

Repercussion of nightmare on the life of the combatant in Han Kang's "*The Vegetarian*"

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Abstract

This article attempts to explore the problems occurred in the life of the protagonist Yeong-hye owing to dreadful nightmare. She is affected psychologically from her childhood onwards. When she was nine years old, the dog was tortured and killed without any consideration by her father. She did not have any sympathy on it. She was not aware of the disgusting incident. The same has been stored in her mind subconsciously. Hence She is witnessed for her continuous nightmare. She dreams animal slaughter and its bloodshed. Nightmare is a predominant part of the novel. She is instructed to do all the things including throwing away meat and egg. It changes her as a vegetarian. She does not consider anybody's advice to eat meat including her husband, father and her family members. She is forced to eat meat with the instruction of her father. Hence she attempts to commit suicide. So many turmoil happened in her marriage life. No one takes her nightmare as a serious issue. That will lead her to face many sufferings.

Keywords: Vegetarian, nightmare, animal, unremarkable, tree.

Introduction

Korean Literature is flourished in Korea or by Korean literati. According to the history it was produced in Korean and classical Chinese. Idu and gugyeol were first used transcription in Korean literature. Hangul, final Korean script used by the writers. Though it has divergence, it is segregated as modern and classical periods. Qupg Sejong is the considered the growth of Korean Literature. It expected from everyone to access the same in culture but the characters from China was given much important to that time. Hence hangul was neglected by the literature eminent. They thought that It would be useful for feminine and people who belonged to low class.

Selecting Chinese characters, hanmun and those who want to contribute its quality to Korean language were facing many uncertain things regarding Korean Literature. They could not accept the existed evidence for Korean Literature as a true one. Therefore debate was occurred for Korean literature. In Korea, some elite people decided to discover which would

be considered as real Korean in literature and language. Others also concentrate to record the true attitude of Koreans without adding Chinese characters.

The works which was made up of Chinese characters and hangul are considered as the main role of Korean Literature heritage. Both have been accepted at the current situation. Besides researchers focused on early oral literature which was based on its tradition. because Korean Literature was first communicated as orally and sometimes the works were written later might be mixed both form including hangul or hyangchal.

One of the appreciated genres of Korean Literature is Short novels today. They have been translated into many foreign languages. They are much attentive on classical part and its value. Poetry is one of the first genres of world literature. In Korea, The first poems were recited because they loved to sing and dance.

Autobiography and history were the other genres which were emerged in thirteenth century. But the form of novel picked up gradually in its shape around fifteenth century. There was turmoil in choosing poetry or novel but Sirhak scholars played a predominant part in inculcating new views to modernity through satirical short stories. Women writers were appeared in the genres of poetry and autobiography. They employed creativity in poetry. These genres were got an opportunity to voice out especially in the beginning of twentieth century.

Dreams refers to images and stories that have been framed by human beings while they all sleep. They are all visible. They can make people rejoice, worry or frightened. Nightmare comes under the bad dream. It is common to all. It happens frequently owing to stress, conflict, and fear, Trauma, Emotional problems, Medication or drug use, Illness. The research surveys If people have particular nightmare again and again, their subconscious mind is trying to say something. If they are not able to see the figures in their nightmare, consult the psychiatrist to resolve the problems.

In literature creating a dream is one of the narrative techniques used by writers including Han Kang. She was born in Kwangju. When she was ten years old, migrated to Seoul. She is the daughter of the novelist Han Seung-won. He is the recipient of numerous literary awards. Both of Han's brothers are writers, too. She studied Korean literature at Yonsei University. She started her career as a writer when one of her poems was published in the winter issue of the quarterly Literature and Society. At the age of twenty three she made her literary debut with *Winter in Seoul* including other poems.

The following year Han Kang won the Seoul Shinmun Spring Literary Contest for *RedAnchor*. Her first short story collection *Yeosu* was released in 1995. She also won the Yi Sang Literary Prize, Today's Young Artist Award and the Korean Literature Novel Award.

The Vegetarian is a three-part novel written by Han Kang. It was first published in 2007 based on *The Fruit Of My Woman*. It has been translated by Deborah Smith into many languages such as English, French, Spanish and Chinese. In 2016, The English-language edition was released. It won international critical acclaim also. In same year Han became the first Korean to win the Man Booker award for this work. *The Vegetarian* is about a woman who takes a decision to stop eating meat after seeing a nightmare. This research shows that how the nightmare leads to devastate her life.

This paper makes an attempt to deal about the first chapter of *The Vegetarian* which is also called the same. The Vegetarian is written in 2007 as a separate chapter by Han Kang who is one of the renowned writer in South Korea. She reveals the inner agony the heroine Yeong-hye because of nightmare. She portrays all the events magnificently. She also uses figurative language in each pages. She handles the role of dream in a proper way. Dream comes in a horrible way. All the characters perform less than dream. It would be given the turning point of the novel. The story revolves around the dream which comes to Yeong-hye during the time of sleeping. It is also considered as an antihero.

The Vegetarian begins with the open statement given by the narrator Mr. Cheong about his wife Yeong-hye who is completely unremarkable in all the ways. He abruptly criticizes her appearance. This will show his frankness. He does not realize the statement which is given for Yeong-hye how much that will hurt her. He shows his gender supremacy on women. Whether men are handsome or not society will not consider them. There is a saying also they are all men. This qualification is alone enough for them. He keeps on quote that she is not at all attractive. Though they are not all made for each other, they do not have misunderstanding with each other. Therefore their marriage is fixed. He has been persuaded in all stages of his life.

Mr. Cheong also explains the characters of Yeong-hye. She cooks variety of dishes for him. Her only hobby is reading books. He comments about her way of dressing that is completely awkward such as not wearing inner on her top. He advices many times for wearing dresses but she is very adamant. She wants to maintain her individuality even in wearing dress though it is very enticing. Apart from that their life goes on smoothly. They have celebrated five years anniversary. One day, he wakes up early morning to search his wife. She is in the kitchen. She stares at the fridge. He asks what happened to her but she hardly says. He shakes her shoulder, she replies that she had a dream. She goes back to her bedroom where she was lying on the bed. He does not like to perturb again. Next morning he wakes up late. Instead of preparing breakfast for him she throws away all the meat from fridge.

When Mr.Cheong asks what happened to her. Yeong-hye answers she had a dream. People are changing their way of life style, food habits, including characters for many other reasons. Here Yeong-hye's life is being changed by the dream. Within the next morning she is totally changed. She becomes as a vegetarian. Mankind have dream that is inevitable. Most of the people do not bother about it. They look after their daily routines. But dream plays a vital role in the life of Yeong-hye.

Yeong-hye does not sleep well. Therefore she wakes up late. She forgets him to wake up early. She always thinks about her dream that will affect their family life too. She does not help him to get ready for office. He shouts at her not waking him up early. Even she does not iron his attire. That day he is alone doing his work. He does not care about the problem of his wife. He never thinks that why his wife is not doing her regular work. He expects that his wife should fulfill his desires alone. He always depends on her by getting ready to go to office. Mr. Cheong is a male chauvinist. She is doing her duty as a wife in the best way. Sometime it is lacking owing to her psychological disturbance. For helping and doing household works have been made for women alone. She is an undemanding wife too unlike others' wives.

Yeong-hye's second nightmare

Next morning Yeong - hye again says that she had a dream. He scolds her severely because of her attitude. He thinks that she is an insane. Now the narrative goes to her dream where she looks at the images which are very horrible. She sees the visuals:

"Dark woods. No people. The sharp-pointed leaves on the trees, my torn feet. This place, almost remembered, but I'm lost now. Frightened. Cold. Across the frozen ravine, a red barn-like building. Straw matting flapping limp across the door. Roll it up and I'm inside, it's inside. A long bamboo stick strung with great blood-red gashes of meat, blood still dripping down. Try to push past but the meat, there's no end to the meat, and no exit. Blood in my mouth, blood-soaked clothes sucked onto my skin. She describes pushing "that red raw mass into [her] mouth." She sees her own face when she chews meat like unfamiliar to her. Chewing on something that felt so real, but couldn't have been, it couldn't. My face, the look in my eyes...my face, undoubtedly, but never seen before. Or no, not mine, but so familiar...nothing makes sense. Familiar and yet not...that vivid, strange, horribly uncanny feeling."(7).

Yeong-hye describes her dream something awful. She takes it into an account. From her childhood onwards something has been stored in her subconscious mind. The dream is taking it out what she has kept unknowingly. That is disturbing her life completely. She cannot come out from the dream.Next evening she prepares meal without meat. Mr. Cheong knows about her dream and all the meat has been thrown away from her house. Hence he

wishes to eat fried egg. So, he asks her to prepare the same but she replies to get rid of all the eggs and milk.

Mr.Cheong's chaos on his wife's behaviour

Mr.Cheong asks about her decision for not having meat in their meal in future also. She responds that he takes breakfast alone in his house. Therefore she says that not taking meat for one time of his meal there is no problem in that. Cheong knows very well about her. She is much talented for Marinating and snipping meat in the kitchen. He explains her ability for preparing food. Now she is presenting him meal through asking apology for the same. He does not understand what happened to her. Few months later, owing to strictly follow vegetarianism, she loses her weight. Yeong-hye knows about her dream. So, he does not ask anything further.

Yeong-hye is not interested to have relationship with her husband because of her tiredness. He advises to add meat in her meal then only she gets energy. Finally she confesses that there is a meat smell in his body. He has confidence on her. She does not have any insane problem even her family itself does not have any history of mental illness.

When Yeong-hye prepares the meal, chips off the knife fell into the dish. Fortunately he does not swallow it. He ranges about her carelessness. Some days pass, Mr. Cheong and his wife are invited for dinner with his colleagues by his boss. He recounts his wife to get ready for the dinner in an attractive way. He notices her without inner wear on her top. He really embraces and his boss' wife has an astonishment and curiosity about her way of dressing. He also observes that she does not mingle with others there.

The food is made as family style. The waiter serves the soup for her but she says that she does not eat meat. everyone astonishes to argue about vegetarian and how is it possible to eat meal without meat. He answers that she suffers from gastroenteritis that is why doctor advises her to become a vegetarian. Now only everyone understands her problem. One person comments that they hate to share the meal to someone who thinks that eating meat repulsive. Yeong-hye maintains silence alone.

Twelve types of food have been served but Yeong-hye eats little. Everything contains only in meat and fish. Finally she eats dessert. Boss' wife expresses her concern on Yeong-hye who does not eat anything. She has no reaction for that and she stares at her. Cheong shocks about her attitude. He assumes that she has not thought anything like that.

Mr.Cheong decides to call her mother and explains the changes of Yeong-hye as vegetarian. She also insists him to follow vegetarianism. His mother in law is shocked to hear the news. She answers him to talk to Yeong-hye next morning. He conveys the same to her

sister In - hye who astonishes and asks apology for sister's behaviour and resolves the problems of Yeong-hye.

Witness of the nightmare as murder

Yeong-hye is also a witness of another dream about murder. She dreams of metal striking a victim's head and violent acts infused by night. She feels unacceptable dislike things, so long repressed and a shuddering, sordid, gruesome, brutal feeling. She worries that everything has started to feel unfamiliar. She sees the visual her dream:

Murderer or murdered....hazy distinctions, boundaries wearing thin. Familiarity bleeds into strangeness, certainty becomes impossible. Only the violence is vivid enough to stick. Sounds, the elasticity of the instant when the metal struck the victim's head...the shadow that crumpled and fell gleams cold in the darkness. They come to me now more times than I can count. Dreams overlaid with dreams, a palimpsest of horror. Violent acts perpetrated by night. A hazy feeling I can't pin down...but remembered as blood-chillingly definite. Intolerable loathing, so long suppressed. Loathing I've always tried to mask with affection. But now the mask is coming off. That shuddering, sordid, gruesome, brutal feeling. Nothing else remains. Murderer or murdered, experience too vivid to not be real. Determined, disillusioned. Lukewarm, like slightly cooled blood. Everything starts to feel unfamiliar. As if I've come up to the back of something. Shut up behind a door without a handle. Perhaps I'm only now coming face-to-face with the thing that has always been here. It's dark. Everything is being snuffed out in the pitch-black darkness. (15).

Both Yeong-hye's mother and sister call her but that will not give any impact on her attitude. Her father also makes a call to her for disobeying Mr.Cheong. She does not respond him and cut down the call. Mr.Cheong apologizes her actions to his father in law. He is ashamed for his daughter's behaviour. He is a strict Vietnam War veteran. His daughter's behaviour is unusual to him. She was treated very cruelly until she was eighteen years old.

In - hye is taking care of cosmetic store and her family including her children. Her husband does not earn money. He spends his time with art which rejoice him. Mr. Cheong is very much jealous on his brother in law. Mr. Cheong compares In - hye ' beauty with his wife. Yeong-hye's father and mother, her sister In-hye, brother-in-law, her brother Yeong ho and Mr.Cheong have peaceful conversation during the time of lunch. She does not like to take food. Moreover she does not mingle with anybody in her family. Her father shouts her. Others immediately interfere to console her harshness. They notice her weight loss that has been damaging her body. Yeong-hye's mother prepares variety of dishes which contain meat and fish. She asks to try a piece of pork. Her father says the same thing.

Yeong-hye's nightmare leads to depression

She is commanded to eat the dishes but she replies that she does not eat meat. Her father orders his son and son in law to pull her arms. He takes a piece of fork and tries to put into her mouth. She tightly closes her mouth. They are all shocked their father's behaviour. He again slaps her causing her mouth to open. He manages to put into her mouth.

Yeong-hye is maximum tortured to eat meat by his father. She is not allowed to eat as her own wish. Being women who may come from any space. They should live for their family and society. Their separate wishes should not be accepted even taking food also. The same thing happens to the life of Yeong-hye. She wounds physically by her father because of her vegetarianism. Though he is a strict father, he has lot of affection on his daughter. He cannot digest the condition of his daughter which means her physical features. They can show the same concern on other things of her daughter. They do not analyze her mind what it keeps. They don't understand why she is avoiding meat. If they sit and talk to her daughter they may observe her problem.

She screams immediately and spits out the meat. She wants to come out from their hold. So, she picks up the fruit knife and slices her wrist. This is expressing her depression that leads to commit suicide. Blood is poured from her wrist. Brother-in-law takes the knife from her and tries to stop the bleeding. He picks up her arms and goes to the hospital.

Yeong-hye's childhood memories

When she was nine years old, she was bitten by a dog. He ties the dog in his motorcycle drives the circle with the dog following behind. The dog exhausts being dragged by the motorcycle, choking and dripping blood from its mouth. In the same evening only his friend's advice her father arranged the feast with the meat of dog. When she eats, she recalls the eyesight of the dog as she watched it die. Her father treat the dog without humanity. Her father and herself did not have sympathy on the dog. They looked at the condition of the dog who is dying second by second. The dog was tortured until it died. She did not feel the pain of the dog on that day. This is also one of the reason of her depression as transform as nightmare. This incident has been stored in her subconscious mind. It is coming out slowly as a nightmare.

Now Yeong-hye is hospitalized and out of critical stage. They are all watching her sleep. Yeong he's wife comments the rude attitude of her father. Mr.Cheong does not think about anything. He feel the disgusting things of his wife. The next day Mr.Cheong and his mother in law come to the hospital. She gives goat soup to her. She also tells her about it as herbal medicine. In the beginning itself she hesitates to drink it after that she agrees. Few minutes later she wants to go to washroom and makes herself to vomit everything. Hence She throws away rest of the soup.

Her mother starts to cry, seeing her daughter so thin. She expresses her agony and she raises lot of questions. She scolds her for not knowing the value of her mother's affection. She simply stares at her mother and comes back to her bed. Yeong-hye thinks that she doesn't know why her mother is crying. She looks at her wrist, which she explains doesn't bother her; instead, she feels as though something is stuck in her solar plexus—there is too much meat lodged there. Blood and flesh, all those butchered bodies are scattered in every nook and cranny. Yeong-hye thinks that no one can help her. So, she wants to throw herself through the window. She believes that if she does so that would finally get this lump out of her body.

Yeong-hye's mother leaves the ward, and Mr. Cheong lies down on a side bed to sleep next to Yeong-hye. He dreams that he is killing someone, thrusting a knife into their stomach and peeling off the flesh and muscle from their bones. But when he wakes up, he explains, he can't remember who he had killed.

Mr. Cheong wakes up and finds his wife on bed. She is not there. He starts to ask people who are all nearby her bed. They respond that she has gone already before he wakes up. He searches her everywhere around the hospital where there is the crowd nearby fountain in the garden. People are talking about her. They think that she may escape from psychiatric ward. She is sitting without having top wear in the bench. She smiles at him when he looks at her. He asks about her nakedness in the public place. She says that it is very hot. She holds something in her right hand. He opens her hand to find the white eye bird. It is has been crushed.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of *The Vegetarian* focuses repeated threatening images come to Yeong-hye's dreams. The same thing has totally destroyed her life. Her life partner is not ready to listen her dream. He takes it as a dream. If he enquires about her dream or gives some suggestion for consulting doctors, he can find the problems of Yeong-hye. He assumes that she is normal. She is being frustrated from her childhood onwards. That is why she sees the nightmare. Her parents itself do not know about her completely. Something disturbs her. It grows gradually and she is affected psychologically that is not revealed in the first chapter.

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