

# TOKUSUKE'S TENDENCY OF MASOCHISM AS REFLECTED IN JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI'S *DIARY OF A MAD OLD MAN*

**Achmad Fanani**

*Universias Pesantren Tinggi Darul'Ulum Jombang*

*akufanani@gmail.com*

## **Abstrak**

Tokusuke, pria berusia tujuh puluh tujuh tahun merupakan seorang pengusaha yang sudah pensiun. Dia adalah protagonis dan penulis buku *Diary of A Mad Old Man*. Meskipun berbagai penderitaan kerap menghampiri, akan tetapi semangatnya tetap berkobar oleh obsesi erotis terhadap menantunya, Satsuko, mantan penari hiburan malam, yang menikah dengan anaknya. Dia sering menggoda Tokusuke. Novel pendek ini bergantian menceritakan tentang pertarungan Tokusuke dengan penyakitnya, pertengkaran dengan istri dan keluarganya, dan pertemuannya dengan Satsu. Melihat beberapa kenyataan tentang perilaku seksualnya, bisa dikatakan bahwa Tokusuke memiliki kecenderungan sebagai seorang masokis. Dia memiliki dorongan seksual yang kuat yang berlangsung selama 6 bulan berturut-turut. Dia juga senang disakiti baik secara fisik maupun mental oleh wanita cantik (Satsuko) yang memiliki karakter jelek dengan kompensasi kesenangan seksual. Semua karakter ini berkaitan dengan karakteristik seorang masokis.

**Kata kunci: Masokisme, kesenangan seksual**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Masochism is a medical condition where people can derive pleasure from being humiliated or hurt by other people. The essential feature of sexual masochism is the feeling of sexual arousal or excitement resulting from receiving pain, suffering, or humiliation. The pain, suffering, or humiliation is real and not imagined and can be physical or psychological in nature. A person with a diagnosis of sexual masochism is sometimes called a masochist.

The purpose of this article is to describe the sexual behavior of the main character, Tokusuke Utsugi, a retired businessman, the protagonist and diarist of this book, *Diary of an Old Man*. More specifically, this article would explain if his sexual behavior has something to do with masochism? If so, in what way his masochism manifests and what causes it?

Junichiro Tanizaki's *Diary of a Mad Old Man* is the journal of Tokusuke Utsugi, a seventy-seven-year-old man of refined tastes who is recovering from a stroke. He discovers that, while his body is decaying, his libido still rages on — unwittingly sparked by the gentle, kindly attentions of his daughter-in-law Satsuko, a chic, flashy dancer with a shady past.

Diary of a Mad Old Man is a brilliant depiction of the relationship between eros and the will to live — a novel of the tragicomedy of human existence.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Masochism**

Masochism is a medical condition where people can derive pleasure from being humiliated or hurt by other people. The first person to use the term masochism in a scientific way was Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a German psychiatrist. He named it after Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) who had written books where he described women deriving pleasure from being humiliated or hurt (Rosen, Fox, and Gregory, 1972: 282).

### **Different forms of Masochism**

Masochism can lead to wounds of different types, for example cuts, bruises, broken bones, strains, traumatic brain injury or other traumas. In some cases, people have died from masochistic practices.

In [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) it is explained that there are two forms of masochism:

#### **1. No sexual motivation**

Masochists want to be humiliated or hurt, because they can get pleasure from this. In some cases patients actively seek situations where this happens. Sometimes compensating actions that are not sexual in nature are seen as masochist, for example hurting oneself. Sometimes psychic abnormalities like nail-biting or pulling ones own hair out can also be named that way. Often, these actions are motivated because the patient feels like they are under high pressure to achieve something. In many cases the causes for this way to behave lie deeper, though. They may be rooted in the personality of the patient.

#### **2. Sexual motivation**

Patients can only be sexually satisfied if they are humiliated or they feel pain. Sometimes the sex partner is replaced by an anonymous (unknown) or fictitious one. Self-mutilation (hurting oneself) also happens in this case, though not as a compensatory action, but rather as part of sexual intercourse or foreplay. This kind has sexual motives. Having power over or being violent to other people or animals often is a source of sexual arousal. It can replace foreplay in some cases.

The essential feature of sexual masochism is the feeling of sexual arousal or excitement resulting from receiving pain, suffering, or humiliation (<http://www.minddisorders.com>). The pain, suffering, or humiliation is real and not imagined and can be physical or psychological in nature. A person with a diagnosis of sexual masochism is sometimes called a masochist.

## **Causes and Symptoms**

### ***Causes***

There is no universally accepted cause or theory explaining the origin of sexual masochism, or sadomasochism in general. However, there are some theories that attempt to explain the presence of sexual paraphilias in general. One theory is based on learning theory that paraphilias originate because inappropriate sexual fantasies are suppressed. Because they are not acted upon initially, the urge to carry out the fantasies increases and when they are finally acted upon, a person is in a state of considerable distress and/or arousal. In the case of sexual masochism, masochistic behavior becomes associated with and inextricably linked to sexual behavior.

Another theory suggests that people seek out sadomasochistic behavior as a means of escape. They get to act out fantasies and become new and different people.

### ***Symptoms***

Individuals with sexual masochism experience sexual excitement from physically or psychologically receiving pain, suffering, and/or humiliation. They may be receiving the pain, suffering, or humiliation at the hands of another person, who may or may not be a sadist, or they may be administering the pain, suffering, or humiliation themselves.

They experience distressed or impaired functioning because of the masochistic behaviors, urges, and fantasies. This distress or impairment can impact functioning in social, occupational, or other contexts.

### **Demographics**

Although masochistic sexual fantasies often begin in childhood, the onset of sexual masochism typically occurs during early adulthood. When actual masochistic behavior begins, it will often continue on a chronic course for people with this disorder, especially when no treatment is sought. Sexual masochism is slightly more prevalent in males than in females.

The DSM criteria for sexual masochism include recurrent intense sexual fantasies, urges, or behaviors involving real acts in which the individual with the disorder is receiving psychological or physical suffering, pain, and humiliation. The suffering, pain, and humiliation cause the person with sexual masochism to be sexually aroused. The fantasies, urges, or behaviors must be present for at least six months.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Some facts of Tokusuke's sexual behavior**

Sexual behavior is a person's sexual practices, whether he/she engages in heterosexual or homosexual activity ([www. medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com)). Here, anything to do with Tokusuke's sexual behavior is described. Tokusuke is an old man with high sexual urges. Dr. Inoue, a psychiatrist friend of his, explains that he was subject to what might be called abnormal sexual impulses; at present his condition was not serious; it was just that he constantly needed to feel sexual desire. (pp. 163).

He always loves and is attracted to beautiful women during the whole of his life. For him women are the only thing that can make his life brighter and happier: *"And so I haven't the slightest desire to cling to life, yet as long as I live I cannot help feeling attracted to the opposite sex."* (pp. 17-18). It also implies that satisfying his sexual desire is his main goal, the only thing he pursues in the rest of his life: *"Even so I can enjoy sexual stimulation in all kinds of distorted, indirect ways. At present I am living for that pleasure... (pp. 18).*

However because he is now an old man, and impotent, he can no longer satisfy his sexual desire directly – having sexual intercourse with a woman. He can only kiss her feet or lick her legs or let her dribble spit in his mouth. But all of this excites him and raises his blood pressure to stroke levels.

Tokusuke's Paraphilias – intense and recurrent sexually arousing urges, fantasies, or behaviors – can also be seen from his confession that his physical pain doesn't make him lose his sexual urge. He has a tendency to love a woman who causes him pain because his sexual desire is higher when he is in pain. In this case he loves beautiful women who are unkind, rude, and spiteful to him although he thinks it is something not normal: *"It's odd, but even when I am in pain I have a sexual urge. Perhaps especially when I am in pain. Or should I say that I am more attracted, more fascinated by women who cause me pain? (pp. 26)."*

For him unkindness, spitefulness of a woman is her credit as long as she is physically beautiful. He really doesn't mind to get more pain from a woman like that, even he enjoys it.

Kindness of a woman is not important for him because, as can be seen in the above quotation, a woman who causes him pain is more fascinating and more attracting. Suppose there are two women equally beautiful, equally pleasing to his aesthetic tastes. A is kind and honest, and sympathetic; B is unkind, a clever liar. According to Tokusuke B is more attractive” (pp. 27) and he would be more susceptible to her than A” (pp. 27). He would feel very happy if he could live with a woman with bad character: “... *but if I found a woman who was really bad, and if I could live with her – or at least live in her presence, on intimate terms with her – how happy I would be!* (pp. 27)”

But not all beautiful women with bad character he can love. There are few exceptions: she should not show her badness obviously, furthermore she must not have kleptomania and homicidal tendencies. It is because such woman is difficult to put up with. However, still such badness couldn't make him exclude them.

Since he has no particular reason to keep on living, sometimes he thinks he would be happier if a woman like Takahashi Oden, a notorious murderess, turned up to kill him. Rather than endure the pain of these half-dead arms and legs of his, maybe he could get it over and at the same time see how it feels to be brutally murdered. (pp. 28)

To satisfy his sexual urges, he teases his beautiful daughter-in-law, Satsuko. Satsuko is a woman whose physical beauty complies with his criterion (“*Satsuko is also called a beauty* (pp. 83))”, and is, of course, a bit spiteful, a bit sarcastic. And she is a bit of a liar (pp. 27). In short, Satsuko is an ideal woman for him to love. The more spiteful she is, the more she fascinates him (pp. 29).”

Although Tokusuke knows very well that Satsuko has done something wrong or make a fatal decision which may endanger himself, he always defends her, as reflected on the dispute between Satsuko and his wife about remodeling the bathroom. He accepts Satsuko's suggestion, and has the whole bathroom done in tile. He doesn't care if Satsuko's decision is a failure and would put him in danger or not (“...*because it turned out that wet tiles are dangerously slippery for an old person.* (pp. 37)”). The most important thing for him is defending whatever she does. He will be very happy if she wins the argument (“...*may be I should say a success.* (pp. 37)”).

However, he realizes that what he does – loving Satsuko – is shameful for an old man, like him. It is not only because of the gap between his age and her age but also shameful because he finds pleasure being teased by Satsuko. It is also shameful because he even doesn't mind sacrificing his wife and children just to win Satsuko's love. This means Satsuko

is the only goal in his life now, others are not important, even in the times when she made mistakes or cheat him.

How dangerous his love to Satsuko to his health can be seen from his confession:

*“The feel of Satsuko’s sole still lingered on my lips, I couldn’t forget it if I tried. I dare say it was when I crammed her toes into my mouth that my blood pressure reached its height. Certainly my face burned and the blood rushed into my head, as if I might die of apoplexy that very instant. (pp. 68)”*

Here Tokusuke sacrifices his health – even his life – just to get the feel of sexual sensation with Satsuko. His blood pressure reaches its height when he crammed her toed into his mouth. Once again he doesn’t mind if he dies because of it. Another example when he endangers his health just because of Satsuko is his insistence to ask Satsuko to accompany him. He really doesn’t mind if Satsuko would smoke in his room which is of course very bad for his health. Her presence in his side is the most important to him.

*“I wouldn’t be able to smoke.”*

*“Of course you could smoke! Go ahead and smoke all you like!”*

*“If I did I’d get scolded.”*

*“It is because he has such bad coughing spells,” Miss Sasaki put in. “If you smoke around him, he’ll never stop smoking and choking.” (pp. 135)*

### **Is Tokusuke a masochist?**

The DSM criteria for sexual masochism include recurrent intense sexual fantasies or urges. ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). Tokusuke in this story is an old man with a high sexual urge. He always loves and is attracted to beautiful women during the whole of his life. His sexual urges go into hyperdrive after his stroke. The object of his lust is his daughter-in-law. His intense and recurrent sexually arousing urges, fantasies, or behaviors can also be seen from his confession that his physical pain doesn’t make him lost his sexual urge (pp.26).

In a masochist such fantasies, urges, or behaviors must be present for at least six months ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)). Tokusuke’s diary lasts from June to November which implies that he experiences strong sexual fantasies and urges for about six months. Therefore it is enough to say that he has one of masochism characteristics.

Masochism is a medical condition where people can derive pleasure from being humiliated or hurt by other people. The essential feature of sexual masochism is the feeling of sexual arousal or excitement resulting from receiving pain, suffering, or humiliation. The

pain, suffering, or humiliation is real and can be psychological in nature. There are two kinds of masochism: without sexual motivation and with sexual motivation ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)).

Considering some facts of Tokusuke's sexual behavior above, we can say that Tokusuke has a tendency of being sexual masochist. His tendency of sexual masochism can be seen when he finds pleasure from being humiliated by beautiful women whose character is bad for the compensation of sexual excitement, although through indirect sexual activities. He has a tendency to love a woman who causes him pain because his sexual desire is higher when he is in pain.

Tokusuke enjoys being humiliated or hurt physically. He experiences sexual excitement from physically receiving pain, suffering, and/or humiliation. In the story, he receives the pain, suffering, or humiliation at the hands of Satsuko. His "sexual activities" with Satsuko often makes his blood pressure higher up to stroke level and potentially endangers his health and life. In Tokosuke's opinion, Satsuko is similar to Takahashi Oden, a notorious murderess (pp. 28). Since he has no particular reason to keep on living, sometimes he thinks he would be happier if a woman like Takahashi Oden turned up to kill him. Therefore if he dies in the hand of Satsuko, it will certainly please him. Other evidences that Tokusuke doesn't mind being hurt physically by Satsuko can be seen on pages 68 and 135.

Having a masochism tendency, Tokusuke also enjoys being humiliated or hurt psychologically. He doesn't mind being cheated by Satsuko. For her small and grudging favors, he pays with ever more expensive gifts (money, cats-eye). However, it seems he doesn't mind seeing her bad behavior, either to him or to other people. The more spiteful she is to others, the more she fascinates him. And she realizes how much her behavior pleases him (pp. 29).

So what causes his masochism tendency? One theory is based on learning theory that masochism originates because inappropriate sexual fantasies are suppressed. Tokusuke's masochism tendency rises because his inappropriate sexual fantasies are suppressed. He has been waiting for a long time finding a woman who meets his criterion. Because these fantasies are not acted upon initially, the urge to carry out the fantasies increases and when they are finally acted upon, a person is in a state of considerable distress and/or arousal. Therefore when he meets Satsuko, a woman whom he thinks as an ideal woman – a beautiful woman with bad character, he becomes submissive to her. He does everything to please her.

## CONCLUSION

Considering some facts of his sexual behaviors we can say that Tokusuke has a tendency of masochism. He has high sexual urges that last at least about six months. He also finds pleasure from being humiliated either physically or psychologically by beautiful women (Satsuko) whose character is bad for the compensation of sexual excitement. All these characteristics relate to the signs of masochism.

## REFERENCES

Rosen, Fox, and Gregory. *Abnormal Psychology*. Philadelphia. W.B Sanders

En.wikipedia.org/wiki/abnormal\_psychology retrieved on 10 April 2010

Varcarolis, E.M. *Foundations of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing*. W.B. Saunders Company. New York. 1990

Hamma, Jaco. *The Rod of Discipline: Masochism, Sadism, and the Judeo Cristian Religion*.  
Journal of Religion and Health. Vol 39. No 4 winter 2000

[www.minddisorders.com](http://www.minddisorders.com)

[www.depression-guide.com](http://www.depression-guide.com).