



Available online at [www.jlls.org](http://www.jlls.org)

---

## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

---

ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 2543-2547; 2021

### A Study Of Kyung-Sook Shin's Please Look After Mom As A Story Of Manipulative Sob Sister Melodrama

Dr. K. Shanmuga Sundara Raj<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Arts and Science College, Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi Dist. (Govt. Arts and Science College for Women, Alangulam, Tenkasi Dist. Under Deputation) (Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627012, Tamil Nadu, India.)

#### APA Citation:

Raj, K.S.S., (2021). A Study of Kyung-sook Shin's Please Look After Mom as a story of Manipulative Sob Sister Melodrama. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 2543-2547.

Submission Date: 25/07/2021

Acceptance Date: 17/09/2021

---

#### Abstract

South Korea's first woman novelist, Kyung-sook Shin's first novel, *Please Look After Mom*, won her the Man Asian Literary Prize. This story has multiple narrators like a son, daughter, husband and mother. The narrator of each section portrays their role and relationship with the central character, the mother, So-nyo. The tradition and cultures of Korea are well pictured when the characters discuss the incidents with the mother. This family-bound novel deals with missing a mother, a dear soul and a symbol of sacrifice. The significance of precious things is not valued when they are nearby. The members united to confer on the various ways to find their lost mother. This paper analyses *Please Look After Mom* as a story of manipulative sob sister melodrama.

**Keywords:** Kyung-sook Shin, sob sister, melodrama.

---

#### 1. Introduction

The term sob sister generally refers to an ineffective sentimental person who seeks to do good. The term states to women journalist who writes stories on sob stories. An individual in solid connections exhibits correspondence and participation; a close-to-home controller hopes to utilize, control, or even exploit another person. Emotionally sentimental or manipulative people or sob sisters behave differently in different situations. These people distort facts, relative importance, or other information necessary to assess a situation accurately. In some cases, the manipulator lies or feigns ignorance about the issue. A more subtle form of distortion is gas lighting. This is a tactic by which manipulators instil self-doubt in someone else, making them question their rights, motives, or abilities. Gas lighting is a common problem in the workplace. Many people are prone to feelings of guilt and even punish themselves for committing a crime. Emotionally manipulative people take advantage of this vulnerability. They tend to pretend to be victims or remind themselves of past benefits, instilling a sense of duty and empathy that makes them more likely to get what they want. The simplest example of this type of emotional manipulation is silence when someone is punishing you for ignoring you. However, there are more insidious forms of withdrawal. When someone who expects some degree of validity or intimacy deliberately withholds it, it creates a power imbalance and may be tempted to return to approval and intimacy.

Parental love, especially maternal love, is an excellent source of better emotional stability that reduces the likelihood of mental disorders, increases self-esteem, and improves children's health. The unconditional love of a mother and the support of a mother who is always by our side - coupled with her tolerant nature- makes a mother a crucial figure in our lives. Motherhood is every mother's most exciting, beautiful, painful, and challenging experience. You think you are doing your best, but you feel you could have done better or something is missing. Like the bond between mother and child, there are irreplaceable bonds in life. This strong bond often causes the mother to feel pain when her child falls and is injured or spends a sleepless night trying to comfort her child. There is always a strong bond between a child and a mother that you cannot see, but you can both feel. To be precise, mothers are sentimental, emotional and manipulative sometimes.

## 2. Discussion

Shin Kyung Sook's novel *Please Look After Mom* asks the above questions in advance and immediately answers them, "No one knows." The mother is missing. The information we get from fundamental facts like her date of birth is as inaccurate and unclear as raging headaches, breast cancer, and secret gay friends. The entire book is a sad, guilt-ridden tribute that gradually reveals the complicated life of a missing mother. Nevertheless, she is only seen, read, and recognized when she is missing, presumably dead. She was gone as soon as she appeared through the screen (or between the sliding doors on the subway). Nobody in the family is least bothered about the mother until she is missing.

Shin's mother has a deep interest in being literate. However, she could not move to school because her father had died in a twist of fate when she changed into three years antique, and her widow mother could not ship her to high school due to poverty. Existentialists name this facticity, which placed obstacles. Facticity indicates all the concrete details against the again floor on which human freedom exists and is limited. After her marriage, the situation receives even worst Mother cannot pursue her training because of poverty; Shin has delivered any other scenario of the same type which occurs after her marriage; her circle of relatives cannot send Kyun, her brother-in-law, to the centre school. Her husband and sister -in-regulation no longer receive to take the obligations, even though mom saved on insisting on sending Kyun to high school. Shin juxtaposed the two scenarios; Kyun and Park So-nyo could not go to school because of poverty.

So, in her affliction, she sent her kids to high school; nevertheless, having her dream to be literate, mom felt guilty, worried and ashamed of not being able to be literate. She tried to break out of the situation whilst there was the literacy query. She says that when Hyong-Chol went to essential college. She did not go along with him; in case she might write something, she made this or that excuse and despatched him along with aunt. The trouble with Park So-nyo is that she no longer takes herself as a man or woman; she is not always capable of apprehending her freedom. She is absorbed inside the global of the "they" "Dasman. Rather than pursuing her dream herself; she prepares her eldest son Hyong-chol to fulfil her dream. When Hyong-chol tried to help, mother stated, "You move and take a look at and driven him to words his desk" (94). Mom reminded him, you need to grow to be a prosecutor (ninety-three) mother continued to refuse to allow him help in the fields (95). This indicates her guidance for her inauthentic preference. Kyung –sook Shin writes mom putting her dream as follows:

He never became a prosecutor. Mother always called it his dream, but he had not understood that it had been Mother's dream, too. He only thought of it as a youthful wish that could not be achieved; it never occurred to him that he had deflated his mother's aspirations. He realizes that that mother has lived her entire life believing that she was the one who held him back from his dream. I'm sorry Mother, I didn't keep my promise (123)

After his mother went missing at Seoul Station, his father left for Chong alone. A woman named Hong Tae Hee comes to pick up her mother from her orphanage Hope House. Everyone in her family knew her mom could not read, but no one helped her.

When Hyong-chol went to Seoul for further research, she turned to Chi-hon to read the letter he sent. Shin Kyung-sook said that through the character Hong Tae-hee, her mom was interested in reading. Her daughter is a witty writer, but her mother suffers from the consequences of her illiteracy. At this point, Shin writes:

You remember how your wife looked hurt, as if you had insulted her, the day you found out that she didn't know how to read. She believed that her husband misbehaved her, because of her illiteracy... You wonder, 'How hard your wife must have worked to hide from this young woman that she didn't know how to read. Your wife couldn't tell this young woman that the author was her daughter, but blamed her bad eyes and asked her to read it out loud Your eyes sting How was your wife able to restrain herself from bragging about her daughter to this young woman (130-131)

She lives away from her family, but her mother is illiterate and had someone read her daughter's novel, so she chooses not to be real. Too embarrassed to admit it, she blamed her eyes. By blaming her own eyes, she was deceiving herself. She may have lied to this young woman, but she knew that she was also lying to herself. She was trying to escape her freedom of choice and responsibility. When her father finds out that her mother is illiterate, she is hurt, and her mother finds herself the object of the gaze of others, that is, objectified. This ego objectification is only possible when the other is given as the subject. Her mother could not read because of the facts, and the facts are her she is herself. It is because she never tried to learn to read on her own. She is hopeless and alienated and she is not herself. She believes it, but does not try to free herself.

Shin made a comparison here between the blind man and the mother. A blind man could not see with his eyes; through the eyes of education, they could see the world. She could see with the naked eye but could not see the world. Ms. Park could not travel without the help of her family. Shin writes, "Nobody said aloud, but at some moment he and his family tacitly came to believe Mother couldn't go anywhere in this city by herself. So, whenever she came to Seoul, someone was with her" (100).

Mom had a headache but decided to read a book. Mama accepts that, at this point, she has something human. She needs to be reached personally. Existentialists say that external circumstances can limit an individual. A person cannot be forced to choose one of the remaining courses over the other. In this sense, individuals still have a certain degree of freedom of choice. For this reason, the terrified person chooses to:

They know that decisions have to be made and there will be consequences. However, again Mama succumbs to her fact, her poor health. Mama's failure here is untrue to be a true individual. Escaping freedom means taking on the role of an object in the world, not a free agent, but merely at the mercy of circumstances. Mother is alienated from her mother's inability to get to her true 'self'.

Park So-nyo marriage became an adventure from a low-income family to an exceptionally negative family, where her own family could not send him to the centre faculty though he desired severely. Although Kyun begged his brother and sister to allow him to go to school, they escaped their responsibility. Whilst his brother and sister did not listen to him, Kyun begged Park So-nyo. Park So-nyo insisted father ship Kyun to high school by promoting the lawn; however, whilst her sister-in-law heard this, she drove Park far from the residence to her place of origin. Park so-nyo insists on sending Kyun to high school, but she too cannot stand forth to take responsibility which haunted her via her lifestyle. Mom whispered, almost to herself, "When I got married, Kyun was the nicest to me ... I was his sister-in-law but I couldn't even send him to middle school, even though he wanted it so badly" (174).

Presenting the dark side of Korean culture, Shin writes:

Kyun yelled, "I did it Why are you accusing her "Your sister grabbed Kyun by the throat "Did she tell you to chop it down You bastard You awful boy!" But Kyun refused to back down His large dark eyes glittered in his pale face "Then do you want her to freeze to death in a cold room He asked "Freeze to death after having a baby (170)

These situations made mom alienated. Firstly, because of Kyun's death; he was the only one who treated mom as human, not an object of use; secondly, because she was accused of killing her, which left her torn into pieces, which left her in confusion; in the middle of the night she would suddenly run out to the bathroom and crouch next to the toilet. She would put her hands out as if pushing someone away and scream, "It wasn't me, it wasn't me!" (175). The death of Kyun led mom to complete isolation and alienation. And the behaviour of her sister-in-law and her husband also made her feel homeless and estranged from her environment. For mother, the house was more than a jail.

Mother had even thought of committing suicide, which existentialists take as an inauthentic response to death. ... "After what happened to Kyun ... I just wanted to die. Everyone else made things difficult for me" (213). Mother's life was so futile and dreadful that it was hard tolerating for her Mother's sister-in-law is so cruel that she does not give enough medicine even when she has diarrhoea Mother just had a baby hand she wanted to get well soon. But the sister-in-law said, "Why do you need more medicine This is enough" (157). The sister-in-law and her husband did not get her medicine. "You realize that you've never handed your wife a glass of warm water when she couldn't keep food down for days, her stomach upset" (155). Shin has shown the mother and her family relationship as slave and master. Mother is taken as an object of use, not a human.

Father was conscious of the reason for his marriage. He could not live with a girl he was about to marry. He both denies the life of his mother and himself. Awful faith refers to any self-deception which denies the existence of human freedom. Father's irresponsibility put mom an additional burden on her shoulder to look after the residence, offer meals for the growing number of kids, and teach them. Mother took the obligation but her preference to take the family turns her into a running device. Shin portrays mom as a regular Korean conventional mother who is prepared to sacrifice her goals, and her existence for the betterment of the circle of relatives, having no time to assume herself as a character.

Kyung-sook Shin reveals that her protagonist in the novel longs for freedom. Her feeling kitchen as a jail and breaking the jar lids indicates that she is in existential soreness. It indicates her choice to be free. While the lifestyle is the same daily, doing the same things repeatedly makes the mother feel unwell. She feels boredom having no chance in her existence but does not try and look for other opportunities. Rather than seeking a viable way to specify her freedom, she breaks and appears to be in prison in the kitchen. She is forced to do the process, for its miles the obligation of a mother to attend to the circle of relatives, whether she likes or dislikes. She does the duty as they do, for her it became no longer the query of preference or freedom. The mother thinks that she cannot make a choice to escape from her boredom because it is her obligation. She believes that one has to do the duty whether one likes it or not. Existentialists say that man is tied by norms anywhere if only the person thinks that manner. For existentialists, there are not any true norms.

Humans cannot have fixed importance, like animals and other entities. They pick out what is good and proper for them. Sartre's clear vision of existentialism emphasizes the life of individual-initially the guy exists, turns up, appears at the scene, and, simplest afterwards, defines himself. For existentialists, a guy is chargeable for his moves and how he defines himself. So, mom right here is accountable for being objectified. She has created her discernment through her actions. Although mom is in her old age, has constant horrific headaches, and is affected by cancer and dementia; Chi-hon still believes: "You never stopped calling her Mom. Even now, when Mother's missing. When you call out "Mom" you want to believe that she's healthy. That Mom is strong. That Mom isn't fazed by anything" (19).

### 3. Conclusion

Kyun-sook Shin's *Please Look After Mom*, answers the question of what occurs if one loses one's individuality and how the others look. The protagonist of the unconventional Park So-nyo grew up in an own terrible family, married to an incredibly terrible family; through her effort and aid, the children get training and settle in Seoul. She lived in isolation, estranged and alienation in her domestic city of Chong up earlier than she went lacking at the Seoul sub-manner station on the manner to go to her grown-up youngsters to have fun their (mother's and father's) beginning day along with her husband.

### References

- Hui-sok, Yoo *Creation and Criticism* Seoul: Changbi publishers, summer, 2009.
- Inwood, Michael *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford University Press Inc., 2000.
- Neitzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality* Trans. C. Diethe. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Prema, P. "Identity Crisis in Atwood's *The Edible Woman*." *Think India Journal*, vol. 22, no. 14, Dec. 2019, pp. 5080-5084.
- Prema, P. "Survival Strategies in Margaret Atwood's Select Novels." *PoGo Publishing House, Inland Flashes-Contemporary Indian Writing*, 2015. pp. 112-118.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Trans. Philip Mairet. Methuen, 1973.
- Shanthi, R. "A Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*" *Asia Pacific Journal of Research*, vol 17, no. 2, 2021, pp. 75-78.
- Shanthi, R. "Theme of Resistance in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Flora Nwapa" *Literary Insight* 9, 2018, 335-338.
- Sayers, Sean. *Marxism and Human Nature* Routledge, 1998.
- Shin, Kyung-sook *Please Look After Mom* Trans. Chi-Young Kim. Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2011.