



Portrayal of Professionalism in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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ABSTRACT:

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British Novelist who has explored the themes of memory and identity in most of his novels. His novel *The Remains of the Day* was published in the year 1989 which deals about the professionalism of the protagonist. The protagonist of the novel, Stevens is a chief butler, who embodies the values of professionalism, civility and credibility in serving his employers. Stevens represents the ideal of a professional butler, through his adherence to strict codes of conduct and his commitment to the ideas of service. Professionalism and civility are important values in the work place and they must be balanced with a sense of personal fulfillment and authenticity in order to lead a truly credible and fulfilling life. The author in his novel *The Remains of the Day* highlights the importance of professionalism, civility and credibility in the context of personal fulfillment and authenticity.

KEY WORDS: Professionalism, Civility and Credibility.

INTRODUCTION:

Kazuo Ishiguro has been considered to be one of the leading literary figures amongst writers of the 1980s. Ishiguro writes about the history of life and especially about the memory. His novels are chiefly in the first person narration by the protagonists, who is trying to recall their past. His novels are typically based on the narrators' journey of self. He deals with the themes of identity, nostalgia and friendship in his works often. Ishiguro has been awarded Nobel Prize in the year of 2017 for

Literature. The novel *The Remains of the Day* was told in the voice and perspective of Mr. Stevens, the protagonist and a traditional British butler who spent his adult life in the service of Lord Darlington. It also describes the challenges he faces when he comes to think back on his past in his twilight years. He recalls his unwilling journey by facing his past life as well as his present life with the help of a diary. The tone of the novel is often nostalgic for the past, which reevaluates his past actions and the decisions. The story is about a butler named Mr. Stevens, who forfeited his soul and body because of his loyalty to support his employer. At the end of the novel, he gets distanced from his past traditions and looks forward to his future with his new American employer, Mr. Farraday.

The importance of one's devotion to his profession is examined through the character, Mr Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens is a chief butler in Lord Darlington's house. He showcases his devotion to his profession throughout the novel. His professionalism is demonstrated by his unwavering commitment to maintain decorum. His dedication shows his perfection and efficiency in the workplace.

CHAPTER II:

“Professionalism is not a label you give yourself; it's a description you hope others will apply to you.” (Maister 17)

The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro explores the theme of dedication towards work through the perspectives of the protagonist, Stevens. He is a highly professional butler who has dedicated his life to serve his employer, Lord Darlington. Stevens takes great pride in his work and strives to be the epitome of professionalism at all times. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes evident that his uncompromising commitment to his profession has driven him out of touch with his own feelings and personal life. Stevens' dedication towards his work is evident in his even in the midst of controversy and upheaval.

Stevens has sacrificed his personal life as a result of his passion to his work. He is aware of this sacrifice and he justifies it by assuming that his profession as a butler is his ultimate calling. Stevens upholds the value of civility in his role as a butler. He sees his duty with grace, dignity and respect and expects the same from others. Stevens is devoted to his duties and takes pride in his work

always striving to maintain the highest standards of service and etiquette. Stevens' commitment towards work is portrayed through his interactions with both his employer, Lord Darlington and with other staff members at Darlington Hall. He is always deferential to Lord Darlington and maintains a formal, respectful demeanor, even in difficult or uncomfortable situations.

Rachel Sykes in her article states that, "Ishiguro's novel shows how professionalism can become a form of self-delusion, as Stevens convinces himself that his subservience to his employer is a noble form of sacrifice rather than a personal failing" (Rachel). She argues that Stevens' obsessive focus on his responsibilities as a butler has forced him to deceive himself into thinking that his servitude is a selfless act rather than an indication of his own lack of agency and self-worth. Stevens has sacrificed his emotional and personal well-being in order to maintain his professional identity and as a result, he has evolved more and more detached from the outer world.

The novel suggests that true credibility requires a balance between these different values and openness to one's own beliefs and assumptions. The numerous obligations and expectations that come with being a butler are indicated in Stevens' views on professionalism. According to Stevens, a butler should always keep a detached and unbiased manner. This attitude of Stevens expresses the emotional control that he possesses. This also shows that Stevens has been more dedicated towards his work at the expense of his own emotional health and sense of fulfillment.

Stevens as a professional butler, takes pride in his profession and his service to his employer, Lord Darlington. Stevens says, "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (*Remains of the Day* 4). This indicates that a dedicated professional takes pride in their work and the opportunities it provides them to serve and study the world around them from a professional point of view. It shows the value of loyalty and dedication to one's employer which are, two significant qualities that are essential for professionalism.

Stevens is a butler who values professionalism and dignity in his role. "The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost" (*Remains of the Day* 43). The aim is on actively promoting the position of a butler in all facets of one's being, not only carrying out the job's requirements.

Emma Levy contends that Stevens' obsession with his professional identity has caused him to lead a life filled with loneliness, despair, isolated and unable to connect with others. Professionalism may previously been a source of pride for him, but it has now turned into a means of self-deception, keeping him from seeing the facts about his own life and the decisions he has made.

Ishiguro's novel suggests that professionalism can be both a source of pride and a form of self-deception, as Stevens clings to his role as a butler even as it becomes clear that his life has been marked by a profound sense of loneliness and regret. (Emma 3)

Stevens' delineates his professional ethics and pursues perfection in every aspect. His devotion to work underlines his determination to do everything in his power to please his employer and uphold his expectations. The power of professionalism in tackling the issues emphasizes the values of professionalism in recruiting and managing employees in a household and its influence on both the workplace and the lives of those employed.

Stevens' commitment to his work and his dedication to be a full-fledged butler are expressed even in small incidents, one such incident is "For all that, it has never been my position that good accent and command of language are not attractive attributes, and I always considered it my duty to develop them as best I could" (*Remains of the Day* 176-77). This shows that Stevens recognizes the value of having a decent accent and language proficiency as essential qualities for a professional butler. He also claims that he feels it as his responsibility to improve these qualities to the best of his ability and also indicates the great sense of professionalism and dedication to his profession.

The novel *The Remains of the Day* highlights the virtues of professionalism such as attention to minute things, dedication and a commitment to service. It also explores the potential drawbacks of dedication such as emotional detachment and lack of fulfillment in one's own life.

The novel, *The Remains of the Day* portrays the idea that dedication towards work can be overused and result in the loss of interpersonal connections. Furthermore, it explores the benefits of professionalism that one can pursue in his profession and the importance of finding a balance between one's professional and personal lives.

Stevens' commitment to professionalism shows his perfection and efficiency in the work. His focus on the work is extreme that he neglects his own needs and emotions. But his professional demeanor and adherence to protocol serve to reinforce the social hierarchy of the British household and maintain a sense of order.

CONCLUSION:

The analysis of the theme of dedication towards work under the roof of professionalism in the novel *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro has revealed the complex and often conflicting nature of the novel's portrayal of civility and credibility. Through the character of Stevens and his commitment to professionalism in the face of changing social and historical circumstances, it is clear that how Ishiguro uses the theme of dedication towards work to explore larger questions about the nature of personal identity, social hierarchies and the role of the individuals in shaping the society.

The research focuses on exploring the benefits of professionalism in one's career, including increased productivity, job satisfaction and a sense of purpose. This research could look into the ways in which individuals can balance their professional and personal lives to achieve a fulfilling and well-rounded lifestyle. Additionally, the research could explore the impact of professionalism on organizational culture and the benefits of creating a culture that values professionalism and encourages its development.

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