It shows that the capitalism in one way or other dehumanizes the human beings.

While treating the geisha or poor females inhumanely, the bourgeoisie themselves lost their own human traits, and hence got dehumanized. The bourgeoisie were so materialized that they would calculate all things always in terms of profit and loss. At Elder Sister Takemi’s death Mother wept and said, “I’ve never known such a good girl. She never disobeyed, she just went quietly about earning her keep. You should all learn a lesson from her!” (32). It seems that she wept because of the loss of the profit or surplus value that she would earn by selling her or her sexuality, not because of love for her. She would abandon or sell a geisha “when she thought you would not be any further use to her. Then when she thinks she can get something out of you, she works you half to death!” (41). Being betrayed in love Tsukiko (Michiko) killed herself. But the totally materialized and money minded Mother was very much furious even at the dead body. In her anger she said, “That shameless ingrate! Who the hell does she think she’s been living on all this year? I’ve spend more than

300 yen on that bitch!” (76). She would scold and severally beat a geisha for a minor mistake. She would behave as if she had no sympathy, love and kind towards the geisha. Hence, by treating the poor girls inhumanely Mother was dehumanizing herself. Cockeye, Masuda’s danna, bought her out from the geisha house not for her freedom but to have complete possession of her. He took Masuda mere as a sex object that can be sold, bought and used. Similarly, Hii-san, the son of the owner of a factory, pretended to love Tsukiko but indeed he had taken her no more than as a play thing or a small singing birds. When he was questioned about his relationship with her, he replied that “I’ve always been looking for a little bird who can sing me a happy song” (79). It shows how the bourgeoisie, by treating the poor females as non-human, dehumanized them; and how they got themselves dehumanized. Anyway, being dehumanized in the capitalist patriarchy the geisha became alienated from themselves.

On the other hand the geisha are alienated from other human beings. They are alienated from their own parents since their early childhood. Masuda, a fatherless child of five or six years, was sent to work as a nursemaid. Then when she was 12, she was brought back at her home, but next day she was sold to a geisha house. Hence, Masuda was always away from her own family.

Similarly, even in places where she worked as a nursemaid, a novice or as a geisha she was alienated from the other human beings. There in the home of landowners, Masuda, “would be scolded severely for the least little things and lived in constant fear of any sign of people” (11). Since then she began to think that “human beings were terrifying” and one of her main concerns was to hide herself from the other people (12). Masuda was not tormented only by the adults but also by the children. She says:

The children would spit something’s out onto the ground. Then they would make me get down on all fours, bark 'yap yap' and run round in circles and then pick the thing up with my mouth. If I were to say 'No!' they would do

something horrible to me, stamp on my toes, pinch me or kick me. Out of fear I would give in. I must have made a good toy for those children. (13)

In her childhood, Masuda, hence, got isolated from the other children also. Once, Masuda was helped by a neighbor. But even that neighbor who seemed to be helpful turned out to be a tattletale. Then she came to believe that “never trust anyone that was the lesson that this experience engraved on my heart” (16).

The capitalist economy had encouraged the geisha to see each other as competitors in the sex market. Hence, the geisha, though they get exploited, oppressed and tortured by the same economic system, they sometimes have hostile relationship with each other. Masuda memorizes how she was tormented by the other geisha when she was an apprentice. She says:

When I started going to parties, I was more frightened of the older geisha than I was of the customers. [...]. You can be bullied in all sorts of ways. The song 'Shallow River' was one of their favorite ways of tormenting apprentices. [...]. Once the evil eye had fallen on you, you'd be forced to do it all over again, two or three times or more. Most of the girls would burst into tears. (45).

It seems that the older geisha tormented the apprentices in such a bad way, because they take the apprentices as their competitors. In the geisha house also, the Elder Sisters would make a lot of troubles for the younger sisters. There would be a sense of competition between one geisha and the other. Once Masuda slept with a customer who was the danna of a geisha named Kingo. Masuda was unknown that the customer was someone's danna. Being so much furious with Masuda for she slept with her danna. Kingo insulted her very much. Later on, Masuda and other Elder Sisters paid the mistreatment back to Kingo, and revenged her. Because of the capitalist economy and unfair human relationship one geisha is alienated from the other geisha.

Masuda was bought out from the geisha house and made his mistress by Cockeye. Being lonely in the house Cockeye had bought her, she began working in a small company. There she was behaved as a social outcast by the other women who were working there. She memorizes;

Before long, I noticed that the women made of point of avoiding me.

'They say she was a geisha, that one'.

'They say she someone's mistress, you know. At any rate, she's got some guy wrapped around her little finger; deceived him completely'.

Bits and pieces of malicious gossip like this began to come my way. I was plunged into a dark depression. Was I going to be dogged by the labels geisha and mistress where I went? May be I should just quit. (84)

The way the co-workers behaved her as a social outcast, made her further isolated from them. Even when she worked as a street stall operator and as a peddler, she had to face the problem of hostility with the other co-workers, because the capitalist economic system taught them that money is every thing and made them forget about humanity, love, kind and help. They would only think and feel them individually when detached from other. Hence, Masuda and other geisha were alienated from each other and as well as from other human beings; their family members, the employers and the friends and co-workers.

Similarly, Masuda experienced alienation also from nature. Where she worked as a nursemaid she was not given any proper food to eat, clothing to wear and bed to sleep. Apart from that she felt tormented sometimes by the nature itself. Hence, she says;

But winter in the shinshu region is cold, and so it was not easy. Never will I have another accident, I would think; but when night fell in spite of myself I'd be afraid again. And so I often ended up sleeping outside. It was only the nights that were cold. [...]. In winter, no matter how cold it was, I was never

allowed to wear socks; and so I would lift one leg up and warm my foot on the thigh of the other leg, doing this over and over again so that I was always standing on one leg. (13)

Since her childhood Masuda realized nature as a tormentor or as an obstacle to her survival. Hence, she was alienated also from nature. In this way, Masuda's autobiography shows how a geisha, because of her commodification, exploitation, oppression and mistreatment, was alienated from her own (her sexual service), from herself, from other human beings, and also from nature.

The Geisha's Resistance and Resolution

Sayo Masuda, in this autobiography, shows not only her exploitation and her own alienation in different ways in the patriarchal bourgeois Japanese society, but also her strong resentment towards such an unjust discriminatory socio-economic system, and her strong desire to end it. Masuda and other geisha were ideologically hegemonized, economically entrapped, commodified and exploited. But, it does not mean that the geisha always accepted all the mistreatments passively. Sometimes the geisha themselves attempted resistance against their exploitation and oppression in one way or the other. However, the way they attempted to resist was whether good or not, adequate or not is debatable.

In the patriarchy often a male is responsible to handle the family. He is supposed to be the bread winner for the family. But Masuda was sold to support financially for the treatment of her step-father. Similarly, all the other geisha were sold by their own parents to support their family financially. They were sold not only for a single time; rather they would be sold time and again even after the end of indentured period. The daughters, even under-aged, were obliged to contribute in any way they can to their economically pressurized families by accepting to go into such a humiliating profession. This reality shows how the economic role of daughter in families was changed, as their families relayed on their income. If we analyze

it from a different angle, the profession a geisha does to support her family can be viewed as the subversion of patriarchal gender role.

Some attempts of resistance by Masuda herself and the other geisha can be found in the text. When Masuda was mistreated by the children in her childhood, she used to cry to make herself free from them. She says:

When I burst in to tears, they would let me go. If I cried they would let me go. If I cried, the children loved it. “Ha ha! Monkey baby cried!” they would shriek in delight as they scattered. I seem to have caught on and made a point of always crying in the end so I could get away. (13)

When she was a child of 5 or 6 there was no way to get away from the mistreatments upon her either from the children or from the adults, but only to cry. Even the crying can be seen as a way to resist against the oppression.

Once, when Karuta was being severely beaten by Mother, Masuda wanted to help her and she “flew at Mother screaming at the top of my lungs” (33). But, Mother flung her down the stairs, and she got her legs cracked. Then she was hospitalized. In the hospital Karuta said, “No matter what they do to you, the only way defenseless people like as can resist is by not resisting” (33). Being impressed of this, Masuda also followed the way to resist by not restating, and changed herself accordingly. Hence,

I’d pretend I didn’t understand what they meant and nod in agreement. This may look as if I’d determined never to resist, no matter what they might do to me, but it may simply have been that I didn’t possess the courage to protest for I’d grown accustomed from an early age albeit unconsciously, to knuckling under. They say that all living things, right down to the tiniest insects, have the methods of survival even the little inchworm known how to

camouflage itself to stay alive: it turns the same color as the tree, pretends to be a small branch, and (46)

It shows that, when she/he is in defenseless situation one can resist by not resisting. That is also a survival strategy.

Similarly, another way of keeping oneself away from the oppression or exploitation is to isolate own self from the other human beings especially from the oppressors. To comfort herself for a moment Masuda “would go to someplace where no one else was around” (17). Later on, when she was a novice, Masuda began to go to a secret place to avoid loneliness where Temari also used to go. They would go near a lake and climb up to a tree in order to hide themselves from Mother and the others. By doing so, they would make Mother to be in trouble or at least they would get peace for a short time.

Another way of keeping themselves away from the pain and suffering was to drink or smoke. Karuta used to drink when she felt pain, suffering and psychological tension. Similarly, Takechiyo was also a heavy drunkard and smoker. Masuda also learnt to drink and smoke from them. When she was in pain, suffering, and psychological tension she used to smoke or drink. Drinking and smoking were also the attempts of the geisha to avoid themselves from psychological tension and to make their owners be in trouble.

The geisha were those poor girls who were pushed into such a humiliating profession by the bourgeois people in one way or the other. But the geisha had grown revengeful thoughts in the mind. Sennari who was raped by a man, sought always to take revenge on men. She says, “I’m getting my revenge on men now. I’ve got two or three that’ll go bankrupt any day now. All these that Masuda heard and experienced made her develop a contemptuous and revolutionary thinking against the patriarchal capitalist society. Particularly after Tsukiko’s suicide Masuda began to see the world a bit differently. She says:

I made up my mind. There was no reason why we should be the only ones who were humiliated, why we should never resist. Until then, my situation had never seemed strange to me, but now I resented with all my heart being a geisha; I hated this world. (77)

Realizing her situation in the geisha world she came to question the existing socio-economic system. When she says, “On this planet called earth, people build things called houses of which men say. This one’s mine, that one’s mine fighting among one another to possess as much as they possibly can” we come to know that Masuda began to hate capitalism (77). It is capitalist society in which the people become wildly possessive and they mistreat, exploit, oppress or torture the weaker. The exploitation and oppression of geisha, was one of the consequences of unjust socio-economic system ‘capitalism’.

Her disbelief and hatred towards capitalism gets heightened when she meets Fusa. Though Masuda had some money or some things of her own she was not happy at all. But Fusa who was facing grinding poverty seemed to be “rich at heart by hopes and peace of mind” (142). It was Masuda’s conclusion that having a lot of property would not be a better alternative to end their pathetic and unhappy life. Rather it would be better to resist against the existing socio-economic system and throw it away.

Talking about how she felt when she was abused and tortured by Cockeye, Masuda writes:

I’d rather die than force him to listen to such abuse. I thought; but when I tried to flee, he caught me under his arm, lifted me up over his head, and whacked me down, thud, on the tatami. As I lay there weeping, I was also thinking: more than any thing else, I didn’t want to have to see this toad; if ever it came to that, I’d stab the toad to death. (92)

It shows that; Masuda thought at least about three different alternatives to get away from the oppression and exploitation of Cockeye; either suicide, to flee or to stab him to death. All these ideas directly or indirectly are resistive.

Silvia Plath, a feminist poet, who viewed that even the suicide can be a way of resistance against the patriarchy, attempted suicide for several times so that she would not be exploited further by the men. Likewise, Masuda also attempted suicide at least for three times so that she could get away from her painful life and at least she would not be exploited, oppressed, or tortured in that discriminatory society. Her first attempt of suicide was stopped because of her own fear to die. Second time, when she attempted suicide by drowning herself, she was rescued by a fisherman. Being struck by her brother's suicide she became physically and mentally very sick. She also wanted to kill herself by not caring about her health, but by drinking constantly. But when she was scolded by Karuta for that, she left her and went to kill herself by walking on barefoot in the snow. There too, she was rescued by an old man of nearly eighty.

The old man brought a change into her life, and into her views towards the life and world. The old man, who "had been a member of the communist party" (143), had said:

When people think only of them selves, that's when they're most unhappy.
Why don't you try doing something for someone else; just once in your life that's enough. At any rate, give it one more year, just once, do something to make someone else happy. If you still want to die, then come back here. If you do that I'll help you die painlessly. (143)

This idea made Masuda to think about her life once again she "pondered the old man's advice and tried my best to live up to it" (145). Then instead of thinking about dying she began to think how she could help the others, some one who is helpless, and make him/her happy.

Knowingly or unknowingly , being a proletariat female who was exploited sexually, economically, psychologically, and culturally in the patriarchal capitalist society, Masuda began to look at the issues of geisha from the Marxist point of view. Masuda equates geisha as a prostitute, because for her both prostitutes and geisha sleep with a customer and get paid. Masuda talks about the Prostitution Prevention Act in an analytical way. She says:

Prostitution is not something that will simply disappear just because you have passed a law against it. Probably this stems from a well meaning attempt to rescue these women from exploitation and profiteering at the hands of rapacious entrepreneurs; but among those making the laws, were there any women like us who could not have survived if they hadn't prostituted themselves? I went to see newsreel. Those women legislators, all done up in their finery mincing about so proudly on their tour of the red -light district - they were just having fun I was forced to conclude. If they thought all that goggle eyed gawking was going to help them understand what goes on in the whore houses they were badly mistaken. (158)

For Masuda, the women legislators, by attempting to end prostitution by just passing a law against it and visiting the red-light district, but not attempting to find out the root causes of prostitution, did a mistake . The women legislators, like the liberal feminists and radical feminists, made a demand of law to prevent prostitution because they may have thought that prostitution was degrading the whole feminine gender. But they did not care about socio-economic status of the geisha or the prostitutes. On the other hand, the woman legislators didn't consult the exploited prostitutes while making the laws. But they attempted to laden their hegemony upon the geisha or prostitutes. The woman legislators forgot that prostitution was not only a matter of sexual exploitation, but it was also, more importantly, the matter of the economic status of the women who involved in such a humiliating profession. So even if

prostitution was prohibited, for Masuda, the women continued their profession in one way or the other. In this context, Masuda says that, “some people in the business say that all they’ll have to do is turn their houses into inns and have their woman work as maids” (158). It shows that taking the issues of prostitution so lightly was insufficient to settle the problem, “Just passing the laws banning prostitution isn’t going to accomplish anything” (159). It seemed that the women legislators forgot that “nobody becomes a prostitute because she enjoys it. It’s human instinct, [...] to fill your belly when you’re hungry” (158-9). For Masuda, until and unless the poverty is ended, there will exist the prostitution so like the Marxist feminists, Masuda correlates the issues of prostitution primarily with the economic issues, and even with the gender issues.

Marxism views that to end any form of exploitation and discrimination in the society, the capitalist socio-economic system should be dismantled and the communist socio-economic system should be established. Masuda, who had also the same vision, has a dream that goes like this:

There’s a large house that looks like a school. People who have no where to go, and people who are out of work gather there. These women do the work they’re fitted for. There are some geisha. And the waitresses, the women who work in bars- [...]. These people who work at the house all receive something. And everyone attributes 100 yen a month which builds into a fond that is used if anyone is sick. I’m sure there are other people who have dreams like this- people who are crying over misfortunes worse than mine, people who are drifting about helplessly. (159)

Masuda’s dream has an outline of her vision of a communist society where there will not be any exploitation and oppression; rather there will be the equality brotherhood / sisterhood, cooperation and co-existence to each other.

An ex-geisha, Masuda, has a dream of a society where the exploitation, oppression and discrimination do not exist. To make this dream come true, the existing capitalist system of economy should be changed. The only one way to end the sexual, economic, psychological and cultural discrimination, exploitation and subjugation of a poor female or a geisha was to change the prevalent patriarchal capitalist system of female or a geisha was to change the prevalent patriarchal capitalist system of Japanese society. Primarily, the geisha must fight against the capitalist economy which entrapped them economically and forced them to go into prostitution for their survival. At the same time they must also fight even against the patriarchal believes and values that always assisted capitalism to victimize the females from economically poor families. The capitalist patriarchy commodified the economically poor females as a sex object to be consumed by the bourgeois men, and made them exploited economically, sexually, psychologically and culturally. But to end this subjugation the geisha must be conscious of their subjugated position in the society. They must not take their pathetic situation as for granted and stay always in alienation. That means they should awake from the false consciousness. Writing an autobiography or a life-account of her own is itself her awakening from the false consciousness to the class consciousness. Thus this autobiography is itself an attempt of resistance against the subjugation of a geisha in a capitalist patriarchy.

Thus, this autobiography shows that a poor female should be able to understand that it is the existing socio-economic and cultural system which forced them to become a geisha or a prostitute. Hence, first of all the poor women must be united to revolt against the patriarchal capitalist system. That means they should have a class consciousness. If their false consciousness got replaced with class consciousness, they would be able to raise their united voice against their commodification, and sexual, economic, psychological social and cultural exploitation and subjugation.

IV. Conclusion

The research on Sayo Masuda's *Autobiography of a Geisha*, has unveiled how the economically poor females in Japan were economically and culturally entrapped to become a geisha, and how they were commodified, subjugated and exploited psychologically and physically in the past. This research has found out that the patriarchy and the capitalism are the two ideologies that assisted each other to exploit and subjugate a female from an economically poor family. The patriarchal capitalist society first entrapped them economically and hegemonized them culturally forcing them to become geisha. As a geisha they got their body or sexuality commodified. That means they became tradable commodity in the hands of capitalist patriarchy. The commodification of the poor females in the discriminatory society resulted into their alienation in different ways. However, it does not mean that the geisha always accepted all the mistreatment passively. Rather, they also resisted directly or indirectly to get rid of their pathetic situation.

For an instance, the autobiography tells us that Masuda was sent as nursemaid to a landowner's house when she was five or six years. Then when she was twelve she was sold to a geisha house for an indentured service. As a nursemaid and as a novice geisha Masuda served the rich people as an unpaid laborer. When she was sixteen, Mother sold her virginity not only to Cockeye, but also to four more men, one after another, and made a pile. When she was an apprentice or a full-fledged geisha, she had to serve them her sexuality. But the wage of her service would pass to her through the geisha registry office and the geisha house. After a few years, Cockeye bought her out of the geisha house to make her his mistress and to have complete possession upon her. In this way, she had become an object to be frequently bought and sold. Because of the poverty, though Masuda was freed from the geisha house and even from Cockeye, she had to sell her sexuality at least for two more times. Sennarri, when she

was only fourteen, was raped by a fish monger to whom she would go to work. Hence, as a geisha Masuda and other geisha were exploited and subjugated at least sexually, economically and culturally at once. They also experienced the severe punishment since their early ages. Masuda had the experience of severe punishment when she was a nursemaid. Because of Mother's mistreatment Masuda had her leg cracked. Karuta was beaten with a hot iron, burned her skin with the cigarettes. A novice from another geisha house was killed for eating a sweet cake worth 1 sen. But the murderers escaped the convict by giving 100 yen to her parents. Michiko was betrayed by Hi-san in love. So, when she was pregnant and Hii-san denied accepting her, she killed herself. The geisha would be treated as a social outcast even after the end of their geisha life. Hence, a geisha in a discriminatory society felt alienated from her own work (her sexual service), from other human beings and also from nature.

It is true to say that this autobiography is itself the outcome of Masuda's class consciousness and revolutionary thoughts. However, as shown in this autobiography the geisha themselves have attempted resistance in one way or the other. Therefore, the research has discussed about the attempts of the geisha to keep themselves away from the exploitation and oppression. Some of them attempted to resist with out resisting. Crying and isolating themselves from the other also become the temporary strategies to get rid from the mistreatment for a short period. Indulging themselves into drinking and smoking was another way they followed to get transitory peace in their minds. Some of them attempted suicide. Masuda herself attempted suicide at least for three times in order to be not exploited further. Some of the geisha wanted to escape from the geisha house, but the policeman would find and force them to go back to their geisha life. So, all these ways of resistance were insufficient to come out of the geisha system or to end it. The legal documents like Prostitution Prevention Act also became unsuccessful to end the geisha system or

prostitution, because the legislators forgot the reality that until and unless the poverty is ended, there will exist the prostitution.

Thus, the present research entitled, “Resistance against the Subjugation in Sayo Masuda’s *Autobiography of a Geisha*”, has portrayed the subjugated position of the geisha in bourgeois patriarchal Japanese society, and it has also come to the conclusion that for the commodification, exploitation, alienation and subjugation of the geisha the unjust and discriminatory socio-economic and cultural system is the most responsible factor. Sayo Masuda herself has analyzed the issues of prostitution or geisha from an angle which is near to the Marxist feminist view point. Hence, to end the exploitation and subjugation of the poor females in the name of geisha system, the capitalist socio-economic system should be dismantled and the communist socio-economic system should be established. For that, the geisha first should replace the false consciousness of the capitalist patriarchal ideologies with the class consciousness. The geisha are also suggested to raise their united voice and revolt against existing socio-economic and cultural system.

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