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## Lessons of Pluralism and Dynamic Potential via the Select Fictions of Kyung-Sook Shin

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### Abstract

Translation of world's literature in English language mesmerizingly imparts bountiful opportunities to the entire literary cadre to acquire huge empire of multicultural and multinational endeavors around the world to read, enjoy and understand multicultural diversities and dynamic potentials with regards to the peculiar patterns of particular human societies from international literary realms of the world. In this connect, the study takes in the English translated works of one of the renowned South Korean novelist Kyung Sook Shin who has been the winner of 'The Man Asian Literary Award 2012' for her highly sought-after English translated novel, *Please Look After Mother*. The study unfurls the very aspects of the multi-cultural diversities through Shin's novels and showcases how a small yet developed East Asian country, South Korea, is imparting dynamic potential for the universal holistic values to the global pluralistic communities of the entire human-society and to the world literature while passing through the phases of cultural pluralism.

**Keywords:** Translation, Multicultural diversities, Dynamic potential, South Korea, Pluralism

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### 1. Introduction

Asian countries are culturally pluralistic yet every culture is ingrained with ingredients imparting gusto and vigor for the art and science of living human-life authentically. Language and literature are the thresholds for gaining access and approach to any of the world's countries' cultures, arts, religions, philosophies and other arenas of their circumstances, growths and developments. In the contemporary scenario, the global society is bestowed with the common medium of communication with the entitled global language 'English'. English has become *lingua franca* either as a primary, secondary or the tertiary and even the official or the colloquial language of the most parts of the world. Therefore, literature in English language opens vistas for an all around global approaches for acclimatization with the World Literature with all its genres viz. fiction and non-fiction works with the enormous varieties and dynamic potential to transform the entire human society to go globally as an adequate citizen sharer of the global ethnicity for its betterment.

Under the abundant umbrella of literature in English language, there has been a worldwide mandate to include literature from one corner of the world to those of the others. Translation of world's Literature in English language mesmerizingly imparts abundant opportunities to the literary bibliophiles, philosophers, psychologists, socialists, linguists, lexicographers and the research scholars, etc., to acquire huge empire of multicultural and multinational endeavors

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around the world to read, enjoy and understand multicultural diversities and to realize the importance of the dynamic potentials for a happy human-life with regards to the peculiar patterns of particular communities at the national, the multinational, the transnational and/or the international literary realms of the world. This leads to the acquaintance with the innumerable multicultural and multinational ethnicities on one hand and with the professionalisms and technologies on the other hand under the approaches of a grand cluster of intellectual population around the world. This kind of activity not only enhances the nature and scope of translation but also imparts abundant opportunities for going global with manifold aspects of literary studies. The translation enterprises find multifarious opportunities to release the great works of literature in the genesis of fiction like dramas, novels, short stories, prose, poetry and many other literary journals and researches at foreign levels.

With this prospect, the present study is an endeavor to highlight the translation works performed by the Literature Translation Institute of Korea 'LTIK' which promotes translation and publication of the Korean literary works into more than 45 languages worldwide, with especial focus on literary translations in English. The study takes in the English translated works of one of the renowned South Korean novelist *Kyung Sook Shin* who won the 'The Man Asian Literary Award 2012' for her English translated novel, *Please Look After Mother*, beating off eleven other prominent novelists with their fictions from the Asian continent. Her novels are renowned works in Korean language which through the efforts of LTI Korea could be reached to the global readers with the purpose of better understanding of the cultural diversity and dynamic potential of a small yet developed East Asian country, South Korea. As a matter of fact, South Korea is known as one of the important constituents of the East Asian Cultural Sphere which includes Japanese, Chinese and Korean Literature as the major role players.

It is only through the translated works that provides the global readers with an opportunity to gauge the position of Korean Literature amongst the World literature as one the very much alive and vibrant and is rooted deeply in an age-long literary tradition. The roots of Korean literature comes from the principles of the Oriental philosophy and culture and are mingling with the emerging principles of the Occidental philosophy and culture generating a deep gap between the older and the newer life-styles and life-perspectives.

The research paper sets about *Kyung Sook Shin's* English translated novels such as *Please Look After Mother* translated by Chi-Young Kim and published in 2011, *I'll Be Right There* translated by Sora Kim-Russell and published in 2013, *The Girl Who Wrote Loneliness* translated by Kim Young Ha and published in 2015, *The Court Dancer* translated by Anton Hur and published in 2018, and the latest publication of the *Violets* on April 14, 2022 which is again translated by Anton Hur along with a brief discussion and analyses of her other works to highlight the key aspects of pluralism from her works. Besides, the study is an attempt to derive the sense of dynamic potential for peaceful and un-bewildered human-living from the literary canon of Shin which is imbibed in realism depicting the hard-core human conditions and the problems of living life especially amid the ultra-post-modern eon.

In today's time, Shin is one of the most widely read and applauded novelist of South Korea with her English translated novels. Her popularity as a literary legend withstands with the fact that her novel '*Please Look After Mother (2011)*' has made her the first South Korean and the first women novelist to win 'The Man Asian Literary Award 2012'. The novel is translated from Korean into English language by Chi-Young Kim and released on March 31, 2011 in the *New York Times* bestseller. Worth noting, the novel is translated into more than 35 languages and published in 27 countries and has sold almost one and a half million copies in South Korea alone. With this popularity, Shin has become one of the best renowned record-breaking novelists in both the Western and the Eastern world of literature as well as with the other demographics of the globe.

Shin's works are the voices of hers as a developed country being opened to versatility of progressions and multicultural opportunities of amalgamation yet enforces the values of maintaining and sustaining the bonds of belongings and selfhood enrooted with one's home country, home town and the ethnic heritages which has ever been forging him with the sense of self-identity.

Shin's works depict the society that nurtures and develops through the inclusion of varied cultures and that may bring multifarious benefits yet hers is an appeal to reestablish the realization of the basic roots of one's own culture in order to realize the sense of being rooted firmly while growing up with various branches of dynamic worldly possessions.

*Kyung Sook Shin's* English translated novels during the last two decades have immediately made her recognized as a grand literary celebrity over the global literary scenario. Though her writings are full of regional essence in her plots and characters yet vividly represent all time universality in their themes and appeals. Her narrative style and the narrative devices are characterized by a profound and unique Point of View narrative technique which immediately draws on the psychological and philosophical unpacking of human emotional traits with which all the characters of her

novels, have been consistently grappling to comprehend the core of the holistic humanitarian values. Her novels are heroically humane in this sense.

It is through the meticulous translated works, we come to know that Shin, a purely Korean lingual South Korean novelist, do possesses the eloquent and perceptive narrative style with spontaneous usages of symbolism and metaphors; capturing the minutest details of life's subtle trials and tribulations and thereby exposes the search for human identity and the very purpose of his existential aspects of sovereign values.

With the aids of LTI Korea, Shin's literary works are translated with meticulous scrutiny of descriptions and the copyrights into English language as well as in languages for the non-English speaking countries; and let the global readers come to know that even the culture is so different but the quest is the same and that is to explore the depth of humanity and holistic humanitarian values. The dynamic potential of literary approaches lies in the fact that her works are reflecting about the particular country or the society or culture but she comes out to be larger-than-life literary personnel; for Korea is just one country while the human quest for life-living dynamic potentials are almost similar to all over the universe. Her works, definitely, help the global readers of the postmodern era to contemplate in order to lead a life full of peace and serenity while facing several trials and tribulations throughout their lives.

The study draws attention towards the fact that at the continental level, Asia with its 25 Asian countries having five top most proficient English speaking countries constitutes the major chunk of English spoken people all over the continent. These countries are Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and India where English is recognized as the official language as well as the primary, secondary or tertiary medium of communication for almost whole of the population. Besides, English has similar values for the rest of the 25 major and a big number of minor Asian countries, but the matter of fact is that with all these, Asia stands at third position as a proficient user of English language among the global scenario, undoubtedly. As per the statistics 2019, India alone stands at 34<sup>th</sup> rank, scores 55.49% with a moderate band of proficiency among the top 100 countries of the world.

Furthermore, English is the first choice whether it is Europe, America, Africa, Australia, Canada or any other major countries where the users of English are either native, official, first, second or third speakers of the language. Second to the Chinese language, English is the most spoken language of the world. Since all these reasons do profoundly favor a great vote to the literary translation works into English language from the various languages around the globe for each of the major as well as the minor countries to put their footsteps on the global literary carpet with an equitable senses of importance and regard. They do acquire capabilities to let the whole world know their places in terms of their diversities as well as their dynamic potentials. With this sense of reasons, the experts for translation works do deserve grandeur of gratitude and appreciation for the kind of endeavors with which they could let the world to honor the multicultural diversities and to promote the reciprocal ties among various countries' cultural diversities and dynamic potentials both in the upward and the downward dimensions, worldwide.

One such endeavor is performed by the translators of the LTI Korea in South Korea who believe that by the works of translation they would be able to broaden their vision for their since-aged love for literature and will be helpful to make the foreign readers to better understand the Korean Literature of the day.

As a matter of fact, every literature in its genesis does possess the great energy burning inside it which impels it towards the entirety of the ultimate truth and the eternal beauty with great senses of bliss and peace. This is the only reason why literature evokes the elements of attraction, affection, enthusiasm and curiosity of a very huge empire of readers; both indigenous and foreign alike. For the same reason, every literature does contains the very aspects of the holistic humanitarian values inside its very roots of cultural-traditions, arts and philosophy, rites and rituals, religion and psychology which attract the humanity around the globe with equal gravitational forces. And all these could be possible in today's hi-tech era just because of the great works of translations; especially into English language.

As the most common saying goes, 'unity in diversity', there might be a variety of variations in cultures and demographic features of different geographical regions; country to country, continent to continent; but the basic humanitarian aspects down the line remain with the same paradigms over the entire globe. The sovereign virtues of love, gratitude, happiness, solitude and bliss etc., are the same everywhere which the human life aspires forever and eternally, too. These cultural diversities and dynamic potentials of different geographical regions definitely reside into their respective cultures and languages which constitute their literature and other forms of sciences and aesthetics.

The acts of translations pave paths for the literary-lovers to sojourn the entire global literary genres with wonderful senses of universal appeals, universal themes, universal secrets and the universal commonalities with which the entire human society finds levels of psychological, philosophical, emotional, societal, environmental, cultural, political, legal, pastoral and urban equilibrium as well as differences. Thus, the acts of translations bridge any gaps between the East

and the West, the North and the South of the globe by producing an utter sense of familiarity with the foreign and the esoteric.

This all is so apparent in the translated novels of Kyung Sook Shin that the global readers may immediately become the indigenous, experiencing the same at their own homelands. Through the novels by Kyung Sook Shin, the paper presents the scenario of The 21<sup>st</sup> Century post-modern individual who is being affected in multifaceted ways via witnessing the various intolerable instances of transformations which in turn keeps on impacting his very self, effectively. The study enquires the vicious global view that the repercussions of the two World Wars and the several colonial ones permeated not only the social milieu but also trespassed on the very personal life of the post modern millennial leading it towards the chaotic and confused human-conditions and the problem of living life authentically, which is the very underlying theme of almost all Shin's novels.

Shin's works are the very reflection of the acute senses of awareness in terms of existential inquires as one of the important paradigm of the post-modern and even the ultra post-modern eon. Thus, issues of existential angst, despair, nihilism, absurdity, alienation, demoralization, and the anarchic circumstances out of the massively increasing urbanization, industrialization, technological and scientific advancements and the very intermingling scenarios of multicultural diversities making the world become a global village but with the percolators of the aforementioned issues; are the various voices from Shin's works. Her novels speak of the contemporary circumstances which are turning the post-modern millennial as a rootless individual with complexes of existential crises, social mobility, and problems of adjustments and issues of social deconstruction. In this way, the present generation confronts, every next moment, certain kinds of dilemmas as early as it finds itself unable and unfit to embrace, completely, timely and whole heartedly, the very shifting discourses of its immediate present.

Besides, while racing along with the post-modernity, it is also the inability of the present generation to step back to live with the previous patterns of life which are imbibed with the specific socio-religious and cultural-traditional ambience imparting them the senses of being enrooted and helping them to forge self-identity. The paper is an endeavor to present this enigma of the fragmented-self within the post-modern individual through the select novels of Kyung Sook Shin in order to explore her works with the perspectives of how the multicultural diversity are acquiring the very places in specific communities which has become a common scenario of the post-modern global world and how the literature of a particular country possesses the strength of imparting dynamic potential to the world literature to deal with issues like these.

Thus, this scholarly enquiry is a prospect to analyze Shin's novels with the lenses of the great energy burning inside Shin's literary texts, impelling towards the realization of the natural and universal truth and beauty, which in turn will attract the entire scenario of multicultural diversities and will show its dynamic potential to the world literature.

All the major novels of Shin under consideration for the present study seem to be deeply attentive to the viewpoints of races, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, philosophy, language and religion encountering with the traits and tussles of the aforementioned post-modern dilemmas. These issues, perhaps or in fact, are the most sensitive issues not only from the grounds of the Korean novelist in particular and the Korean Literature in general, but rather from the grounds of almost all literature around the world.

Shin, as a renowned featured novelist, has already garnered a worldwide readership for the very advertising style of her narration, famously known as *Kyung Sook Shin Syndrome*, and for her heart-piercing insights into life and literature. The conceptual reference of the sociologist, Dr. Caleb Rosado is cited here in order to initiate the discussion of the present study. Dr. Rosado defines multicultural diversity as, "A system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society."

Shin's novels display the sincerity and diversity with her unique narrative style, especially the Point of View Narrative using very pathetic tone and heart rending language. It appeals an urge for emerging sensitivity to diversity and a hope for understanding the conflicts in order to explore the new ventures of identifying similarities and differences which lead the entire human society more or less with similar human experiences in terms of their ethnic groups and behavioral patterns.

Her novels create universal appeal in the sense that whatever communities of the several countries and whichever the various ethno-cultural norms these people follow; on the holistic grounds, all come to realize similar experiences of pleasure and pangs, when things or emotions with which they have tied up their senses of relationship and selfhood becoming diminishing. Shin's are the works of her national community which has marked its presence amid the name list of the developed countries and as such luxurious life style, technological advances, hi-fi skyscrapers, socio-political

and legal-economical uprisings etc., are the prominent features of the country. But the thing of surprise and shock lies in the fact that the country has passed through this journey from the rags to the riches between the period of only five to six decades, and as such lots of ups and downs during this bigger endeavor with shorter duration of time, made their marks in terms of prosperous and adverse effects resulting in several happy verses painful experiences of its people. Shins' are the reflections of how every strata of the society has to come to run along the race in order to become a citizen of the developed country like South Korea, whilst leaving many things left behind taking the aching of the heartfelt emotions for the near and dear, kith and kin relationships.

Shin's *Please Look After Mother* (2011) presents the South Korean scenario of patriarchal chauvinism and matriarchal suppression with the universal themes of degradation in human values alongside the technological advances; the generation gaps, the emotions of alienation etc. Despite all such circumstances, the story emphasizes that one needs to realize the importance of this precious life and the life values in order to sustain a robust mental and physical well-being and such a juncture can be achieved in human-life by being the realization of the true-self.

Her second novel *I'll Be Right There* (2013) speaks about the everlasting needy presence of the near and dear ones at times of crisis as well as at times of blissful moments of life. It's a conscious call for be ever together with the ones whom one loves and whose presence has so much importance in one's life despite of all the adverse circumstances.

*The Girl Who Wrote Loneliness* (2015) is the depiction of the interior monologues of the contemporary youthful generation which has to fight against the oppressions of its contemporary society. It speaks of all those entangled dreams and desires which were downtrodden under the tyrannical pressures of the socio-political turmoil and upheavals of the time.

On a different note, *The Court Dancer*, (2018) a historical novel deals with the sacrifices of the female protagonist for the fervor of her patriotism. It alarms the readers for giving the topmost place of importance to dutifulness; rest all to be at the secondary places of prominence.

## 2. Conclusion

In this way, the present research paper is an attempt to state that through the works of expertise translations that leads the global readers, and in the like manner, me, to get unfold to the diversity of cultural traits and cuisines, the oriental and occidental hemisphere, the patriarchal and matriarchal patterns, the interior and external conflicts and monologues with which every human being irrespective of their country's paradigms, suffers and experiences the nostalgia and the disturbances created out of the political upheavals, the drastic changes with their varied pros and cons due to the advancements in different dimensions of sciences and technologies with which otherwise the foreign readers might remain isolated.

An author is a reflection of his age and the community; so are the literary works of Shin, one of the most prominent author of the '386 Generation of South Korean novelists'. Her literary works are the reflections of the exemplary values, ideas and thoughts which could bring the Korean Literature to shine at the global level through apt translations. Today, the Korean literature is making its remarkable place in the world literature just because of the translated works through which the global readers do come to know and understand the depths of actions, principles, traditions, behavior and thoughts of a particular genuine society from a different demographic realm. Not only this, we come to know and recognize the age old accumulated intellectuals and wisdom and thereby get a grand arsenal of literature that otherwise would not have been available to the global readers.

Though the act of translation does confines with certain acute limitations, yet the great and expertise acts of translations do win grounds at global scenario, undoubtedly. The soul of a community lies in its culture and the culture resides in its language. Thus, the works of translation art is of big challenges for recreating the ditto of the originals, yet to great extents, the expert translators do make it a point and try their best to produce the original authors as it is and so does seems obviously in the translated works of Shin's novels. The LTI Korea definitely employees the higher quality parameters and skills for translation works and acquire highly qualified and well trained suite of professional translators for the purpose to be accomplished full-fledged. Despite the fact that Shin created her novels with the Korean ambience, the specific sensitive issues in relevance to the holistic humanism staunchly touch and affect the global community with strings of pluralism yet possessing only the single string of vigor for living the human-life authentically. The study contributes to the literature on multicultural communities by providing a more inclusive view of consumption in multicultural environments than that afforded by the sole consideration of ethnic origin or individual traits and orientations.

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