

CULTURE TO NATURE REVERSE JOURNEY IN THE VEGETARIAN BY HAN KANG

Dr. Durgesh Vitthal Borse

Assistant Professor

Government Vidarbha Institute of
Science and Humanities Amravati

1234rahulborse@gmail.com

&

Miss Pratiksha Kailas Maske

Research Scholar

Government Vidarbha Institute of
Science and Humanities Amravati

pratikshamaske312@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A drop of ink may make a million to think

Lord Byron

Writing is a strong medium to mobilize people to think and rise again in justice and another may explicitly push people to rebel against any atrocious thing. 2024 Nobel Prize winning author Han Kang has successfully done this beauty through her novels like Human Acts, Greek Lessons and The Vegetarian. Russo says, man is born free and everywhere he is in chains. (The Social Contract, 5) Man created culture and various cultural institutions but these cultural institutions have become very rigid. Transgression is not allowed to keep the social institutions intact ideological violent weapon is used to deal with any challenge to the institutions. The Vegetarian is a story of women, Yeong-hye who dares to go against social institutions and to face violence which she deals with silence. She knows that she can achieve freedom only by leaving culture she does not want to fight for equality she thinks that her slavery is due to her being in the ontologically and epistemologically, in the human constructed culture. She has given hopes of freedom within the oppressive social structure. She has determined to go back to nature the novel The Vegetarian is the story of her reverse journey from culture to nature.

Key Words: Patriarchy, Human institutions, radical thoughts, hegemony

The novel *The Vegetarian* is divided into three parts each part has a different narrator who tells us the story of Yeong-hye. These three parts are namely the vegetarian, The Mongolian Mark and Flaming Tree. In the first part the narrator is Yeong-hye's husband he represents patriarchy when the novel opens (Mr. Cheong) tell the reader *before my wife turned*

vegetarian I always thought of her as completely unremarkable in every way (16). this statement clearly indicates that Yeong-hye is an ordinary woman but an ideal wife who sincerely and candidly follows all the institutional rules of culture. Her decision of not eating meat is a shocking remarkable decision for her husband. He doesn't like decision she gets Haunting dreams that forces her to give up eating meat. She becomes vegetarian to escapes Haunting and horrible dreams. Her husband cannot digest this idea; he cannot tolerate her vegitel metamorphosis. He wants her to be submissive, but she doesn't give in her disobedience is intolerable in violent patriarchal institution. After that her journey towards becoming nature is replit with violence in patriarchal society rules are determined by institutions and you are bound to follow these rules you are born with rules and you die with them if anyone dares to go against them, the person meets the same fate as Yeong-hye. Yeong-hye is subaltern she knows that she cannot speak. If she speaks, she would be silenced she uses silence as a weapon of transgression. Her husband becomes violent towards her but she remains silent she only says that *I don't eat meat*(page) patriarchy dreams her decision a threat.

It Is her strategic essentialism to find a solution to her problems. The novel begins much before the actual beginning her decision of becoming vegetarian occurs in the very beginning of the novel but she has been brooding over the solution for a long time. She is a feminist philosopher who wants to invent institutions where women would be at the centre. Her establishments she is absolutely sure about the futility of fighting for egalitarianism which will improve the condition of women by remaining within the structures of patriarchy. The only solution is to leave patriarchal culture completely going back to nature and finding new ways of living. She wishes to leave the culture and become arboreal being.

She starts her journey towards her destination of arboreal existence by denying patriarchal constructed things in quotidian culture. He takes dietary decision of not eating non vegetarian food. Then she leaves the marriage institution, Institutions of kit and kin, Institutions of human relation, ideological constraints imposed by society on sexual instinctual Desire, not wearing proper clothes. Taking an ecofeminist view, Soo-Jeong Shin interprets the motif of being vegetarian through the combination of plant and food. Shin opines that the heroine's vegetarian diet is "a kind of resistance" or "revolutionary behavior" for "it recovers the nature of the ecological human-relation and renews the human-being." (9) Chan Je Wu claims that the *male social order stressing meat-eating sometimes unveils violence, without the knowledge of plant-based femininity* and that Han "suggests considering from a feminine or plant-based ethical perspective the complexity of issues brought up in the middle of the violence, ignorance and failed communication." (10)

In an interview the author herself has opined *eating meat, cooking meat, all these daily activities embody the violence that has been normalized* (12) Yeong-hye rejects all these

things the novel *The vegetarian* depicts a woman who rejects and omni present and precarious violence even at the cost to herself (13) opposing carnism is a way of opposing patriarchy. Nick Fiddles in the book *Meat: A Natural Symbol* says just as meat is a sign far excellence of men's control of natural world, so women as meat has been a particularly effective statement of her supposedly wider social rule and availability as a natural resource for men (15) eating meat means accepting political dominance of men. In a food sensitive society what would be the staple food is institutionalized by power the food epistemology and ontology are within the constitutions of power.

Her thoughts occur in the form of dreams and thoughts and dreams are actualized through actions. The central character of this novel wakes up in the middle of the night to solidify her thoughts. she opens the refrigerator looks at the items in the refrigerator for long time and early in the morning. She evidently declares her decision. Her decision is not just unacceptable to her dear and near ones but they also do anything to stop her to stick to it. And when she is not ready to accept anything against it. She experiences violence from family members including her husband. She is a threat to the institution of food, family and patriarchy. Her act of becoming vegan is radically opposed by those around her. Adhy Kim in the paper says *Han interrogates the "human" in human rights and proposes speculative philosophies of history that frame human rights violations, particularly in the context of the South Korean Cold War, within longer natural histories.* (431) The protagonist in the novel challenges the very definition of human right which is hegemonically harnessed by male dominance.

In the second part of the novel the narrator is Yeung hye's brother-in-law the second part is titled *Mongolian Mark* it metaphorically conveys transgression through active expression of female bodily experience. There are rules for sexual behaviours which have made the Instinctive Desire artificial. Yeong-hye is an ordinary looking unattractive woman but the *Mongolian Mark* has made her unique. She like a tree that grows in wilderness denuded and solitary she is objectified as a unique nature phenomenon for unrestrained sexual desired. What is shown in the second part is the liberation which has become spiritual for her in nature there are no rules for societal propriety and inherent values of love and sexuality inherent values are strongly asserted it is not insist but copulation vegetarian is all comprehensive attempt to jettison humanity and human structures.

The second part of the novel we will that she is no longer animal but has become one with plant world. She is found doing a handstand like a plant she is silent all the time because plants don't speak any language. She has determined to give up everything that has made her human silently acting on her instinct is the way through by which she creates her vegetal existence. Body is controlled, manipulated, regulated by mores of society power is encoded in body. She denies all those courses of body behaviours she starts with not wearing upper body

parts inner wears she gets her body painted like floral no need of clothes to cover the body she believes nakedness is nature and clothes are human culture she not only gives up human culture clothes but she also denies media of human violence altogether.

Throughout the novel she is silent like many women in the history of patriarchal society she doesn't want to contradict any person in the language that is man made 'she becomes the hero of her - story'. Her story is the story of silence and its strong retaliation to the violence of patriarchy. She has given a message that redemption and salvation is in becoming tree not in becoming Rebel in society. Her act is the act of dehumanization her own self. She starts living on sunlight. This self-denial results into magic realistic kind things. She forgets the human world and she starts feeling one with nature. She experiences what flora and fauna experience.

In the novel there are three perspectives towards the central characters decision of becoming vegetarian. The second section is the point of view of Yeong-hye's videographer brother-in-law, he is after the deeper truth of existence. He is a painter of naked bodies. He wants to produce the perfect art. He is the only character in the novel who is qualified to understand the aesthetic vegetarianism. He thinks that *the fact that she didn't eat meat, only vegetables and cereal grains, seemed to fit with the image of that blue petal-like mark* (71-72). The final section, "Flaming Trees," is the third Lense to diagnose her decision. The representative people of this perspective are Yeong-hye's doctor and her sister. The doctor looks at it as a medical condition but her sister is very sympathetic towards her and ascribe her sister's condition to female trauma. She nurses her sister. She realises the change in her: the effects of not taking food. She goes on to say, *I used to need one of the nurses to help me give her a bath; now she's so light I can lift her easily on my own. It really is like caring for a baby. Anyway, I was hoping to give her a bath today as well* (151). Her sister can feel her only because she shares the same pains and that is why she is capable for empathy for her. The novel depicts ungendered female experience.

She has become very sensitive to everything in nature. She feels the sound of the animal dying is just like sound of murder, what she perceives as *the elasticity of the instant when the metal struck the victim's head* (28). She cannot bear the smell of dying dog too *The smell of burnt flesh, which the perilla seeds couldn't wholly mask, pricked my nose* (42). She gives up everything, she loses sense of smelling feels that it is impossible to continue eating meat. she begins to avoid sex with her husband. This is the complete renunciation. She achieves this through hardship. She becomes part of nature. She is now inseparable from the greater natural order.

Citations:

Adhy Kim. *Han Kang's Speculative Natural Histories Beyond Human Rights*. *Comparative Literature Studies* , 2021, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2021), Published by: Penn State University Presspp. 431-454

Kang, Hang. *The Vegetarian*. Trans. Deborah Smith. London. Portobello Books,(2007).Print. Lock, Charles. "Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology." *Literature and Theology* 5.1(1991): 68-82. Oxford University Press. JStor.

Marguerite M. Regan, "Feminism, Vegetarianism, And Colonial Resistance In Eighteenth-Century

British Novels" in *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 18th-Century British Novels (Fall 2014), pp. 275-292.

Regan, Marguerite. M. "Feminism, Vegetarianism, and Colonial Resistance in Eighteenth Century British Novels." *Studies in the Novel* 46.3(2014): 275-292. The John Hopkins University Press. Jstor.

Renk, Kathleen, W. "Jane Eyre as Hunger Artist." *Women's Writing* 15.1(2008): 1-12. Taylor & FrancisOnline.

Rousseau Jean Jacques. *The Social Contract*. Penguin. New York. 2002