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The Barber’s Unhappiness

‘The Barber’s Unhappiness’ is a fiction story by George Saunders, in which he has described the tale of an unmarried middle-aged barber, finding his love interest. It is quite evident from the name of the story that it talks about the unhappy life of the barber; however, the author has also discussed the romance and standards of the general public in terms of marriage. The story is an attempt by the author to shun the materialistic, as well as unrealistic relationship standards of the society, as well as the attitude of the public towards the less attractive and charming people like the barber. The story may have been an attempt to shed light on the wrong standards of the society; however, it also uncovers the tale of Mickey, the barber, to achieve his happiness after finding a loyal and reliable partner.

The barber's unhappiness describes the tale of unhappiness of Mickey, who is a single middle-aged barber, living with his dominating mother. The barber is not so handsome, as well as does not have quite appreciated profession. His mother ensured that he does not get married by always discouraging him and lot letting him get involved with any girl. Moreover, due to his own skeptical view, he was unable to approach any girl. However, he wished to meet his dream girl and spend quality time with her in Mexico. He used to stare at the other women, which the author has described in the story by saying that “Mornings the barber left his stylists inside and sat out front of his shop, drinking coffee and ogling every woman in sight (p. 137).” He used to spend all of his time at his shop, as his mother kept a strict eye on him and did not let him move. Once he got the chance of attending a dinner party, where he could get the chance of meeting the pretty girls, however, his mother kept him engaged, by asking him to make the dinner for her and did not let him go. The author described the scene in words, “When he said he was running late, she said never mind in a tone that made it clear she was going to accidentally on purpose burn herself again while ostensibly making her own omelette. So he made the omelette (p. 139).” His mother did not want him to get married, therefore, used such tactics to keep him busy at home. The barber could not go on that meeting; however, he was again invited to another such meetup, and finally succeeded in attending that. There he met with a girl who was going on a date with some other guy. The guy insulted him by saying that she was not according to his standards and he did not like the women who were fat and were not attractive. Mickey desired to become close to her, however, could not dare to do so. At one incident, he was mocked by his uncle to get married to any old age woman, who consented to marry him; otherwise he would stay single his whole life. This prompted him to make the advancement, and he was able to get the attention of that girl. When she visited his shop, he became nervous, and the author described his thoughts by mentioning, “Did she like the shop? He took big bold steps with his head thrown back so he’d look happy. Happy and strong, with all his toes. With all his toes, in the prime of his life (p. 169).”

Saunders has shed light on the typical standards of the society in terms of developing the relationships. He has highlighted that the bodies of women are objectified and the men show their interest only in those women who are attractive. The author has also provided some insight into the thoughts o the men who think that fat women are not attractive and does not deserve to get the attention of the handsome and rich men. On the other hand, attractive women are not ready to accept the less popular, handsome and well-established men. Both of the genders try to find all the qualities in their prospective partner and do not hesitate from rejecting the individual, who does not fit on their scale of popularity, and well-established status. The author has shed light on another sick mentality of the modern generation, which is developing relationships for the sake of fun and entertainment and not on the basis of love and affection of each other. He has presented the examples in his story, where people made fun of each other and tried to undermine each other in front of other people, without caring about the emotions of the other person (Saunders).

The different thing about the story is that Mickey did not think like the other members of society. He wanted to get married and settled in his life. However, he could also not ignore the efforts of his mother, even when he knew that she was just putting an act to stop him. He also got sick of the mocking of his uncle, who thought that he was also trying to find some attractive girl and was unable to do so, due to his profession. He finally met Garry and realized the fact that she was perfect for him, which motivated him to make the advancements, without being too cautious of his status and age. The author has tried to show that the standard of developing the relationship should be the attraction and love between two people and not just the physical appearance and social status of each other. After spending a major part of his life, without having any love relationship, Mickey was able to accept the fact that he does not need to follow the typical and unrealistic standards of the society and could win the heart of some lady, due to his attitude towards her and he became successful in that as well. He was able to become happy as Garry approved his feelings towards her, as well as reciprocated them. The author mentioned the ending in the words, “ Here I am," she said, with a shy, pretty smile. "I'm so glad you are," he said, and bent to unlock the door of the shop (p. 174).” They were able to find their own happiness, without caring about the typical standards of society (Saunders).

The story by Saunders is the perfect depiction of the wrongful and unrealistic relations standards of the people of the modern generation. He has highlighted through the story that people base their relationships on physical attraction and social status, while not giving any importance to the emotions and perception of the other person. He has presented the example of Mickey's mother, who tries to control him, as well as of Mickey, who just wanted to find love and peace in life. Due to his pure intentions and true feelings, he was able to win the heart of the lady he liked, through which the author tried to present the message that love does not depend on physical appearance or social status.

Work Cited

Saunders, George. *Pastoralia*. A&C Black, 2000:135-174.