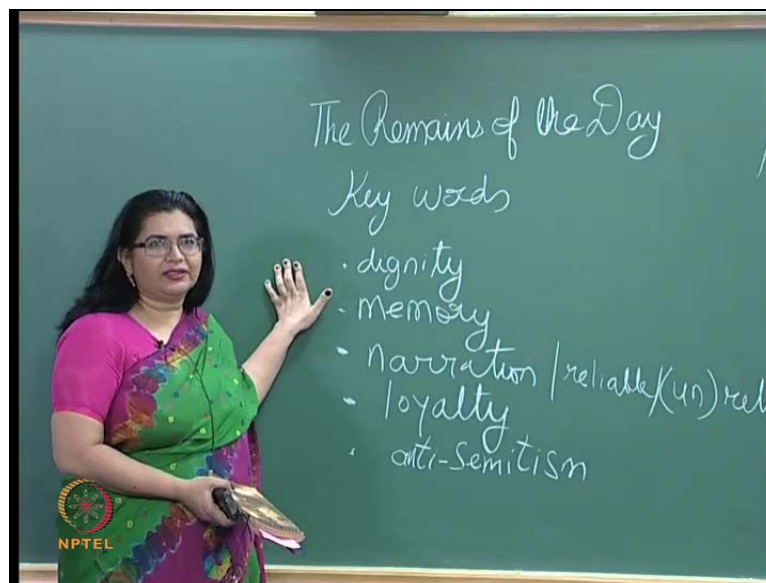


Contemporary Literature
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Module No. # 01

Lecture No. # 30

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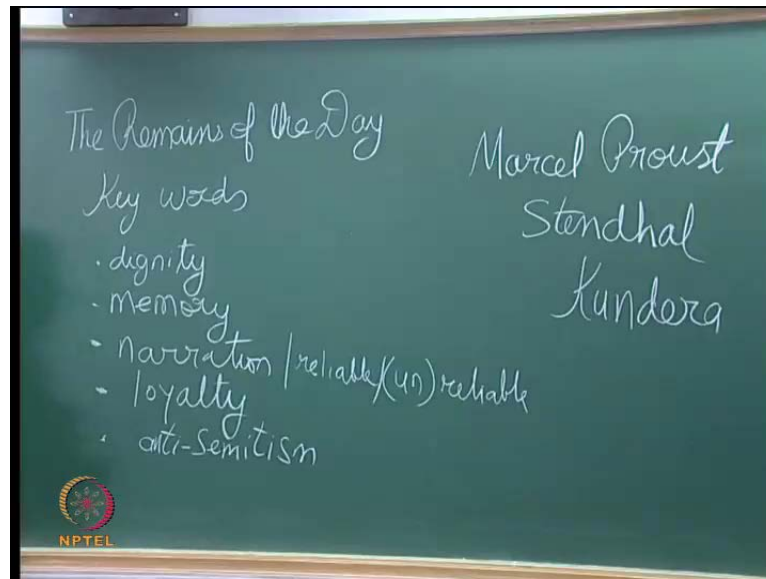


Good morning. So, we will continue our discussion of Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*. The key words for today will be discussion of dignity. As you remember that Mr. Stevens, a hero, the butler of Darlington hall, he has been **marling** over the issue of what makes a great butler and who possess this virtue of dignity. You also remember, of course, the dictates of the **heir society** where there are very hard and fast and very strict rules of admission. Membership is extremely limited and only to those distinguished butlers, who come from **a** extremely distinguished households as well as possess great deal of dignity and matters of dignity. The Hayes Society, of course, unable to define exactly what the term means.

By distinguished households, they mean not aristocracy of course, but people who have made it as they say and not just nourish, but in several different aspects of life and society. Second notion is that of memory, as we have seen so far the elements of the day,

is a novel of memory. Mr. Stevens, throughout the novel, reflects over things that happened to him and he also reflects on his life in Darlington hall. There was a timer and the last time when we stopped, they were looking at the great conference of March 1923 at Darlington hall, where Stevens feels that he really made himself indispensable, and perhaps, came very close to the ideals of one of the greatest butlers of his time.

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So, dignity, memory and as seen earlier, Stevens is an unreliable narrator. The idea, the views we look at the novel or we see the novel entirely through his point of view but at times, we also feel that Stevens is not a very reliable or very trustworthy narrator. Why not? Because of any sense of dishonesty, that because of his deep sense of loyalty towards large valentine and at times we do feel that his loyalty although justified, but it is also slightly colored.

This sense of loyalty which is so deep and so unquestioning towards his employer, it has impacted his sense of judgment. Therefore, we call Stevens an unreliable narrator. Then, today we are also going to discuss something that we have not so far talked about with reference to the remains of the day, the idea or the theme of anti-semitism in the novel. So, we stopped at page 110. Now, we will go to Mortimer pond door set which is day to afternoon. Also, you may call the Chapterization, the chapter titles of the novel. We do not. It is the way it is titled, day one at Salisbury, day two Salisbury Afternoon and so on.

So, the numbering, the days or naming various places that the rural part of England, but it is not as if Stevenson actually concerned with that particular day or with that particular place. Where ever he goes, his thoughts invariably go back to those glorious days at Darlington hall. Now, the afternoon of his life rather in the dusk of his life, he remembers whatever happens to him. So, he is actually counting his days.

What he is banking on is this letter which is quite ambiguously written by Miss Kenton, his former colleague at Darlington hall which gives some kind of impression that she might want to come back. So, might want to return and resume her services as the house keeper at Darlington hall.

Darlington hall is no longer what it rules to be. Now, there is no Lord Darlington. The hall remains, but it has a new owner Mr. Farraday, an American. Steven says the struggling to cope with ways of Mr. Farraday who is an American. So, there is a cultural difference and also who is not a noble man as the British would understand. So, there is lot of misunderstandings between Mr. Farraday and Stevens.

Now page 113. It would seem there is a whole dimension to the question, what is a great butler. So, this is how we start and we come back to the same idea. So, repetition is an important feature of post modernist literature and this novel also, we find the same idea, same motive is repeated in several different ways, what is it that defines a great butler what is a definition of a great butler. I have hitherto not properly considered. It is, I must say, a rather unsettling experience to realize this about a matter so close to my heart, particularly one I have given much thought to over the years. So, again he is being remembered as a great butler you see and is up somehow. It has got something to do with the socialist structure, I mean England. As we have been talking about is a very a hierarchical society and the people ran according to their places, according to varies ranks in society and that is very important.

So, to be ranked as one of the greatest butlers of his time is very important. Although, he is not really modest we cannot use that word, but perhaps to polish a person to accept or admit that is it is his life's ambition to be counted among the ranks of the great butlers of his time. Therefore, this frequent reference to days as either and also over what makes a great butler and the reasons why he can consider himself a great butler.

We, the last time where we stopped, we were talking about what makes him feel that he can indeed join the category of a great butler. The fact that he had outperformed himself at the conference of March 1923 where he let it known to everyone that his duties come over and above all personal and emotional relationships and as his father dying. Mr. Stevens continuous with his duty of serving the people at the conference, that he feels is distinction and that he feels is something that should earn him a place in the ranks of the great butlers.

Page 115. I believe I can best highlight the difference between the generations by expressing myself figuratively. Butlers of my father's generation, I would say, tended to see the world in terms of a ladder-the houses of royalty, dukes and the lords from the oldest families placed at the top, those of new money lower down and so on, until one reached a point below which the hierarchy was determined simply by wealth or the lack of it. Any butler with ambition simply did his best to climb as high up this ladder as possible and by and large, the higher he went, the greater was his professional prestige. Such are, of course, precisely the values embodied in the Hayes Society's idea of a distinguished household, and the fact that it was confidently making such pronouncements as late as 1929 shows clearly why the demise of that society was inevitable, if not long overdue.

Stevens feel, so that the demands of the heirs of heir society that so called distinguish households which are basically marked by nobility and the households aristocracy and aristocratic antecedents and those are the features, those are the factors that define a household, but Stevens himself feels, Stevens who is so traditional and conservative in his outlook, he too feels that even by the standards of 1929 Hayes Society's was quite outdated and out of sync with the changing times. One no longer associated even in 1929 dignity with once birth and especially noble birth. So, as someone say, you know later in the novel, Stevens feels that one is as brave as one does.

So, if someone has provided great service to the society, then that gentleman should also be included as a person with great dignity and also that house hold should be qualified as a prestigious household. So, Stevens also gives the indication of his own unrest with his times, but then being what he is, he remains quite and he, as we see that he himself is a person who is as outdated as the society. We also felt and we also saw that when Stevens is a dart set, he comes across a person and while they are engaged in a conversation, he

denies that he has an oath for Lord Darlington. Although, he admits that he comes from a great household that is Darlington hall, but denies that he had ever known Lord Darlington and last time, we were also talking about, what causes this denial.

Perhaps, there was too much of suppression of emotions at Darlington hall under Lord Darlington. Therefore, at a sub-conscious level, Stevens is not very comfortable with the idea that he had served, he had actually served a person like Lord Darlington, although his sense of loyalty, his unwavering loyalty never lets him admit that. Perhaps, he is too proud to admit that Lord Darlington, after all was not such a great person. He had harbored fascist and anti-semitic tendencies. He had also harbored feelings where which in long, they were not politically very beneficial to society at large and this could be one of the reasons why Stevens feels and defuses to admit that he had served Lord Darlington. While he mingles over the fact that why he could not admit that he had been in the service of Lord Darlington.

We are on page 121. I may not have thought further why it was that I had given the distinct impression, I had never been in the employ of Lord Darlington. For surely, there is no real doubt that is what occurred. He had asked, you mean you actually used to work for that Lord Darlington? I had given an answer which could mean little other than that I had not. It could simply be that a meaningless whim had suddenly overtaken me at that moment, but that is hardly a convincing way to account for such distinctly odd behavior. In any case, I have now come to accept that the incident with the batman is not the first of its kind; there is little doubt it has some connection, though I am not quite clear of the nature of it with what occurred a few months ago during the visits of the wake fields.

Now, see he says this is not the first time. This is not one odd incident they are denied having ever worked for Lord Darlington. Something like that had happened even earlier. Look at the structure of the novel. It moves back and forth and most back, then forth because he spends very little time. We see him not for all that long. Darlington hall, actually most of the time, he is out of Darlington hall, but reminiscing and recollecting about his days at Darlington hall. So, this incident suddenly triggers things and triggers of his memory. So, here I would just have to court myself, prove the French writer who has written this remarkable book called *Remembrance of Things Past* and talks about the accuracy of memory and associations and particular sensations that a company remembering.

So, if some of you might be familiar with the incident of Madelyn, he takes a bite of Madelyn and the association of Madelyn takes him back in time and he is remembers things that had happened to him long ago. So, in Marshal prove sensations are powerful, but cannot be described. They are indescribable that memories have associations. Associative power of memory at the same time is also very good with the arbitrariness of memory, the inaccuracies of memories and that is what we are seeing here. A person in the village, it suddenly takes him back to his recent past at Darlington hall. There he had come in contact with a couple, an American couple who had been visiting Lord, sorry Mr. Farraday and this is how it goes.

Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield are an American couple who have been settled in England having a number of acquaintances in common with Mr. Farraday amidst Boston society. They paid a short visit one day to Darlington hall. I now refer to a time only a few weeks after Mr. Farraday had himself arrived at the house, a time when his enthusiasm for his acquisition was at a height. Acquisition, that his Darlington hall, one he acquired the place much of the Wakefield's visit was taken up with my employer leading them on what might have seemed to some an unnecessarily extensive tour of the premises enclosing all the dust sheeted areas. Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, however, appeared to be as keen on the inspection as Mr. Farraday. Mr. Farraday had commenced the tour at the top of the house, and by the time he had brought his guests down to inspect the magnificence of the ground floor rooms, he seemed to be on an elevated plane pointing out details on cornicings and window frames, and describing with some flourish what the English lords used to do in each room.

Although, of course I made no deliberate attempt to overhear, I could not help, but get the gist of what was being said, and was surprised by the extent of my employer's knowledge, which despite the occasional infelicity, betrayed a deep enthusiasm for English ways. It was noticeable, moreover, that the Wakefield's were themselves by no means ignorant of the traditions of our country, and one gathered from the many remarks they made that they too were owners of an English house of some splendor. Then, comes a time because now, we see a couple, an American couple is sorted with the English way of life, and also the great English homes which had that typical British architecture. They are quite impressed with the way house was. Mr. Farraday himself is quite proud of acquisition and ownership of this great house and then, comes the interesting part.

Mrs. Wakefield turns to Stevens and asks perhaps, you are the one to tell me. This arch here looks seventeenth century, but isn't it the case that it was built quite recently, perhaps during Lord Darlington's time? It is possible, madam. It is very beautiful, but it is probably a kind of mock period piece done only a few years ago. Isn't that right? I am not sure, madam, but that is certainly possible. Then, lowering her voice, Mrs. Wakefield had said, but tell me Stevens, what was this Lord Darlington like? Presumably you must have worked for him. I did not madam, no.

This again comes as a big surprise that Stevens denies having ever worked for Lord Darlington, not just when he is student across the country, but also he has done it earlier as well. So, this is the mystery why could he do that repeatedly. Then, Mr. Farraday understandably is quite upset with the way Stevens had conducted himself. Mr. Farraday's opinion, this is a sort of betrayal because after all, he brought the house because of its antique value and in one stroke, Mr. Stevens had just demolished whatever image, whatever reputation Mr. Farraday had tried to cultivate for himself.

Indeed, Stevens. I had told her you were the real thing. A real old English butler and see this is also, call it ironical, a real thing. He is treated not as a human being, but as a thing. A real English butler as if it is an object, as if it is some art piece of furniture, something that we called curios. So, butler perhaps 20 years down the line from 1923 to this particular period, they have become relics. Something that is valued for their antique, a value, but not, but it is not as if they are really significant or vital in those contemporary times. So, therefore, this idea you are a real thing, I thought you are real English butler that you have been in this house for over 30 years serving a real English lord. So, all this things they do not really matter. They just have some kind of nostalgic value. A real lord, a real butler, a real English house that they may not have, they have much practical value, but yes they do have some kind of curiosity value that is why that is how Mr. Farraday looks at things, but Misses wake field contradicted me on this point.

In fact, she contradicted me with great confidence. Mrs. Wakefield was convinced you never worked here until I hired you. In fact, she seemed to be under the impression she had heard that from you your own lips made me look pretty much a fool as you can imagine. I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? So, now he wants a validation and this what I paid for. You are a genuine old fashion

English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You are the real thing, aren't you? That is what I wanted, isn't that what I have?

This again, while Mr. Farraday may be a good employer and he is definitely less formal, less straight jacketed as compared to Lord Darlington, but then again it shows Stevens is being exploited and used for something, for some other thing. Now, there was a time and he was used for his services towards Lord Darlington. This may not be a case with Mr. Farraday, but now he is treated like an object, like a rollick from the past. This is what I have bought the house and I have bought a real English butler along with the house. Then, Stevens tries to cover up and save the situation. He says, in this country, we are not really. It is not considered very polite discuss once past employers and Mr. Farraday. All therefore, disappointed with Stevens behavior by his excuse.

Page 125. I believe I realized even at the time that my explanation to Mr. Farraday and though of course, not entirely devoid of truth was now fully inadequate. The fact that I told him that it is a British culture, not to discuss ones past employers with ones current one, but Stevens himself is not very convinced about this explanation and he admits it. When one has so much to else think about, it is easy not to give such matters a great deal of attention. So, I did indeed put the whole episode out of my mind for some time, but now recalling it here in the calm that surrounds this pond, there seems little doubt that my conduct towards Mr. Mrs. Wakefield. The day has not obvious relation to what has just taken place this afternoon and then, comes another part. He says that Lord Darlington, although, he did his best to serve his country and serve humanity to the best of his abilities, but still history does not remember him well. Time has not treated his reputation with kindness.

Today, many people feel that Lord Darlington had soft corner for and Stevens being what he is state. Firstly, loyal to the Lord Darlington rubbishes of the whole thing and he say, perhaps one reason why I do not like admitting to people about the fact that I have served lord Darlington is the fact that people start talking about his political convictions and his ideals. It is not always in very flattering terms and this is something, I because of my great admiration for Lord Darlington. So far we have been talking about loyalty as a theme in 'The remains of the day', Stevens has perhaps aware of Lord Darlington weaknesses. Lord Darlington did make severe mistakes which had tremendous repercussions on the world political history, but still he is too loyal a person that has been

ingrained him the loyal, the kind of loyalty that is completely a part of his system. He is because of that sense of loyalty, he is unable to admit to him, admit to himself that Lord Darlington did indeed have committed severe mistakes.

We will move up to the next chapter, Day 3, Morning. There comes a very interesting point where he is at a large at an end when he surrounded by the simple village fops and he tries to banter a term which is used initially early on in the novel by Mr. Farraday. He feels that Stevens is too serious a person. He does not joke. He needs to lighten up a little and Stevens, while he is traveling and while he is with people from the country side, he attempts to make a joke and that joke also is so labored that nobody laughs at him. So, nobody laughs at the joke and this is his reaction. You will perhaps appreciate then my disappointment concerning my witticism yesterday evening. At first, I had thought it possible its limited success was due to my not having spoken clearly enough, but then the possibility occurred to me, once I had retired, that I might have actually given these people offence. After all, it could easily have been understood that I was suggesting the landlord's wife resembled a cockerel- this thought continued to torment me as I tried to sleep.

So, you see because he has been spurred on by his current employer to develop a sense of humor, to develop some kind of wittiness about him, so he now actually devotes himself and devotes his energies towards acquiring a sense of humor. Humor cannot be acquired, either you are born with it or you are not, but he tries to, that is Stevens's character. He is so loyal; he is such a devoted servant of his employers that he would do anything that is expected of him. So, if Lord Darlington expects him to be serious and be utterly committed. He would do that if Mr. Farraday expects him to lighten up a little to develop a sense of humor to banter to cote Mr. Farraday. Stevens would do that as well and he says I have off late taken to listening to the wireless in my room whenever I find myself with a few spare moments.

One program I listen to is called twice a week or more which is in fact, broadcast 3 times each week. Basically, comprises two persons making humorous comments on a variety of topics raised by readers' letters. I have been studying this program because the witticisms performed on it are always in the best of taste and to my mind of a tone not at all out of keeping with the sort of bantering. Mr. Faraday might expect on my part taking my cue from this programmed. I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at

least once a day whenever an odd moment presents itself. I attempt to formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment so diligently working towards acquiring a sense of humor to learn some jokes. So, that he can please his current employer which his bunter.

So, again this is as pathetic as tragic as trying to please Lord Darlington with his devotion. That means, we would never know what Stevens really wants and that is the tragedy of 'The remains of the day'. 'The remains of the day' does not claim to be a grand, a great tragedy, but one has to read between the lines to understand what unquestioning loyalty or devotion does to people. It turns them into almost like mechanical creatures, but they were, they do not have a will or a mind of their own. They do what they are programmed to do, what they are told to do and there remains the tragedy. The question then that we are left to face is what happens in those societies where people remain unquestioning, especially when people do not question their leaders and those in the position of power and authority.

We move on to page 133. Now, Steven is again in the country side and travelling through and one of these destinations is the village of Marsden. Perhaps Marsden would ring a bell for you as he did for me upon my first spotting it on the road yesterday in, sorry road atlas yesterday. In fact, I must say I was even tempted to make a slight detour from my planned route just to see the village Marsden. Somerset was where the firm of Geffen and company was once situated and it was to Marsden, one was required to dispatch one's order for a supply of Geffen's dark candles of polish to be flaked mixed into wax and applied by hand for some time. Geffen was undoubtedly the finest silver polish available and it was only the appearance of new chemical substances on the market shortly before the war that caused demand for this impressive product to decline.

As I remember, Geffen's appeared at the beginning of the 20's and I am sure, I am not alone in closely associating its emergence with that change of mood within our profession that change which came to push the polishing of silver to the position of central importance. It still by and large maintains today. This shift was I believe like so many other major shifts around this period a generational matter. Now, he goes back again to one of his role models, one of the greatest butlers according to Mr. Stevens, one Mr. Marshal and he says it was Mr. Marshal who thought the butler of his times that polishing silver is one of the greatest skills that a butler should acquire.

A household prestige depends on the kind of silver it owns and it may look very anachronistic, you know out of times, out of sync with the changing times to have a skill in polishing silver. Geffen's and company which is the company that manufactures the polishing material for a silver ware, it becomes a metaphor, a symbol for those decadent times then ones prestige depended on acquiring silver and polishing it with a material brought from with products from Geffen's and company. Interestingly, the decline or the closing of Geffen's and company coincides with the change in times.

So, according to Mr. Stevens, we are no longer living in those times when Geffen's and company's products are still being used. New chemical substances have arrived and the people no long of lock to the market rather send. They are under butler household servants to go to this place and by products from Geffen's and company. So, this also is not just a product that Ishiguro is talking about, he is also talking about certain symbols which become outdated with as times go by, as times change, so we shifts in time and shifts in periods. People change products, change and values also shift. So, the closing of Geffen's and company in marks at shift in society's attitudes towards his conventions and traditions like Geffen's and company butlers to have become and out mudded you know symbol of a past which is no longer relevant. Of course, past is always relevant, but these symbols, these objects including butlers, they have become outdated. Nobody, no one ridicules for them. They are as Mr. Farraday was mentioning that they are just things to be looked at and to be marveled at, but they really do not have any practical or utilitarian use or service and that is quite tragic because Stevens does feel out of sync, out of touch with times.

It is a page 134. As far as I was concerned, it was a simple enough matter one used good polish and one supervised closely. Geffen's was the polish ordered by all discerning butlers of the time and if this product was used correctly, one had no fear of one's silver being second best to anybody's. I am glad to be able to recall the numerous occasions when the silver at Darlington hall had a pleasing impact upon observers. So, this is what if Stevens remains in the past. He is never able to shake away his past. His past is something that has completely over powered or consumed him and so much does he live in his past that every object like Madelyn takes him back to the time days gone by.

Geffen's and company silver company that specializes in producing products for polishing silver that too has very special memories for him. He says once, he recalls that

once he observed a guest as distinguished as George Bernard Shaw, the celebrated writer playwright who was a guest in Lord Darlington's house. Stevens observed that George Bernard Shaw was admiring the silver in Darlington hall and this Stevens takes as a personal as a matter of personal pride and joy, but as Ishiguro tells us that all this was in the past things have changed. Things have come a long way since those days, those times.

Coming to page 137. It needs to be said too what salacious nonsense it is to claim that Lord glad a Darlington was anti-Semitic or that he had close associations with organizations like the British union of fascists. Such claims can only arise from complete ignorance of the sort of gentleman. His lordship was Lord Darlington came to abhor anti-Semitism. I heard him express his disgust on several, separate occasions when confronted with anti-semitic sentiments and the allegation that his lordship never allowed Jewish people to enter the house or any Jewish staff to be employed is utterly unfounded, except perhaps in respect to one very minor episode in the 30s which has been blown up out of all proportion as and as for the British union of fascists. I can only say that any talk linking his lordship to such people is quite ridiculous.

So, now slowly coming out, slowly unrevealing Lord Darlington did have a past which was slightly tainted. Lord Darlington indeed was the kind of a person who was the racist and anti-semitist. He never took Jewish people in his service. He also very unceremoniously dismissed two of his maid servants. They were both Jewish. So, however, that Stevens refuses to admit that even to himself and as we have been repeatedly saying in this class about the novel *Wanna*. What makes Stevens an unreliable narrator, the fact that he refuses to be honest even to himself. We have already seen that he cannot be relied on. He lies to people that he had ever worked for someone called Lord Darlington and he lies himself that Lord Darlington was actually a racist. He was actually a person with sympathies, but throughout the novel he tries to color the perception of Lord Darlington.

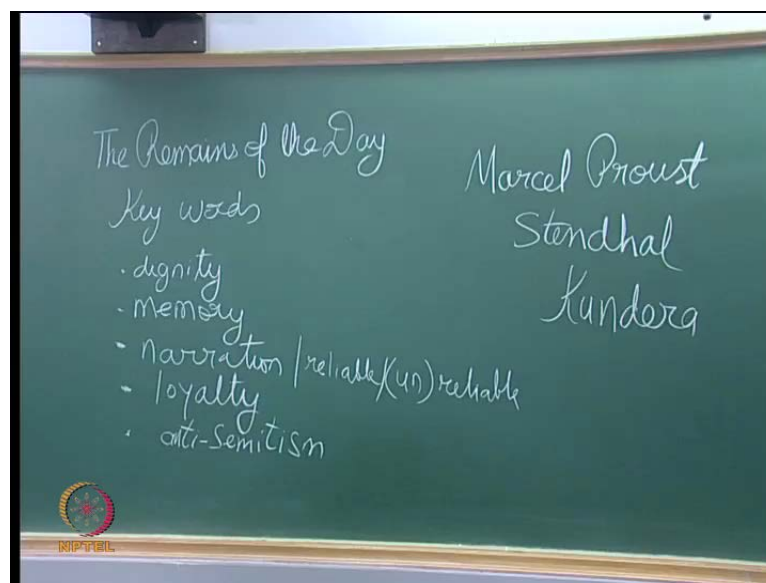
Ishiguro is writing this as a caution. He cautions us that this is the way a society becomes when it 's people remain unquestioning and absolutely loyal to certain figures, to certain charismatic figures coming to the end of this chapter. Then, again it is seems hardly worthwhile to speculate greatly on such matters. Now, one will in all likelihood, we talking face to face with Miss Kenton within forty eight hours. Still I must say I did

spend some long minutes turning those passages over in my mind last night as I lay there in the darkness listening to the sounds from bellow of the landlord and his wife clearing of for the night.

So, this is what he wants deep down in his mind. He longs for Miss Kenton. He feels that if Miss Kenton returns, perhaps those glorious days would return. Of course, Lord Darlington is no longer there, but what he feels is that if there is any hope for any kind of happiness, it is there with Miss Kenton who might be now married to someone else, but if she returns, then perhaps there is still some chance for some kind of personal happiness. He does regard himself as a great professional success though never admits it completely, but he does say that several times. What he does not admit is utter loneliness, his total lack of company.

For human company, he just remains devoted to his profession as a butler that he has glanced himself of all human emotions. He has just turned himself into some kind of a machine and Miss Kenton for him, represents everything that is human and humane, someone who had displayed some affection and emotions towards. At one point, he is one person whose company he seeks and longs for, although he does not accept that to himself.

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So, this is what we have been talking about, an idea of dignity, the role of memory in 'The remains of the day'. Stevens is a reliable or rather and unreliable narrator and the theme of unvarying loyalty towards ones superiors. Such tendencies of unquestioning loyalty lead to unhealthy trends like anti-semitism in our society and that is the hidden message in 'The remains of the day'. We will finish the novel tomorrow. Thank you very much.