



Okja: A meat-lover's nightmare

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Don't watch *Okja* if you are one of those with big plans of making the best out of all the surplus meat that will dip into your deep fridge. It will make you hate yourself for your meat eating, environment killing gastronomic habit. Even though the chances of having a non-kosher food as a palatable item during these holy days are slim, the presence of a genetically modified giant creature in a bucolic paradise will make you fall in love with an unlikely creature—a pig! And if you have already watched the 2017 movie by the South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon-ho, now is the time for you to reflect on a David and Goliath moment when a brave girl decided to take a Hamletesque "arms against a sea of troubles." While on a philosophic mood, you can even pursue the trail of thought to connect it to the recent events when our brave school children took to the streets, rather naively, to fix the system that displayed an error sign. Just like their derring-do met the conspiracy of anarchists, spin doctors, and media circus, Mija's attempt to save her friend meets a similar fate. Mija, a 13-year-old south Korean girl traveled to New York in search of her lost pet Okja, and became involved in an intrigue of corporate greed, animal right group's anarchy, and instant media gratification mania.

When Netflix touted it as one of the most watched movies in 2017, I remember being

glued to my phone screen with only one regret. I wish I could watch the digital deftness and poignant puppetry of Bong Joon-ho's sci-fi movie on a big screen. With *Okja*, along with another movie, Netflix broke fresh ground by becoming the first streaming service to produce movies to be adjudicated by the pundits at Palme d'Or. Not everyone was excited to have a small screen movie taking such a giant leap. The president of Cannes film festival made his position clear. "The size of the screen should not be smaller than the chair you're sitting in. It should not be part of your everyday setting," the Spanish filmmaker said. "You must be small and humble in front of the image that's here."

Interestingly, *Okja* is the story of an oversized pig, genetically modified by Mirando Corporation. The CEO of the company in its effort to revamp its company's image sends away 10 piglets to different locations to find an eco-friendly solution for meat crisis. A South Korean farmer and her granddaughter Mija raise this pig and develop a heart-warming bond with what turns out to be a gentle giant. Okja, the pig-like creature, is a strange mix of a canine and a porcine. Mija and Okja grew up in the countryside of Gangwon Province in Korea for 10 years until one day, Mirando Corporation decides to take Okja back to the US. Mija set off a daring journey to

retrieve her animal friend, and while in Seoul found herself befriended by a radical animal rights group, Animal Liberation Front (ALF).

The plot so far follows the mainstream children adventure movie such as *ET* or *Free Willy*. The presence of the corporate giants, the media pundits, and extreme animal rights group (not to mention the invectives aplenty) change the dynamics, and the small screen movie starts projecting a larger than life moment that Cannes Jury has been unwilling to admit. The movie is cleverly made to create a pastiche. On the one hand, Mija's grandfather lives deep inside the mountains in a traditional setting where physical nature (the mountainous terrain) and human nature (love, empathy, and compassion) contribute to the growth of Okja. The Mirando Corporation, on the other hand, was built by a cruel businessman, Lucy Mirando's grandfather. Lucy lives in the concrete jungle of Manhattan where life is complicated by the obsession of consumption.

Okja was part of a humanizing project spin-doctored by the heartless Mirando Corporation with the evil twins Lucy and Nancy Mirando at the helm. Their paid zoologist runs a series of TV programs on the growth of the ten piglets that were once distributed among farmers across the world.