

**PROFESSIONALISM AND SELF-ESTEEM IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S
*THE REMAINS OF THE DAY***

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Abstract:

Genetic birth locates him in Nagasaki, Japan, born on 8 November 1954. At the age of five, he moved to Surrey, England and did not return to Japan until thirty years later. Kazuo Ishiguro has been considered as one of the leading literary figures in two centuries, the late twentieth century and the contemporary twenty-first century. This research article dwells on the efficacies and integrity of professionalism followed by Stevens encompassed by dignity in the work of art *The Remains of the Day*. The term 'Professionalism' aims at the specialized knowledge, long and intensive preparation on the work one assigned with. On such base, the term professionalism cannot be confined to Stevens' art of butlering alone, rather it is assigned to the diplomacy of tension that prevails in his mind and his deeds. The combined quality of dignity and greatness carries the narration throughout *The Remains of the Day*. Unlike professionalism gained out of expertise in any field, Stevens has taken it over by regarding it as a moral vision. As Stevens puts it, "the question was not simply one of how well one practiced one's skills, but to what end one did so" (116). Ishiguro has more accurately mirrored the life of a butler by taking the story to international acclaim. Stevens at the later part of the novel claims that the art of being an honest professional butler has changed his life at the cost of losing his touch of humanity towards his peers. At the same time, the loss of love and marriage is brought forth to the eyes due to the obsessed nature of Professionalism. At the end of the story, Stevens' grief is more pathetic and sorrowful because he has failed in his terms. Taking into consideration Stevens' bitter experiences on his career serving Darlington brings forth a disappointing silhouette.

Keywords: twenty-first century, narration, novel, .etc

Genetic birth locates him in Nagasaki, Japan, born on 8 November 1954. At the age of five, he moved to Surrey, England and did not return to Japan until thirty years later. Kazuo Ishiguro has been considered as one of the leading literary figures in two centuries, the late twentieth century and the contemporary twenty-first century.

Ishiguro took his first step in the literary career with his debut novel *A Pale View of Hills* in the year 1982. Very soon his commencement was rewarded for the same work. He won Winifred Holtby award for his debut work. Sequentially he shared the professional contest along with the writers Martin Amis, Ian Mc Ewan, Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, Graham Swift, Rose Tremain, Jeanette Winterson, and Pat Barker. Followed by, in the year 1986, Ishiguro published his second novel *An Artist of the Floating World*, which won the Whitbread Book of the year. His third novel *The Remains of the Day* made him world-wide recognized a person by winning the Booker Prize for Fiction for the year 1989 which is also adapted into a film version. The film was nominated for eight academy awards. Ishiguro's next art of creation is *The Unconsoled* published in the year 1995 and was awarded the Cheltenham Prize in the same year. His fifth novel *When We Were Orphans* published in the year 2000 was shortlisted for both the Whitbread Award and Booker Prize for fiction. In the year 2005, again his work of art entitled *Never Let Me Go* was shortlisted for Man Booker prize for fiction.



Ishiguro makes the reader ruled under his captive of the art of writing through his third novel *The Remains of the Day*. The novel revolves around the storyline of an English butler Stevens who is a refined working butler, true to his master. *The Remains of the Day* focusses on the life of Stevens who devotes his entire life to maintain the dignity of his profession. On the contrary, he spent little time to spare for his personal life and emotional life.

This research article dwells on the efficacies and integrity of professionalism followed by Stevens encompassed by dignity in the work of art *The Remains of the Day*. The term 'Professionalism' aims at the specialized knowledge, long and intensive preparation on the work one assigned with. On such base, the term professionalism cannot be confined to

Stevens' art of butlering alone, rather it is assigned to the diplomacy of tension that prevails in his mind and his deeds. The combined quality of dignity and greatness carries the narration throughout *The Remains of the Day*.

Stevens tries to be a butler who does not perform only to his limitations rather he becomes an amateur in performing his role. He always wears the mask of an irreplaceable butler who necessarily denies his personal feelings and emotions. This particular obsessed nature of Stevens being a butler fades away his personal life as well. By suppressing his emotive nature, to be a professional being he naturally reduces the true intimacy with another person. A reader on the completion of *The Remains of the Day* will naturally wonder what kind of dignity he constitutes in his life. Stevens is essentially the ideal representation of an individual who has no distinction between personal and professional life; on the other side, the latter has taken a step further towards the former one. His sense of virtue and worth naturally stems out from his job and the ethics he possesses towards it.

By the recent aesthetic reception in the sphere of literature, literature has moved its position by over-viewing the art of perception. A reader assigns the role of reading a text and eventually, he/she constructs, deconstructs his/her performance by constant recalling of events. Taking the motif of 'professionalism' a step ahead in this paper, there is a significant study in manipulating the technique employed by the protagonist Stevens on the grounds of professionalism. Ishiguro has given complete and exuberant experiences and emotions of a profound butler in *The Remains of the Day*.

The novel revolves around the journey of Stevens who is currently working under his new master Mr. Farraday. Previously Stevens was working under Lord Darlington. On the dawn of the novel, it is understood that Darlington Hall has been handed out to Mr. Farraday. After 35 years of inherent service to Lord Darlington as an honorable butler to now, he finds himself under the new Master Mr. Farraday who said Stevens to take off and travel across England on vacation in the old Ford. Stevens welcomes the journey to search the former housekeeper Miss Kenton, who worked along with Stevens 20 years earlier.

Stevens decides to use the trip to visit her. Stevens sets off from Darlington Hall and readily travels with a complete nostalgic tone.

One memory, in particular, has preoccupied me all morning- or rather, a fragment of a memory, a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the years. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlor; (*The Remains of the Day* 223).

This is the progressive stage of the novel. Meanwhile, *The Remains of the Day* inwardly and outwardly depicts the restrained inner emotions of Stevens who repulsed human sympathy and tenderness to perform his piety to his work and his master to prove his dignity.

At one point of time, Stevens explains that butlers of his generation, and the nature of his profession to be, "It is surely a professional responsibility for all of us to think deeply about these things so that each of us may better strive towards attaining 'dignity' for

ourselves” (44); “were ambitious, in a way that would have been unusual a generation before, to serve gentlemen who were, so to speak, furthering the progress of humanity...” (114). Stevens further expresses,

Our generation was the first to recognize...that the great decisions of the world are not arrived at simply in the public chambers... Rather, debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country... It was the aspiration of all those of us with the professional ambition to work our way as close to this hub as we were each of us capable. (114-115)

Unlike professionalism gained out of expertise in any field, Stevens has taken it over by regarding it as a moral vision. As Stevens puts it, “the question was not simply one of how well one practiced one's skills, but to what end one did so” (116). Ishiguro has more accurately mirrored the life of a butler by taking the story to international acclaim. Stevens at the later part of the novel claims that the art of being an honest professional butler has changed his life at the cost of losing his touch of humanity towards his peers. At the same time, the loss of love and marriage is brought forth to the eyes due to the obsessed nature of Professionalism. At the end of the story, Stevens' grief is more pathetic and sorrowful because he has failed in his terms. Taking into consideration Stevens' bitter experiences on his career serving Darlington brings forth a disappointing silhouette.

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted... All those years I served him, I trusted was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. (243)

Stevens pesters himself with pure self-criticism and self-revelation. He judges that he has sacrificed the utmost happiness of his life to no good end and at the same time his dignified career. Remembering both these thoughts he makes sure that the loss of happiness is made only for one reason; to serve his master and attain the professional idealism. But Ishiguro has given space to Stevens to think further and reach forward by his thought of intelligence; the small conversation between a person and Stevens makes him set right his mind.

The journey eventually takes Stevens to resolve the past and missed opportunities in his life; at the same time, he believes to return to her again and hopes to reunite and redeem the past. All his inner thoughts are revealed in the course of the journey. In this process of the journey, Stevens' self-exploration is also exposed. His obsession with dignity, piety emerges out in this journey. However one can understand from his current state of mind that the conventional life of early days has no significance and thoroughly been wasted. Thus the journey gives him a chance to realize the self-discovery and the point he has lost his personal life due to the time spent in pleasing his master as a pious butler.

Human beings are the creatures bounded by limits. Due to commitments and honorable living due to professional touch turn out to be morally successful, but passionately it is a terrible one. Naturally, his conscious nature of butler overweighs his inner emotive conscious as a human being. Stevens through his journey and self-revelation takes everyone to the hard realities of things and life.

Note: This article is strictly followed to MLA Latest edition (VIII) for writing the research paper.

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