



BOHEMIANS REMINDS THE METAPHORICAL PHRASE, JUDGING THE BOOK BY ITS COVER: A SHORT FICTION BY GEORGE SAUNDERS FROM THE BOOK IN PERSUASION NATION

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Abstract: The paper delineates the interpretations made by the people of a particular person immediately without analyzing the cause is equal to outraging an individual. The perspectives vary from person to person, what a person sees in an individual, acknowledges his or her opinions. The error lies in the fact, that there is no further analysis or says observations. Yes! Sometimes a person is astonished by discovering the actual nature of that individual at the end. Similarly, the short story *Bohemians* from the book *In Persuasion Nation*. The boy has his own opinions towards the two old polish ladies; the widows who have lost their husbands due to Eastern European pogrom (persecution). Later, the boy recognized his faulty perception that he was building up towards those ladies living in an urban house. Likewise, an English idiom 'not to judge outwardly, may it be a person or a thing, a man may seem very stout and not very noticeable, but you never know, he is the most powerful person in his area and vice versa. As the narrator had aggregated his point Mrs. Poltoi just by acknowledging her behavior outwardly.

Index Terms – Metaphor, Perception, Behaviour, Change, Mrs. Poltoi.

INTRODUCTION

Bohemians is the eleventh story from the book *In Persuasion Nation* by George Saunders. Saunders is an American writer, popularly known for his several awards, the Man Booker prize for his novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*, which was his debut. The short story *Bohemians* reminds a reader about an English idiom, “Don’t judge the book by its cover”. (Defoe, 2022) Mr. Tulliver first says this line during the discussion about *The History of the Devil*, by Daniel Defoe. The boy aka narrator in this fiction categorizes the personality of the ladies through their outward behavior and the way he is treated by those widows. Many a time a person falls into an unfavorable notion, by judging an individual erroneously. The boy, later on, changes his “sympathies” (Louize, 2015) after learning about them. The ladies mentioned from the very beginning are the two widows, who lost their husbands during some kind of persecution in the European states. They have been living alone since then, and both women are typically different from each other and they are the new neighbors of the narrator. They are called 'Bohemians' since the narrator's dad calls 'bohemians' to anyone who is white and has an accent. Bohemia is located in European Union, though today Bohemia is called the Czech Republic yet the former is more popular than the latter. Mrs. Poltoi is a reserved woman and Mrs. Hopanlitski, who is also known as Mrs. H, is opposite to the other lady. Mrs. H is open-minded and comfortable interacting with people around her in the locality.

The perception

Mrs. Poltoi wore only black, she is harsh and claustrophobic and loved food, since she consistently stares at others' food until it enters their mouth. It sounds and seems hilarious but that's what the boy has got to say about the woman. Not only this, there are several to discuss, and because of typical thoughts, and annoying behavior, she has judged accordingly as the person observes outwardly. It's a human tendency, which is very natural in acknowledging a human being and categorizing them into various lists of sections that are created already in the mind. For instance, the catholic church, according to Mrs. Poltoi, is a jeweled concubine, "drinking the blood of the poor" (Saunders, 2004). Moreover, the thoughts are not normal, therefore it's quite an exceptional condition to think about Mrs. Poltoi as the boy thinks. Well, once he was playing in the front yard and the ball rolled over to Mrs. Poltoi's property, she captured and flung into her backyard, heaving into the quarry. This one act of Mrs. Poltoi compelled the boy to immediately analyze her nature and the behavior, which he disliked and gradually began to have prejudice towards her.

On the other side, Mrs. H. is a slim and cheerful woman who talks very politely and is also friendly. The boy along with his family started getting in touch and talking about various topics in the evening times. Her English and accent were flat and quite clear which relatively matched them. Therefore, it was much easier to get along together. The narrator adds on, that Mrs. H was an optimistic human being and frequently cracked some humor elements in between the conversations. She insanely talks about her imagination, she confesses that at times, she really "desires to be hit by a car, to return one day as a proper raccoon and attack her class brothers. To let them suffer from many rabies" (2004). In addition, after she completes her talks about all around the areas, the fact should not be denied that at the end she also teaches the boy not to harm anybody in life or harm himself. The concern about upbringing is distinct in her words and her behavior. Anyone at the first meet with Mrs. H would probably like and appreciate her nature. The boy and his family enjoy Mrs. H's company for talks, food, time, and everything. Hence, it is not necessary to explain further, about his gratefulness towards Mrs. H. Mrs. Hopanlitski's poise and dexterity made the boy loath Mrs. Poltoi. Mrs. H's utmost elegance overshadowed the whatsoever goodness resides on Mrs. Poltoi. Thus, immediate evaluation of someone or something is always an unfavorable idea because it has and it will always fall into adversity.

This reminds of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*; Elizabeth Bennet interprets Darcy as a proud and arrogant person at her first meeting. Darcy's introvertness portrayed his nature negatively, which highly affected the protagonist, Eliza. Furthermore, Elizabeth's atrocity towards Darcy, considering him arrogant, Darcy, on the other hand, interprets her as imperious and figuring out that she has a cold shoulder. The group of friends was planning to organize a party, kind of a homo party all very excited for the presence of girls in the party, the narrator, Raccoon, Eddie, Art and many more to join. The scarcity of money was the main reason for their declining excitement, especially for the dumplings. According to the plan they had to knock door to door in the locality for the contribution. When they happen to encounter Mrs. Poltoi, she had her drama. Eddie rang the bell of her door, on her appearance, he uttered a word 'contribution' she asked, "for what, the reply was 'for him'. Her response, 'to what end', the same response from the other side. 'For contribution'. Mrs. Poltoi asked him to leave the porch." (2004). Eddie started sitting on the couch since something clicked in his mind that while anybody goes around asking for a contribution from door to door the person should sit for a while might be for a kind of discussion. Poor Eddie, not seated yet, Mrs. Poltoi flung him back, pushing with her hands, which was not a good sign, and he had a very cold welcome. As per the consequence, he got rolled down to the steps losing his balance. Eventually, his head too got banged with an iron banister and he left bleeding.

The change

Mrs. Poltoi did not stop here, she added "live and also let others be at peace" (2004) which was utterly rude and mean. After a while, Eddie's father enquired about the event that just happened, if this was treatment to be given who knocks on the door. The reply was insane, explaining that she refused the entry to the boy, yet he tried pushing himself inside the house. Though his father urges that Eddie, his son has never harmed anybody in his life and can never do so. Mrs. Poltoi insists on him to leave or she would possibly call the police. Such behaviors and words poured from the lady made everyone interpret that she was mean and impolite. This group

of friends used to spend time on the porch of Mrs. H. cookies and also asserted them for forgiveness explaining the act of Mrs. Poltoi. She clarified the matter by sharing, that whatever took place, Mrs. Poltoi should not be blamed entirely. In addition, she has a small heart, they both (Mrs. H and Mrs. Poltoi) have gone through a hell of a lot of things in life, which had broadened her heart into crude and harshness. She had seen the city being bombed, strikes, the whole city was furious, therefore, she has seen the black night. The next morning, the view of scorched bodies lying on the street and few people seriously injured with blisters and burns, who were begging for mercy. Moreover, one of the bodies caught a grip on her ankle, it was none other than her father's friend.

In reality, the person's behavior has some or the other reason to be in the way he/she is. The immediate judgment can lead to a fatal ending, there will be always a failure in mutual understanding from either side. This is one of the major reasons for misunderstandings in life. Those days, at that moment Mrs. H was given shelter at Mrs. Poltoi's house during the time of crisis. The narrator at the end settles his mind with the change of thoughts towards Mrs. Poltoi, with regards to all that he had learned about the lady. Besides, whatever kind of behavior that was seen in Mrs. Poltoi, she is completely different inwardly. She fakes to the world that she is a very coarse and boorish type of woman, but from inside she is as soft as a little girl. All that is seen in her, negative or positive, is due to her bitter experiences. The present will surprise any reader, since now the entire change in Mrs. Poltoi, compels everyone to know and understand who Mrs. Poltoi is, it's all because people out there began understanding her far better. The boy now illustrates, that Mrs. Poltoi, makes sausage, pancakes, and other snacks; and they ate like pigs, stomachs full. She prepared all things ready before he returns from school. She also began to take keen care of him by changing his bedsheets and spoke very politely. It became quite easy now for the neighbors to get along. Saunders expects his readers to experience his works rather than a mere reading. "Saunders played with the reader's inherent tendency to judge people whether they deserve to be treated nicely, fairly, or negatively" (Louize, 2015). Psychologically, it also meant to give another chance to the people whom you come across in life anytime anywhere, no wonder the person might be waiting for a second opportunity, without any further prognostication.

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