

A Study Of Stoic Femininity In The Select Novels Of Kazuo Ishiguro

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Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro, the Noble Laureate of 2017, always unweaves a “convincing portrait of human life”. His fictional characters are never away from everyday reality. Through a single mother, a professional butler, a forgotten artist, and many others; Ishiguro gives access not only to the apparent emotions but also to the nuanced emotions that readers hardly observe. Significantly, the article discusses the femininity of some of the female characters of Ishiguro who are “Strong, equanimous in the face of misfortune”. Being endowed with femininity is different from being a feminist. While the former refers to the culture-deemed traits of women like being sensitive, nurturing, sweet, and having an appreciation towards aesthetics. Whereas the latter deals with an ideology that aims for socio-political equality among the genders. Characters with such a rebellious combination of virtues give birth to a term called ‘Stoic Femininity’. The article illustrates the idea that a few female characters of Ishiguro cope with their insecurities in life by being stoic-feminine.

Key Words: Stoicism, Stoic Femininity, Ishiguro, Insecurities, coping strategy.

Literature Survey

‘Exploring the Application of the Principles of Stoic Philosophy in the Workplace’ is a Ph.D. dissertation by Chrystie Watson to know to what extent Stoic philosophies are useful in the rapidly changing work atmosphere of this century. Many methods like qualitative and quantitative surveys, Interviews, and Inductive and deductive interpretations of data are utilized by the researcher to understand the impact of Stoicism. ‘Better Living Through Stoicism, From Seneca to Modern Interpreters’ is an article published in The New York Times (2021). This is an interesting piece of writing that commemorates the Stoic virtues in the world of pandemics. One of the core virtues of Stoicism is not to be a slave; neither mentally nor physically. The author

equates the word slave to addiction, i.e., addiction to gadgets that stops humans to be attentive in their lives. The article ‘Troubling stoicism: Sociocultural influences and applications to health and illness behavior’ traces the evolution of the term Stoicism from classics till now, particularly in terms of health literature. The authors also explore the different sociocultural aspects that help people to conceptualize Stoicism over periods of time. The applicative benefits of the philosophy of stoicism in various elements have been accessed by researchers and recorded in the literature survey. But not much of a study relating feminism with the philosophy of stoicism is found. Though stoicism attributes equal stature to both genders, there are critics like Manning who argue that females are incapable of wisdom and therefore are incapable of stoicism.

The author of this article has applied the characteristics of stoicism to the select female characters in the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and studied how well they form a coping strategy with the stoic attitude that serves them to cope with financial, social, cultural, and political insecurities from the masculine world.

Aim and objectives of the Study.

The aim of the paper is to bring out the stoic strength of some of the women characters depicted in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro. Though the principles of stoicism are also strong in male characters, this paper focuses on the female characters of Kazuo Ishiguro who portray stoicism with a blend of femininity.

The objective of the article is to enunciate the stoic strength of women in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro. While most writers tend to depict women either as a victim of misogynists or a victor of nugacious masculinity, Ishiguro tends to portray them in a more natural light as struggling individuals hoping for support from their male counterparts yet willing to move on without. In their struggle with the unknown and unknowable fate, they exhibit a kind of equanimity identical to the strengths of stoics.

Stoicism

Zeno of Citium proposed the philosophy of Stoicism in the 3rd century. The word stoic is defined as "Strong, equanimous in the face of misfortune" by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE). The state of stoicism is when people act according to reason or logic. This philosophy believes that more than an incident that happened, what an individual thinks about the incident decides the impact (Epictetus). The term 'eudaimonia' in general refers to happiness or welfare. The core virtue of stoicism

is eudaimonia. The stoics believe that eudaimonia can be attained through a virtuous life. The stoic virtues demand qualities like "wisdom, justice, courage, and discipline." i.e., one should keep seeking wisdom, support justice, and be courageous and disciplined.

Feminism

Feminism is a movement that shouts out against inequality in terms of gender. Feminists point out the treatment of women by males and blame the patriarchal society for the miserable state of women. The attitude of feminism kept changing phase after phase. The first wave of feminism talks about the suffrage of women.

My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. (Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.)

Wollstonecraft demanded to be treated as equals to men and not to be belittled. She is against the stereotypical attitude of portraying women as 'beautiful' but instead suggests being called 'gentle'. She also encourages women to strengthen themselves to be void of blind obedience to men. The Second Wave of feminism is all about discrimination in all walks of life including sexuality, family, workplace, etc. This wave of feminism can be studied under two branches of feminism namely, Liberal and Radical Feminism. Liberal feminism focuses on improving women's personal and professional lives whereas radical feminism gets the help of the Civil Rights Movement to keep a check on the violence against women. The Third Wave of feminism denied considering women under one group. This wave found that there are different grievances for women based on various aspects like race, class, caste, and ethnicity and

encouraged them to develop a personalized definition of feminism.

The above discussion on feminism helps the readers to understand the aim of feminism, which is to fight against the injustice caused by the patriarchal society and consequently gain the due respect women deserve. Emily acknowledges Stoics as feminists since they believe that women are equal to men in terms of reasoning and therefore are equal citizens.

The standard argument for considering the Stoics, feminists rests on two claims: first, that the Stoics thought women were equal to men in their rational capacities, and second, that women and men were equal citizens of the cosmopolis. (Stoicism, feminism, and autonomy)

Stoic Femininity

This article prefers to identify the traits of female characters in Ishiguro's novels with the term 'femininity' rather than with 'feminism' since they do not bother to fight against men as feminists but rather take responsibility to own their lives. The female characters of Ishiguro are different from the prototype feminists who fight to the finish against the masculine-centric attitude of the world. But the women characters of Kazuo Ishiguro understand the fact that males are also fellow beings in the troublesome journey of life and they don't deserve to suffer the whole blame. The article analyses the lady characters of Ishiguro with the term '**Stoic Femininity**'; they signify their stoic traits like being calm, practical, virtuous, reasonable, and courageous in all walks of life along with their feminine qualities like gentleness, warmth, cooperativeness, kindness, devotion, etc., which are often characterized as contrasts. Taking up the responsibilities of their lives doesn't mean that they suffer voluntarily by avoiding men in their lives. Women of Ishiguro are ready to accept the help and support from men to make their lives better but were also ready to

walk away if the men didn't meet their expectations. Though stoic traits are oceanic, this article tries to bring out the four qualities of stoicism namely, Stoic wisdom, Stoic justice, Stoic courage, and Stoic discipline through which the women characters of Ishiguro seek solace in their insecurities. Looking forward to in any given situation is what is the key ladies of Ishiguro believe in.

Stoic Wisdom in the women characters of Kazuo Ishiguro

Etsuko in A Pale View of Hills

A Pale View of Hills is the first novel by Ishiguro. The story is all about the traumatic memory and experiences of the central character, Etsuko. She recalls the days she lived in Nagasaki, post the disaster. The impact of the war and the vacuum it has created in the lives of the people is described sensibly. The novel also exhibits a special quality of humankind; to live beyond the human-made worst-ever destruction people can witness, which in turn exhibits stoic wisdom.

I do not find it as easy as my husband did to put the blame on Nature, or else on Jiro. However, such things are in the past now, and there is little to be gained in going over them here. (94)

The unique quality of the women characters in the novel is that none broods over their tragic past but accepts the present as it is and looks forward to a better future. The moving present consoles the mind that got stuck in the brooding past.

As the novel begins, Etsuko lives in England. Nikki, her second daughter who leads a fashionable life in London, visits her. Etsuko remembers her Nagasaki life, the life she led with her first husband, and the people she met worth creating an everlasting memory. She broke her first marriage long back and came to England to get married to her second husband. The decision she took for the well-being of herself and

her child is an act of courage. The fact that Etsuko and her first husband don't adore each other is observable in the way they treat each other.

In those days, I remember it had become the vogue for young couples to be seen in public holding hands – something Jiro and I had never done ... (120)

The reason behind the divorce is not apparently specified perhaps the trait of stoic wisdom is evident from the fact that she doesn't think it fits to blame a fellow passenger fighting his way out in the muddled wary world. The fact that blaming or complaining about others will take one nowhere is well understood by the lady but accepting the reality of the situation and moving on could be the only strategy to cope with the pain and insecurity the divorce and death caused.

Stoic Justice in the women characters of Kazuo Ishiguro

Ms. Kenton in *The Remains of the Day*

The Remains of the Day is one of the most appreciated works of Kazuo Ishiguro. This novel bagged The Booker Prize. New York Times reviews the book to be a "profound and heart-rendering study of personality, class, and culture". Mr. Stevens, the Head Butler of Darlington Hall, and Ms. Kenton, The Head Housekeeper of Darlington Hall are the protagonists of this story. Mr. Stevens is obsessed with professionalism. He strives to show himself to be a thorough professional. He was a blind follower of Mr. Darlington's values and that is what he thought of as being loyal to his master. Whereas Ms. Kenton, who is equally responsive to her master proves to be more responsible as a professional being. She always strives to make everything around her better and keep growing better. Ms. Kenton observes the dry life of Mr. Stevens. She even tries to make a few romantic advances. She tries to brighten up his room a little

with some flowers and the response she receives is

"Miss. Kenton, I appreciate your kindness. But this is not a room of entertainment. I am happy to have distractions kept to a minimum."(55).

He ignores her kindness. He refuses to see what is significant at the moment and picks up with her about her calling his father by his first name 'Williams'. Mr. Stevens pursues every action of Ms. Kenton against his father. Adding to his perception, one day when Mr. Stevens' father was carrying the heavy trays with his trembling hands anytime ready to fall on the lap of the guests, Ms. Kenton observes "...a large drop on the end of his nose dangling over the soup bowls."(62) This enraged her and when she reflected her thoughts that perhaps he is bestowed with duties beyond his abilities in terms with his age, Mr. Stevens refused to accept and defended his father stating that they are "trivial errors". This illustrates that Mr. Stevens fails to stand by what is right and indeed fails to be a true professional. He who had concerns about every little thing in Darlington Hall spurns to consider the "larger significance" of this act since it is related to his father but Ms. Kenton acts righteous.

Mr. Stevens thought that Ms. Kenton dislikes his father but she is the one who helped him in crucial times. One of them is when Mr. Stevens' father was breathing his last. Ms. Kenton was beside his father letting Mr. Stevens attend to his duties which he thought is a sign of true professionalism. "Of course, Mr. Stevens. I will tell you when the doctor arrives." (110). She informed him about his father's demise and consoled him. Ms. Kenton is aware that when to do what. She, as a Head Housekeeper condemned nonprofessional acts and also did her duties as a fellow human being. She never carried any dismay against either of them. She didn't express any kind of disappointment when Mr. Stevens replied, "I'm very busy just now, Miss Kenton. In

a little while perhaps” (111) for asking him to see his dead father, rather she understood him and extended her hands to the fullest ability. She expressed the trait of Stoic wisdom as she understood what to do, what not to do, what to say, and what not to say in a given specific situation. All her enlightened, wisdom-filled actions resulted from her attitude of letting go and moving on to the next significant day. Ms. Kenton broke through the professional insecurity caused by Mr. Steven’s continuous belittling attitude by letting hurts go then and there and starting a fresh day all over again.

Ms. Kenton appointed two housemaids, Ruth and Sarah. She took the responsibility to train them and proved their true ability to the rest of the members despite their disbelief in the girls. When Mr. Darlington asked Mr. Steven to dismiss the girls just because they are Jews. Mr. Stevens maintains a heartless silence. But Ms. Kenton gets outraged and says,

‘Does it not occur to you, Mr. Stevens, that to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would be simply - wrong?..(157)
‘I am warning you, Mr. Stevens, I will not continue to work in such a house. If my girls are dismissed, I will leave also.’
(157)

Besides all these words, Mr. Stevens simply puts that it is the master’s decision whose wisdom can never be questioned. After a year when Mr. Darlington regrets his decision to dismiss two well-behaved maids for an unjustifiable reason, Mr. Stevens remains the same. When he recalls the incident with Ms. Kenton, “...only this time a year ago, you were still insisting you were going to resign.” (161) she revealed her reason for being counterproductive. Stevens remembered the painful incident as much as she, Ms. Kenton tried to forget.

Had I been anyone worthy of any respect at all, I dare say I would have left Darlington hall long ago. ...Where could I have gone? I have no family. Only my

aunt. I love her dearly, but I can’t live with her for a day without feeling my whole life is wasting away. (161)

This incident serves as proof of one of the notions of stoicism that “...virtue of those who suffer injustice is not harmed.”(Scott Aikin). Ms. Kenton could have been with her aunt to get away from all the pressure but chose to stay back for sure for her spirit. Thus Ms. Kenton, Sarah, and Ruth’s dignity are preserved amongst their suffering since they were ‘insensitive to mistreatment’. The stoics condemn that one can be treated otherwise based on class, gender, or ethnicity. But the two girls here were dismissed due to their ethnicity and Ms. Kenton is the only one who opposed the idea that kept everyone backward in time. As a true stoic she didn’t let Mr. Darlington’s values override her own and kept widening her mind socially and politically. Firing employees despite their great work is definitely a point for other employees to feel insecure about their job and position in the workplace. She voiced against the whole of it to get out of any kind of professional humiliation thrown at her, thanks to her confidence.

Beatrice in The Buried Giant

The novel, *The Buried Giant* is “A deeply affecting portrait of marital love” between the elderly couple Axl and Beatrice. The story is set in early Britain, the age of ogres. People, in general, were suffering from memory loss due to the mist released by the she-dragon Querig. The mist helps the people of the villages to live in harmony forgetting their tragic past. The mist buries the enmity between the Britons and Saxons and also the treacherous activities of the villagers to their trusted ones. Beatrice is courageous enough to fight to know it all. She exhibits a ‘come what may’ attitude. They intend to cross the sea to reach an island as a part of their journey. It is an order that only couples who have been faithful to one another will be led to enter

the mysterious island together whereas others will be separated.

The calmness and quietness with which she leads show her confidence. Readers could see that she is ready to face whatever is there on the island. She has the kind of strength to face it with ease. She does all she could to move forward from the present to dissolve her insecurities about the place she lived and the life she had. The man is left to himself on the shores to recollect the past and dream of various possibilities and probabilities. Maybe she knows a punishment awaits her. She takes the future as an answer to the past.

Stoic Courage in the women characters of Kazuo Ishiguro

Etsuko in A Pale View of Hills

Etsuko didn't choose to marry Jiro, her first husband. Jiro's family took her in as she had lost her parents to the bomb blast. It is very apparent that Etsuko isn't happy about her marriage but still she looked forward to better days with her to-be-born child, Keiko. "Well, I'm certainly looking forward to it." (25) She put an end to her not-so-adorable marriage with Jiro, her first husband, and moved to England with Keiko, her first daughter hoping for a better future for the girl. She went through the times when Keiko isn't on good terms with her second husband and Nikki, her step-sister. She lost her second husband and Keiko due to her cruel fate. Nikki chose to live in London and pays rare visits. But still, Etsuko holds on to life like a true stoic. She expresses neither a touch of romanticism in the new marriage nor hatred about the old marriage. She treated both the same and kept looking forward to a better situation than the present. She puts a courageous face to life and takes the people in it as it is and as they are.

Sachiko in A Pale View of Hills

Sachiko is another lady, Etsuko, and the readers find interesting. She is indestructible in all ways. Her daughter Mariko is found awkward and is described as someone who has "a strangely expressionless look" by Etsuko. Sachiko regrets her decision of getting married knowing that a war is about to commence.

Perhaps it was foolish to have married when I did. After all, everyone could see a war was coming. But then again, Etsuko, no one knew what a war was really like, not in those days. (75)

But she didn't hold on to the regret and quickly moved on to look forward. She aspires to go to the United States of America with the help of her boyfriend, Frank. To her disappointment, he drinks away all the money she saved and gave him. She is not even slightly surprised that this isn't the first time he does this to her. She handled the situation with utmost temperance. She didn't blame him for doing that rather she tries to understand him and adores him saying "... what he wants most is to take me to America. That's what he wants. ... Sometimes, you see, he's like a little child." (69) She treats him fair knowing that he is as much as a victim of war as she herself is. She manages to deal with him fairly. She stands as an ultimatum of endurance, one of the ethics of Stoic courage.

Sachiko got a job in Mrs. Fujiwara's shop with the help of Etsuko and worked again. She truly is industrious. In the meantime, her aunt comes to meet her to take her back to her uncle's home who is a well-to-do person. Sachiko respects her uncle but refuses to stay with him stating "There's nothing for me in my uncle's house. Just a few empty rooms, that's all." Sachiko's true spirit of High-mindedness is admirable when she says the above line even when she lives in a small hut in the corner of "an expanse of wasteground, several acres of dried mud and ditches". In the face of any situation, she exhibited true confidence and always pushed herself to move forward. Seneca, a popular

Roman Stoic says, “Sometimes, even to live is an act of courage”. Sachiko, with all her financial constraints, dysfunctional relationship, and personal insecurities caused by these has showcased real stoic courage.

Mrs. Fujiwara in A Pale View of Hills

Mrs. Fujiwara, the noodle shop owner is one of the most inspiring characters in the novel. She lost her entire family to the bomb blast except for her elder son, Kazuo. The one thing that makes her appear cut above from rest of her generation is that she owns a business independently and works happily for herself. She also inspires everyone around her and encourages people to look forward to better days. “Mrs. Fujiwara always tells me how important it is to keep looking forward”(111) Her cheerfulness is contagious.

“Why, Ogata-San,” she exclaimed, recognizing him immediately, “how splendid to see you again. It’s been a long time, hasn’t it?”

Stoicism teaches how steadfast one should be in the time of vicissitudes and Mrs. Fujiwara can be called a stoic superwoman. She isn’t concerned about creating an ideal circumstance but deals with reality ideally.

Beatrice in The Buried Giant

The protagonist couple of the story lives in a warren away from the warmth of the fire. They were also not allowed to use candles by the priest and the villagers as some sort of unrevealed punishment.

The man, Axl spends sleepless nights as a consequence of the effect of the external elements. But Beatrice enjoys a peaceful sleep irrespective of warmth and comfort-deprived circumstance. The lady, who is more anxious to move away from the place to go in search of their lost son whom they believe lived in one of the neighboring villages sleeps fine. She doesn't brood over it. This shows the serene preparation

of women to leave suffering behind and take up the journey to have a meaningful future. The confidence she had that she will end up with what is right for her is reflexive.

A fine, strong, upright man. Why must we stay in this place? Let’s go to our son’s village. He’ll protect us and see no one treats us ill. (27)

She is also anxious to find the reason behind the forgetfulness as everyone else. While others show it explicitly, she executes a kind of balance in the interest. She decides to travel on an uncharted path irrespective of her poor health which showcases her industriousness.

When Axl wonders what might be the reason behind the forgetfulness, asking what might have happened that has made God furious with them to this extent, Beatrice stuns him by saying that they should have done something shameful that even God is embarrassed to remember and so punished us likewise. Beatrice is not afraid of remembering sad or threatening memories rather is ready to accept the past as it is and move on to the future to live it meaningfully.

“We’ll have the bad ones come back too, even if they make us weep or shake with anger. For isn’t it the life we’ve shared?” (141)

Though she is alarmed about the bad memories which might put her marriage in a tight spot, she is ready to risk it to know all. Disregarding the fact that her act of killing the dragon might make her and the whole village face the elusive past, she strives her best to know the truth. The state where no one remembers who they truly are, what have they done to each other and their roots for sure would result in diffidence and lack of confidence which are signs of insecurities. She fought back against it by keep exploring and moving forward.

Chrissie in Klara and the Sun

Klara and the Sun is the latest work of Ishiguro. Klara, an AI is the protagonist of the story. Josie

is the owner of Klara. When she fell sick due to 'upgradation', a process through which children will be genetically updated, and when everyone is determined that she will follow the path of her late sister Sal, her mother Chrissie Arthur tries to make Klara a lookalike of Josie. A child's death is one of the most painful experiences for any mother. Knowing that there is nothing she could do to make the situation better or more favorable to her, Chrissie didn't just cry over the fact but also made her mind up to deal with it in a practical way.

Stoic Discipline in the women characters of Kazuo Ishiguro

Sachiko in A Pale View of Hills

Sachiko wasn't ready to get away from Frank, her boyfriend despite him being a spoilsport to her ambition to go to America, drinking away her money, and being a treacherous boyfriend who spends time with a bar girl but she decides almost instinctively to leave Frank when he refuses to accept Mariko, her daughter. She didn't overlook her responsibility and her virtue as a mother. She put forth the quality of seamliness.

“...what is the utmost importance to me is my daughter's welfare. That must come before everything else. I'm a mother, after all.” (86)

Though she is ready to give up her boyfriend for her daughter, she didn't put much effort into bringing her daughter up. Her decision of letting her child grow naturally is the result of her belief that too much care in a time of war only serves to spoil the spirit of the child. Nurturing a fatherless child, then in Japan is not a cakewalk. She was facing insecurities in all available forms but ended up putting a growth mindset; leaving the past and grabbing the opportunities that come on her way to develop.

Ms. Kenton in The Remains of the Day

After Ms. Kenton's aunt's demise, Ms. Kenton decides to leave Darlington Hall. When she informed Mr. Stevens of the same and about a marriage proposal she got, “He has asked me to marry him. I thought you had a right to know that”(225), he replied, “Indeed, Miss Kenton. That is very interesting” (225). Despite his constant denial, she kept trying to win his heart. She gave as many chances to Mr. Stevens to serve her fine as her man. The absence of Ms. Kenton made Mr. Stevens feels a vacuum. A letter from her gives him comfort which hints to him of the remote chance of the lady returning to Darlington Hall. He undertakes a journey with the hope to get her back in his life. Mr. Stevens fails to react in the present but does it in the future.

Finally when they meet each other after years together, when Mr. Stevens expresses his wish for Ms. Kenton, to return to Darlington Hall to resume her position, of course not purely only for that reason, she clearly chooses to remain in her present life. When she was questioned about her not-so-happy marriage by Mr. Stevens, she practically replied that she might have had those thoughts now and then but they disappear quickly.

Let me assure you, Mr. Stevens, my life does not stretch out empty before me. For one thing, we are looking forward to the grandchild. (249)

Indeed she also accepted that it was tough for her to realize and accept the fact that she left Darlington hall and find herself married to one of her acquaintances and consequently left her home thrice just to return. Being a stoic lady, she never got away from her responsibilities. She expresses true ethics of modesty toward the family to which she is committed. The welled-up eyes of Ms.Kenton while waving back to Mr. Stevens shows her love for him but she controls her personal desires. She could have made Mr. Stevens feel awkward and embarrassed for asking her to return to Darlington Hall. But she never gave him a sense of insecurity by insulting her

before everyone. Her harsh words could have hurt his ego. She makes him understand that what is been done cannot be undone. The only way is to look forward. She advises him that he should also do the same to grow both personally and professionally. Mr. Stevens then plans to take steps to improve his quick wit, the quality his new boss expects from him. He accepts the personally disappointing conversation with a lite heart and decides to move forward. The constructive mindset is due to Ms. Kenton. She sets herself as a role model. As Marcus, a stoic philosopher says, she lived as ‘cosmopolitai’ fulfilling her everyday duties and responsibilities.

Helen in Klara and the Sun

Rick is Josie’s best friend who is not ‘lifted’ yet. The fact of not being lifted, i.e., not being genetically modified as a child, makes others consider him inferior. Miss. Helen is Rick’s mother. She cares about Rick’s education. She even requests Klara to help him study to get into the college Atlas Brookings, which takes children who are ‘unlifted’. She tries all the ways she knew to get Rick into college as she regrets not being able to ‘lift’ him. Helen even meets her former flame, Vance to get help for Rick’s education. Vance, after investigating Rick’s abilities starts to vent out his feelings towards Helen about how poorly he was treated by her in the past. Helen implores Vance.

‘Vance, I’m apologizing,’ she went on. ‘I’m pleading. I’m saying behaved badly towards you and if you like, I’ll vow to you that I’ll punish myself and keep punishing myself until I’ve made it up to you.’ (255)

But Vance moved away putting a blunt end to the conversation. The real pain and effort took by Miss. Helen can be understood by her lines once Vance disappears.

I’m wondering if that was enough. If that will satisfy him. ... What’s Vance going to do? Is he going to help? He could at

least have told us one way or the other. (256)

The insecurity she possesses about her non-lifted son’s life is very visible. She fights back against it by asking for her in spite of the humiliations she faces. She didn’t let the pressure of humiliation or the insults affect her. She kept pushing herself to look forward to opportunities to fix her son’s life.

Queer Stoic Femininity in Klara and the Sun and Never Let Me Go.

Traits of stoicism are not only found in human female characters but also in female AIs. Klara, a robot, can be appreciated as an epitome of femininity as she understands others to the best of her ability and serves so. The hope and faith Klara had in the Sun are ethereal. Klara once witnesses the Sun helping a beggar man and a dog back to life. Since then, she worshiped the Sun with true devotion. She pleads with the Sun to heal Josie and also declares a deal that she would destroy the pollution machine as a return gift. She believed that the “Cootings Machine”, as it is written on its side, is the reason for pollution that blocks Sun and determines to destroy it. Klara’s bourne-less hope is revealed when she imitates Josie to her mother and conveys the following line.

There is special help coming. Something no one’s thought of yet. Then I’ll be well again. (105)

Even when Josie’s parents and others believed that Josie would soon die, Klara is the only one who trusted that Josie will be fine. All Klara’s prayer is not just purely for Josie’s health. She also prayed for the love between Rick and Josie. To her shock, when Rick and Josie decide to part ways as adults, Klara goes speechless. The value Klara holds with love and the humans who were destined to spread love in this world is highly inspiring.

Klara positively receives all the negative inputs from humans. Though she learns that humans are

selfish and not virtuous enough to be dedicated, she never judges them or disrespects them. She gave her best to fulfill her duties. Finally, she ends her life with a note of positivity that she is satisfied with her duty. The disappointments with humans never deprived her off her duty.

Yet another interesting novel by Ishiguro is *Never Let me Go*. The novel is about clones whose sole purpose in life is to donate organs to the needy. Clones are raised to become 'donors' and 'carers' until they 'complete' donating all their organs. Kathy is the narrator-protagonist. Irrespective of their incomplete life, they try to experience love with a complete sense. The truth that they can't be together forever didn't stop them from being kind and loving to one another. The courage with which they accept reality shows true traits of stoicism.

I keep thinking about this river somewhere, with the water moving really fast. And these two people in the water, trying to hold onto each other, holding on as hard as they can, but in the end it's just too much. The current's too strong. They've got to let go, drift apart. That's how it is with us. It's a shame, Kath, because we've loved each other all our lives. But in the end, we can't stay together forever.(277)

Every individual is a born loner and is destined to carry their cross. The existential predicament of any human is painful that too from a clone's point of view, the pain is double fold. Yet the stoicism with which they accept the inevitable end is worth all our appreciation.

Scope for the Future Research

This article analyses the stoic qualities of femininity in the female characters of Ishiguro. Men of Kazuo Ishiguro also display stoic acceptance and endurance. Therefore researchers

in the future may examine the stoic qualities of men in Ishiguro's novels.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro chooses themes that delineate the essential insecurity in the human heart. Life between World War - I and II, or the life in the historical context of growing conflicts between Britons and Saxons, or the life of an artist in the floating world of principles and philosophies, or the unconsolated lonely search of humans for artistic identity abounds in insecurity of very high order. It takes enormous courage and fortitude to develop a smart strategy to handle the sense of insecurity that is generated by the intensity of the nerve-racking experiences. Ishiguro's characters are endowed with natural optimism that serves as a source of inspiration and motivation to move on without being bogged down by the heaviness of the experience. Men or women in the world of Kazuo Ishiguro fall but never fail to pick themselves up and move on. They may be hurt and may carry the wound to their graves but yet they never allow themselves to be destroyed. They move on bravely from one disaster may be to the other with enthusiasm and confidence. The stoic attitude of these characters is truly impressive. Ishiguro's women in particular are not merely the fairer sex but are the stronger sex as well thanks to their stoic faith in the future.

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