

# YEONG-HYE'S VEGETARIAN AFFECTS TO SOCIAL LIFE IN HANKANG "THE VEGETARIAN"

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## Abstract

*Hankang the vegetarian novel tells the woman named Yeong-hye who decided to be vegetarian after having nightmare, being vegetarian Yeong-hye got negative reaction(stigma) from her family and society. This study was descriptive qualitative in nature which used the data from whole novel of the vegetarian and to support the study, the researcher used theory of vegetarian in social cultural context and theory of vegetarian effect in society.*

*The result of this study, the researcher finds that to be vegetarian cannot accept in Korean society because of collectivism influence, which collectivism hold the value of interdependence that prioritize the goal of group so that vegetarian was consider as a deviant behaviour that can disturb harmony in group and discordance with non vegetarian.*

**Keywords:** Rejection, Deviant behaviour, and Negative reaction(stigma)

## INTRODUCTION

The Vegetarian novel was the Korean novel written by Han Kang that had been translated by Deborah Smith in English version, this novel was contemporar, stereotyping, and cultural theme, which succeeded to be winner in Man Booker International prize 2016 and published in 2007, so that, the researcher was interested to study this novel, because this novel revealed Yeong-hye's vegetarian affect to social life.

The Main character in this novel was Yoeng-hye, Yeong-hye was the home maker and house wife, yeong-hye had married with Mr Cheong for five years, before yeong-hye turned to be vegetarian, Yeong-hye had passive personality and unattractive, everyday Yeong-hye worked as part time writer in magazine agent, one day Yeong-hye

experienced nightmare, in her nightmare shows the cruelty to animal, after waking up from her nightmare Yeong-hye's behaviour was change, Yeong-hye became disobedience and defiant person. at that time Yeong-hye decided to be vegetarian, knowing Yeong-hye turned to be vegetarian Mr Cheong cannot believe and got mad at Yeong-hye, Yeong-hye got negative reaction and stereotype from her husband, family, and communities.

Yoeng-hye's vegetarian affects to her social life was interesting as the main topic in this research, because it revealed effect of Yeong-hye's vegetarian to her social life, which Yeong-hye got negative reaction and stereotype from her social life.

Kim state that To be vegetarian in korea would disturb harmony in group, which sharing meal was the common practice that bring intimate in the relationship, eating together was an important of circulating information, promoting solidarity, and sharing values within a group(Kim:1994).

This study focused on Yeong-hye's vegetarian affects to her social life which described the effect of Yeong-hye's vegetarian in social life, in conducting the study the researcher used descriptive qualitative study, which analysed the effect of Yeong-hye's vegetarian in social life based on data that available in the novel of the vegetarian by reading comprehensively the whole story of Yeong-hye's vegetarian, the researcher also used theories related the effect to be vegetarian in social life and vegetarian in Korean culture to support this study. To analyze Yeong-hye's vegetarian affects to social life, the writer formulates problem that is: "what is effect of Yeong-hye's vegetarian in her social life?"

### **Vegetarian in Korean culture's view**

In north American and Western European culture, an individual is construed as autonomous entity, who is independent from others. Whose behavior is organized by references to one's own internal attribute (Markus and Kintamaya:1991). Contrary, In Chinese, Japanese, and Korean culture is construed as relation who is interdependent with other, whose behavior determined and organized by feling, thought, and

relationship (Markus and Kintamaya:1991). Individual serves more to express one's belongingness to the group and promote harmony (Kintamaya:2010). it can conclude that the concept of self between western and eastern culture is different.

Meat has traditionally held in the central position among of dishes both in western and eastern asia(Twigg:1979). As in the Chinese new year day pork dumpling always available on the table. In korea itself vegetarian was considered as a deviant behaviour that cause discordance with non vegetarian, it can disturb harmony within a group, in Korean culture "Eating together" is become the relationship in communities by sharing meal. Because it signifies belonging to political and social communities (Kim:1994).

Collectivisme in korea caused vegetarian cannot accept in korean society. Collectivism in Korean culture was defined as a culture based on hierarchical social culture which subjugates the individual right to the collective goods of society (park sang seek:2018). The influence of confusion from China which pathriacal system dominant in korean family culture. Collectivism hold the value of interdependent which prioritiez goal of group, Korean develop of sense of identity through relationship in their society. Because of the close of involvement of other in their social circle, korea tend to identify strongly with their in group (Han and Ahn :1994).

### **Effect to be vegetarian**

According to gofman stigma is reaction to a perceive deviation from social norms (Goffman:1963). To be vegetarian will create stigma in society because vegetarian is consider a deviant behaviour which against social norms in a group. People who are unable obligate or follow social norms; these individuals are labelled as "Deviant".

Goffman breaks down Social Identity into two parts: Actual social identity and virtual social identity. The actual social identity is an individual's actual physical behaviour, while virtual social identity is the individualist going to act based on

assumption. This assumption come from social norm in our society in everyday interaction (Goffman:1963).

According to romo being forthright about their eating habit to meat eater could result in mockery and stereotyping, vegetarian clearly fit the pattern of stigmatized individuale, especiaaly individual that become social tension because of their identity. Vegetarian naturally engage in communication when they cook and dinner or otherwise, socialize with family, friends and collagenous, consequently vegetarian can entail the meaningful social life and comuncation (Romo:2012).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Method comprises of the step and it trails to; Reading novel, Inventorying data, Classification data, and tabling the data. Beside that, the technique is interpereting the data with mimetic approach in order to make it relatedtothesociety.

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## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

To be vegetarian will create reaction from family and Communities, it happened in Yeong hye's life. Knowing Yeong-hye turn to be vegetarian Mr Cheong cannot accept and get mad at Yeong –hye, it is potrayed when Mr Cheong ask Yeong-hye to make him fried eggs

*“Just make me some fried eggs. I’m really tired today. I didn’t even get to have a proper lunch.”*

*“I threw the eggs out as well.”*

*“What?”*

*“And I’ve given up milk too.”*

*“This is unbelievable. You’re telling me not to eat meat?”*

*“I couldn’t let those things stay in the fridge. It wouldn’t be right.”*(Hankang:2007)

From the quotation above it indicated that Mr cheong cannot believe that yeong-hye turn to be vegetarian and ovoiding meat even milk. Because usualy everyday yeong-hye always cook Korean cuisine like bibimbab,bulgogi, and minced beef. According to romo eating is a longlife physical necessity that is often done in the company of others, vegetarian naturally engage in communication when they cook, diner or otherwise socialize with family, friends, and colleague. Ovoiding meat can entail meaningful social communication (Romo:2012).

According to Goffman to be vegetarian will create stigma and reaction either from society, family, and communities, stigma is the reaction to perceived deviation from social norm. vegetarian clearly fit the pattern of stigmatized individual, these individual become acustome to social tention because their identity (Goffman:1963).

Instead of having problem with her husband, Yeong-hye also has problem with her family, Her mother Knows that Yeong-hye turn to be vegetarian after she asked Mr Cheong about Yeong-hye, Her Mother cannot accept that her daughter now become vegetarian because Yeong-hye used to eat bulgogi, and Korean cuisine that mostly made from meat. according to twigg, meat has traditionally held in the center of dish both in west and east asia (Twigg:1979).

“How is everything with you? I hadn’t heard a thing for such a long time...”  
“I’m sorry about that. It’s just that I’ve been so busy lately...is my father-in-law in good health?” “Oh, nothing ever changes with us. Are things going well at work?” I hesitated. “I’m fine. But as for my wife...”

“What about Yeong-hye, what’s the matter?” Her voice was laced with worry. She had never seemed to show much of an interest in her second daughter, but I suppose one’s children are one’s children, after all.

“The thing is, she’s stopped eating meat.”

“What did you say?”

“She’s stopped eating any kind of meat at all, even fish—all she lives on is vegetables. It’s been several months now.”

“What kind of talk is this? Surely you can always just tell her not to follow this diet.”(Hankang,2007:20)

Someday, Mr Cheong and Yeong-hye got invited to have dinner with Mr Cheong's executive director wife. In Korean culture "eating together" has a particular significance, because it belongs to political and communities relationship by exchanging food. (Kim:1994), In there Yeong-hye feel uncomfortable with the dishes when the food is served, the food is jelly mungbean dressed with mushroom and beef. Spontanly, Yeong-hye rejected those foods, yeong-hye only ate kimchi and fruit salad. knowing this, Mr Cheong's executive director was surprised.

*"I don't eat meat," she said, slightly louder this time.*

*"My word, so you're one of those 'vegetarians,' are you?" My boss asked*

*"Well, I knew that some people in other countries are strict vegetarians, of course, you know, it does seem that attitudes are beginning to change a little. Now and then there'll be someone claiming that eating meat is bad...after all, I suppose giving up meat in order to live a long life isn't all that unreasonable, is it?"*

*"But surely it isn't possible to live without eating meat?" his wife asked with a smile (Hankang,2007)*

*"People mainly used to turn vegetarian because they subscribed to a certain ideology...I've been to various doctors myself, to have some tests done and see if there was anything in particular I ought to be avoiding, but everywhere I went I was told something different...in any case, the idea of a special diet always made me feel uncomfortable. It seems to me that one shouldn't be too narrow-minded when it comes to food." (Hankang:2007)*

*"Do you remember those mummified human remains they discovered recently? Five hundred thousand years old, apparently, and even back then humans were hunting for meat—they could tell that from the skeletons. Meat eating is a fundamental human instinct, which means vegetarianism goes against human nature, right? It just isn't natural." (Hankang:2007)*

In Mr Cheong's executive director 's wife consider that to be vegetarian was against human nature, because eating meat was fundamentally human instinc, people around Yeong-hye laugh because they condiser that Yeong-hye is weird. According to kim eating vegetarian was consider as a deviant behavior because it is discordance with non vegetarian (Kim:1994)

*“Well, I must say, I’m glad I’ve still never sat down with a proper vegetarian. I’d hate to share a meal with someone who considers eating meat repulsive, just because that’s how they themselves personally feel...don’t you agree?”*

*“Imagine you were snatching up a wriggling baby octopus with your chopsticks and chomping it to death—and the woman across from you glared like you were some kind of animal. That must be how it feels to sit down and eat with a vegetarian!” (HanKang, 2007:10).*

Yeong-hye also got opposition from her father because her vegetarian, her father knew from Yeong-hye’s mother after hearing the news that Yeong-hye turned vegetarian, Yeong-hye’s father was a disciplinarian and patriarchal man, he worked as a military merit service in Vietnam, knowing his daughter turned to be vegetarian he called Yeong-hye and Mr. Cheong to come to family gathering in apartment of Yeong-hye’s brother Yeong-ho in next June. In there Yeong-hye’s mother brought steamed beef, and sour pork, Yeong-hye is pushed to eat.

*“Enough!” my father-in-law yelled. “You, Yeong-hye! After all I told you, your own father!”*

*“This outburst was followed by In-hye’s roundly rebuking my wife. “Do you truly intend to go on like this? Human beings need certain nutrients...if you intend to follow a vegetarian diet you should sit down and draw up a proper, well-balanced meal plan. Just look at your face!”*

*“This whole vegetarian business stops right now,” she said. “This one, and this, and this—hurry up and eat them. How could you have got into this wretched state when there’s not a thing in the world you can’t eat?”*

*“Well, what are you waiting for? Come on, eat up,” my father-in-law boomed.*

*“You must eat, Yeong-hye,” In-hye admonished. “You’ll have more energy if you do (Hankang:2007)*

Yeong-hye got punishment from her father, she was pushed to eat pork, beef and oyster, Yeong-hye felt depressed. While her father punished her and pushed her to eat meat. no one can help Yeong-hye even her husband.

*“Eat it quickly! My arm hurts...”*

*My mother-in-law’s arm was actually trembling. Eventually, my wife stood up.*

*“Iwon’t eat it.”(Hankang:2007)*

*Finally, Yeong-hye tried to suicide with wrish her arm with knife, Mr Cheong took her to hospital and she get treatment in there, Yeong-hye felt depressed, her body get thiner.*

*Jaw clenched, her intent stare facing each one of us down in turn, my wife brandished the knife.*

*“Stop her...”*

*“Stay back!”*

*Blood ribboned out of her wrist. The shock of red splashed over white china. As her knees buckled and she crumpled to the floor, the knife was wrested from her by In-hye’s husband, who until then had sat through the whole thing as an idle spectator.*

*“What are you doing? Somebody fetch a towel, at least!” Every inch the special forces graduate, he stopped the bleeding with practiced skill, and picked my wife up in his arms. “Quickly, go down and start the engine!”*

*I groped for my shoes. The ones I’d picked up weren’t a pair, so I had to swap them before I was able to open the front door and go out.*

Yeong-hye got IV needle insert into her right arm, during in the hospital yeong-hye got mental therapy from psychiatrist to make her well, Her mother cared Yeong-hye and gave her herbal medicine, in the end of story Yeong-hye felt sorry that what she did was the wrong thing.

## CONCLUSION

Yeong hye's vegetarian affects to her social life is the study of Yeong hye who turns to be the vegetarian after experiencing dream, it tells about the woman named Yeong-hye, Yeong-hye has married to Mr cheong for 5 years, Yeong-hye was the house wife, everyday she worked as a freelancer in magazine company, she was an ordinary woman, one day Yeong-hye experinces a nightmare, after waking up Yeong-hye's behaviour is change, Yeong-hye become disobedience and aggressive, she throw meat from refrigerator and at that time Yeong-hye decides to be vegetarian.

Knowing this Mr Cheong cannot accept that Yeong-hye to be vegetarian just because of ridiculous dream, to be vegetarian will create the effect to social life, Yeong-hye got rejection from her family and communities because of being vegetarian, the result of this study reveals that Yeong-hye's vegetarian cannot accept in Korean society because of collectivism culture. According to Kim to be vegetarian in korea would disturb harmony in group (Kim:1994).

Somehow to be vegetarian is the personal decision for any reason, Yeong-hye is the one who want to be a vegetarian on her way, her Changed behavior is the resistance of patriarchy system in korean culture, Yeong-hye wants to be the independent woman and close to the nature, unfortunately Yeong-hye's decision is not respond well in Korean culture, vegetarian is consider as the defiant behavior that can discordance with non vegetarian.

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