

The Journey of Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View Of Hills*

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Abstract

One cannot survive without relying on one's memory as it plays an important role in a man's life. Like a coin has two sides, human memory recalls information as well as forgets certain facts. But nowadays men's lives have become too handy as they turn over more on mobile phones that store many records, files and documents. Yet today's experts and scientific research say mobile phone acts as a weed killer of human emotion and memory. However, the episodic memory acts beyond the technology to help men to survive by selective process of recollecting, constructing and acting according to the situation. In this way, how Kazuo Ishiguro uses memory as a symbol in his *A Pale View of Hills* is the main focus of this conceptual paper.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View Of Hills*, Memory, past, present, emotions

Introduction

Memory plays an important role in human being. It acts as a twofold process by going back and coming back to the present. When the memory plays in, an equal measure, there is a balancing situation of the mind. Memory neither has its limitations to make the fact forget nor could review the fact on time, hence one say, and memory is a mysterious psychological journey, in human life. Knowing the power and value of memory Kazuo Ishiguro uses it as a tool and a symbol to reveal out the story of the protagonist. To this context, the Ishiguro remarks as,

I like memory, at various levels. At a purely technical level, I like it as a method of telling a story-it to give me plenty of freedom...and I just like the texture of memory as well. I like that the scenes are necessarily foggy around the edges because they're open to manipulation and they're open to self-deception and embroidery. And they're often tinged with nostalgia, some kind of strength and emotion. I like all these layers that come with a scene. Thematically, I have been interested in memory itself. (04)

Kazuo Ishiguro who was born in Nagasaki, Japan, later settled and became a citizen of British. His graduation in English, Philosophy and creative writing, turned him as a multi-talented writer as a novelist, screenplay writer, short fiction and lyricist. To his credit he has written more than half dozens of novels and as an identity for his writing received various

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notable awards and Noble prize for literature, in 2017. To his name and fame all over the world, his works have been translated into 27 foreign languages and apart from his few novels have been filmed.

Discussion

Ishiguro's novels dealt with multiple themes such as human psychology, memory of past, human emotions, search for identity, cultural crisis, historical facts, fantasy to reality, nostalgia and dislocation. These themes could also be traced out in *A Pale View of Hills*, the novel taken up for the discussion. *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), the first novel by Ishiguro, is the story set in Japan. The novel begins in the present, where Etsuko leads her life lonely in England, as her British husband Mr. Sheringham passed away and her elder daughter Keiko committed suicide. Etsuko's second daughter Niki visits her mother from Japan to enquire about her sister's death and fails to maintain a cordial and affectionate relationship with her mother. "But such things are long in the past now and I have no wish to ponder them yet again. My motives for leaving Japan were justifiable, and I know I always kept Keiko's interests very much at heart. There is nothing to be gained in going over such matters again (91).

When Niki blames Etsuko for her sister's death, Etsuko denies to answer for it, instead, she recalled her life in Japan in the early 1950s. Through her recollection, discussed the condition of Japan after the Second World War and hence advise Niki, the Japanese –British, who has to be cautious and take it as a challenge to meet the struggle to lead her life after the war. She also further recounts her life with Japanese husband, Jiro, his father Ogata San, and her Japanese friend Sachiko who had a relationship with her Japanese daughter Mariko.

Niki, the name we finally gave my younger daughter, is not an abbreviation; it was a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a Japanese name, and I - perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past - insisted on an English one. He finally agreed to Niki, thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it. (33)

Many critics viewed *A Pale View of Hills* as a historical novel, yet it is only through the protagonist's memory the historical events were revealed out. The novelist also focused on the emotional turmoil of the protagonist and so one could find that based on the protagonist's situation he let the characters to go back and recount the sufferings, shameless, shabby, horrible incidents, little happiness, experiences etc, throughout the novel. To justify this, in the novel, Etsuko utilizes her memory to come out of her loss and to find and define her identity. When her elder daughter hanged herself and committed suicide, Etsuko desperately got disappointed. She felt lonely and neglected by her younger daughter, at such mental stress her emotions naturally took her back.

To connect both stories, he continues, the reader must recall Etsuko's treatment of the young tomato plants which she has ruined: "I really have been rather neglectful

about those tomatoes this year.” (92) Etsuko, one could argue, has treated Keiko just as she has treated her tomatoes and as Sachiko has treated Mariko. When she exclaims that “it doesn’t really matter” (92)

Even when Etsuko was blamed that she was the reason for her daughter’s suicide, Etsuko rewinds to past and tried to identify for a meaning full reason. She also got a little relieved when she thought of her past and reassured herself that she wasn’t the cause for Keiko’s death. “What does it matter about the dirty little creatures?” (165). The crucial point in which the connexion of both strands is made. Starting from here, Mariko and Keiko are in reality the same persons, just as Etsuko and Sachiko are. The Protagonist, in fact, or intact, uses her past as a mediator and an agency and whenever she meets a trauma, try to explore her painful past to make the present better. So one could find that the characters especially the protagonist had a tie-up with the psychological and emotional relationship with the past and the present.

As she concludes, the “horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter; as with a wound on one’s own body, it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things” (54). The daughter’s death is predicted in the following lines:

I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture - of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end. [...] It may seem morbid of a mother to have such thoughts, but on hearing of her suicide, the first thought that ran through my mind - before I registered even the shock - was to wonder how long she had been there like that before they had found her. She had lived amidst her own family without being seen for days on end; little hope she would be discovered quickly in a strange city where no one knew her. (54)

The novelist has used the first person narrative technique and made the protagonist act as a mouthpiece of the Ishiguro. He also takes the reader to a post-world war period in Japan which shows his love for his native soil land. To this context, it could be stated by Ishiguro as “I wished to recreate this Japan put together all these memories and all these imaginary ideas I had about this landscape called Japan. I wanted to make it safe, preserve it in book before it faded away from my memory altogether”. (23)

Summation

To sum up, the novelist has used the journey of memory to act as a supreme power within the characters and let them free by going to and fro to the past and present to reveal out their experience. The novelist also uses the journey of memory to seek the attention of the readers and at the same time controls the mood of the novel. However, the novelist has made

the protagonist recall carefully, chronologically and strategically her experiences and has artistically filled the gaps of the past and the present.

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