

Delineation of Dystopian Realities and Social Alienation in Kazuo Ishiguro's*Never Let Me Go**S. Anish Joseph, Dr. M. Saji**Reg No. 18123154011010**Assistant Professor and Research Scholar**Associate Professor and Head**Department of English & Centre for Research**S.T. Hindu College, Nagercoil**Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University**Tirunelveli***ABSTRACT**

This article delineates the dystopian realities and social alienation in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. The novel is set in a parallel world where human clones are fashioned for the only purpose of organ donation. The society depicted in the novel revolves around the systematic harvesting of organs from clones. This dystopian element raises ethical questions regarding the value of life and the consequences of unchecked scientific advancements. Clones in the novel survive severe regulations, with their vocations encoded by their only drive as organ donors. Their lack of autonomy and dependency to the dominative system overall a dystopian atmosphere. The characters wrestle with their own identities and the realization that their existence is tied to serving a specific purpose. This existential struggle emphasizes their social alienation, highlighting the toll of living in a dystopian world.

Keywords: dystopia, social alienation, identity crisis, existentialism

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Never Let Me Go

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro, skilfully discovers dystopian realities and social alienation. Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1954. His nine works of fiction acclaimed various honours around the world specifically Booker prize and Nobel Prize in Literature. His works has been translated into over fifty languages. The publication of award-winning novel, *The Remains of the Day* made him the most famous European novelist at the age of thirty-five. His sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go* deals with three individuals who were brought up as clones in an elite place called Hailsham.

The clones in *Never Let Me Go* experience a profound sense of isolation and alienation. Society views them as sheer commodities, leading to emotional detachment and a lack of sincere acquaintances among the clones themselves. Ishiguro's novels are filled with memories, their potential to forget, to silent, to digress and distort and above all to haunt. *Never Let Me Go* is written through the vision of Kathy who is now thirty-one years old and has been a carer for more than eleven years. She reminisces about her relationship with Tommy and Ruth. Tommy is continuously bullied by fellow students for his lack of creativity and is prone to uncontrollable rage but otherwise he is kind and sweet. On the other hand, Ruth is controlling and always pretend to be a special person than she was.

The characters in the novel parade an outstanding emotive restraint, as a surviving mechanism for their predetermined fate. The novel is classified into three parts. First part deals with Kathy's childhood and her friendship with Tommy and Ruth in Hailsham. Second part focuses on her adolescent age after completing their schooling in Hailsham and transferred to

cottages in order to enjoy their adult lives. Third part deals with her life as a carer and her past memories. As the novel progresses, it becomes remarkable that creativity is treated with highest value among Hailsham students. They exchange their artworks for other valuables. It is a tradition that best works from each class will be selected by a Belgium woman called 'Madame' and it is rumoured that their works will be showcased in her gallery. This specific character Madame is terrified of these students and later it was revealed that it was not horror but disgust that she felt for them.

The emotional landscape of the characters is obvious by estrangement. Relationships, counting friendships and romantic connections, are affected by the impending spectre of organ donation. Kathy takes interest in Tommy when she encounters his usual tantrum and helps him to control his anger. They confide in each other about their secrets and feelings. Readers can understand that the rules implemented in Hailsham are not normal because students have to take extra careful measures to maintain their health. After schooling sixteen students from Hailsham live in cottages where they can explore and live like an adult. At this point they know that they are clones created to donate their organs at particular age. They have less mortality than normal humans so they have to go through childhood, adulthood and old age within thirty to thirty-five years. While they are in cottage, they search for their possibilities whom might have been taken as a specimen for their clones. Around this time, they came across a rumour about 'deferral' that means if two people were truly in love then they can extend their period of time for four years before donations so they can spend some time with their loved one before donation began.

The novel interrogates the treatment of clones and the significances of a society that commodifies human life. Kathy, working as a carer for over ten years looks after donors, eventually becoming a carer for Ruth. Ruth persuades Kathy and Tommy to visit an abandoned

boat. Ruth reveals that she felt guilty for keeping both Kathy and Tommy apart and wants them to try for deferrals. In few years Ruth died and Tommy and Kathy learn a hard truth from their guardian Miss Emily and Madame that the idea of deferrals was a made-up rumour spread by students who longed for a spark of hope to live on. This novel ends on a tragic note by highlighting a fact that Kathy spends her time looking back and not looking forward and comes in terms with her reality and accept her fate without throwing any tantrums.

The characters' involvements showcase the moral dilemmas that are intrinsic in a system that discards and outcasts a group of clones for the benefit of others, highlighting the desensitising effects of such a societal structure. Social isolation is a condition where a person find it difficult to connect with other people of his society or atmosphere. As a sociological concept it has multiple layers of significance and can be allude to both an individual mental state and to a sort of social relationship. Social isolation alludes to the sentiment of being isolated from one's locale. Karen Horney's theory of neurotic needs proposed that every individual has certain emotional need to be fulfilled. These neurotic needs and their fulfilment can affect a person's social skills in multiple ways. Horney has classified these needs into three categories based on the defence mechanism adopted by an individual to overcome them. They are- (I) Needs that move one towards people, (II) Needs that move one away from people, and (III) Needs that move one against people. In the case of Kazuo Ishiguro's characters, they tend to move towards and away from other people. Even when these characters move towards other people, they are mostly unable to found personal bonding with others, in the cases where they succeed in bonding, they have to put other relationship at stake.

Clones in *Never Let Me Go* are socially secluded and marginalized. They survive in isolated institutions, separated from the normalised society, highlighting their position as

outcasts. The novels of Ishiguro frequently portray characters who are far removed from reality and perfectly content living inside their fantasy world. These characters commonly keep their emotions and feelings to themselves and even their bonding with another human feels superficial. “The loneliest moment in someone’s life is when they are watching their whole world fall apart, and all they can do is stare blankly.” (Fitzgerald, 1925) These lines are highly applicable to the characters in *Never Let Me Go*. They lose everything. They are very much aware of their situation but they cannot do anything about it. Though major characters are clones, they are nothing less than human. As such, they too have certain neurotic needs which need to be fulfilled. When they are unable to fulfil them, they tend to act out and create chaos around themselves and in other people’s lives. The major neurotic needs of the characters in *Never Let Me Go* are – the need for independence, the need for love and approval, the need for a partner, the need for power, the need for privacy and furthermore. Of these, the need for love and approval is exhibited by almost every character in *Never Let Me Go*. Being together with a friend or a partner, and engaging in physical relationship is their only way to defy the system in which they have brought up – “Didn’t we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? A spontaneous hug, a secret letter, a gift?” (60).

Clones in the novel lack action over their own personal lives. Despite their birth through artificial methods the clones are inherently human and capable of feeling everything as normal human can. They crave for love from parent, though they never know who their parents were. Likewise, it demonstrates the degree to which the exacting standards at Hailsham diminish human closeness: any uncommon association with guardian is highly illegal. At another point in the novel, Kathy clarifies that students from Hailsham do not embrace each other. In *Never Let*

Me Go, human closeness is the main way the clone opposes the rigid framework they are forced to live by. It's hard not to notice that each character is always with a company or a lover. They are aware that their lives are limited and any moment they have to donate their organs and eventually die. Usually, donors die after fourth donation and some may even die after their first donation. But they chose to be with their partner. In the case of Ruth, she understands that Kathy and Tommy are naturally drawn towards each other. Thus, she becomes hostile towards Kathy and verbally hurts her. Finally, she understands her mistake of keeping them apart and tries to get them back together rather forcefully.

This dystopian society detaches and estranges the clones from the rest of humanity, manipulating them for their organs. The character of Ruth is more of a decision maker. She is the one who separate both Tommy and Kathy. This can be seen as her response of being unable to make decision about her life. The control imposed on her makes her cold towards everyone and she overcomes her inability to control her own life by controlling other people's lives. In the end, when she joins Kathy and Tommy, she forces them together. The next prominent need of the clones is the need of independence. The clones are forced to live in a certain way and give up their hope for a fruitful life. They wish to live free and with their families like every human but it is far from possible. This causes them to live carefree and do whatever they put their minds to, without crossing rules implemented for them.

The dystopia is entrenched in the commodification of human life. Clones are raised to believe that their purpose is to donate organs, and they are thoroughly reaped for this purpose. The crucial need for the clones is the need for private action. The characters are fully aware of their condition yet, they do not even try to escape or run away, apart from seeking deferral, which was only a myth. The characters are well aware of their purpose, willingly give up their

lives for some people whom they have no relation with. They accept their fate silently. It can be seen as sign of fulfilling their need for private action. They being alienated from society try to get recognition through donating their organs. Their lack of purpose in life, apart from donating their organs and die in the process makes them free from any obligations and rules that separate them from mainstream community.

Ishiguro masterfully customs the dystopian setting to reconnoitre profound questions about humanity, morality, and the consequences of unimpeded scientific progress. The social alienation experienced by the characters aids as a distressing commentary on the latent dehumanizing effects of societal structures. By finalizing this paper, the deprivation of one's neurotic needs prevents a person from functioning properly, which in turn, might isolate them from society. The neurotic needs of a person should be satisfied to lead a healthy life style. It is a nutrient of the mind that makes a person a social being. If the neurotic needs are dismissed, their functionality is highly affected. Ishiguro's characters suffer the pangs of loneliness and they are unable to find a connection with other people in their society.

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