‘***The Girl Who Can’ by- Ama Ata Aidoo***

1. What is the setting of the short story, ‘The Girl Who Can’?

Ans. Adjoa was born in Hasodzi, it is a very big village in the central region of the country, Ghana. When all of Africa is choking under a drought, Hasodzi lies in a district known for its good soil.

1. In which year the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ was published?

Ans. 1997

1. Who is the narrator of the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’?

Ans. Adjoa

1. In which anthology the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ was published?

Ans. ‘The Girl Who Can and Other Stories’.

1. In which year Ama Ata Aidoo was born?

Ans. 23rd March, 1942.

1. In what name Nana calls Maami in the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’?

Ans. Kaya

1. Name the village where Adjoa was born?

Ans. Hasodzi

1. How many generation does the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ represent?

Ans. Three generations.

1. How long distance of Adjoa’s school from her village?

Ans. Five kilometers.

1. How many years old Adjoa is?

Ans. Seven years old.

1. “School for girl is waste of time” who said this?

Ans. Nana.

1. What is the nationality of Ama Ata Aidoo?

Ans. Ghana.

1. Name the man from whom did Nana bring iron to press Adjoa’s school uniform?

Ans. Mr. Mensah’s house.

1. What physical problem did Adjoa has?

Ans. Adjoa had thin legs.

1. In which section Adjoa was selected in the district sports?

Ans. In the junior section.

1. What did Adjoa win in the district sports competition?

Ans. Adjoa won the cup for the best all round junior athlete.

1. Why was school a waste of time for women according to Nana?

Ans.- Women are meant only to create a family and take care of the family. Education is not important. African countries were under the colonial rulr for a long time and the colonizers did not take any effective step for their education. So after colonization, the women especially were stuck to their earlier condition.

1. What did Nana tell after Adjoa won the cup?

Ans. Nana told that thin legs also be useful, they can run and win the cup.

1. **Discuss how the story Adjoa resonates with the struggles of the emancipation of women of the contemporary society? Give well reasoned answer with special reference to** ‘**The Girl Who Can’ by Ama Ata Aidoo.**

**Or,**

**Discuss the significance of the title of the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ by Ama Ata Aidoo**.

**Ans.** Emancipation begins at an individual level. When a hundred women liberate themselves by doing their part, they move onto a further level. At this new level of solidarity, they bring a thousand different idiosyncratic definitions of “perfect” women at the table. But if only women’s emancipation was as easy as it seems as the history of men’s opposition to women’s emancipation is more interesting than the history of emancipation itself. The significance of the title of "Girl" is that it reflects the story's theme of femaleness in a generic way.

Little Adjoa is an ambitious girl, like any other girl of her age who has dreams and aspirations of her own and truly believes that anything is possible. She still isn’t introduced to the real atrocities of the world and thinks of it as a happy and safe place. In Adjoa, is a glimpse of every other girl child who still isn’t riddled with the ugly face of truth. In Adjoa, I see a part of me, a part which still believes that persistence can break barriers. Then comes Maami, her mother who likes every other parent wants the best for her child and wants that her daughters soar high on success and earns a respectful position in this society. In Maami, I see a glimpse of my mother and every other mother in this world who still wants to give her daughter what she was denied. Now behold the old Nana. Nana, who has lived all her life according to the society’s perspective and it is safe to assume that Nana could’ve herself been a victim of indifference and enormities. Nana represents the real face of this patriarchal society who is hellbent on degrading a woman and denying her self-worth. You would ask me how Nana becomes an embodiment of patriarchal society when she is a woman. Allow me to tell you how. The continued oppression of women can as well be worsened by some other women who use women's oppression to climb the social ladder. Nana constantly disputes and debates with Adjoa’s mother regarding Adjoa’s spindly legs. Our dear little protagonist has thin legs that have no thick muscles on them and neither does she have thick and solid hips. Nana is skeptical about the girl’s future because of this. It is imperative to note that solid hips and thick legs exhibit biological signs of robustness which according to Nana promise fertility and strength. For Nana, and, for the entire society, the definition of a perfect and powerful woman is one who can bear children and be a perfect wife and mother.

Adjoa doesn’t get it. She finds it hard to understand how can someone’s body set limits on who they can be and cannot be. Adjoa does not feel insecure rather she is inquisitive and tries to find out whether what Nana believes is true or not. Her confusion reflects every woman’s dilemma of how her worth is reduced to certain biological factors and beauty standards. Also, Nana’s other concern is Adjoa’s father. Often than not, a woman’s relationship with a man is criticized and even abhorred by some. Her ability to find happiness on her own is riddled with doubts and frowned upon. Adjoa’s mother is made to feel guilty by her mother regarding her husband. Nana always gets the upper hand and Adjoa’s mother is not able to voice her concerns.

But Adjoa is a girl of grit and spirit. Her one real love is her love for running. Adjoa is selected by her school for running at the district games. She finally runs. And she runs like never before and wins a cup. It is Adjoa’s passion for running that eventually reconnects her with Nana. Nana although initially is skeptical of her ability to run, finally finds herself admiring her granddaughter. Although she doesn’t show it, on the inside Nana has found peace in Adjoa’s achievements. She has found a piece of what was missing in her own life, the satisfaction of being known. The satisfaction that is her self-worth often comes from persistence.

Gender elitism stands as the first and foremost problem to women’s liberation and there’s no more accurate description of this than Virginia Woolf’s quote. Why is it that powerful man is seen as some sort of leader yet a powerful woman is seen as a variation, as an oddity? We follow the same path yet; a male is endowed with much more respect and a woman is not. Does a set of different genitals bother society so much? Well in that case the ultimate answer lies with a much higher power, for it is responsible for such a variation. But even in today's day and age, men are still bristling with half knowledge. They still fail to understand the simple needs of a woman. I believe that if women were to be given the reins of the administration and the power that men possess today, half the world would not face the atrocities they face today. But since it remains a hypothetical situation, all we can hope for is a reawakening or rekindling of men’s consciousness who have never faced the wrongdoings that women have to go through.

Often than not, the economic status of women coincides with her status of liberation. A woman with an underdeveloped economic status is still seen as unliberated. It is imperative to note that emancipation does not translate as just economic. It is political, social, and even at a mental and spiritual level. Maybe money can act as a liberation symbol at the professional front but it can never be substituted for all the toiling women have to undergo at their own houses. Nana always thought that a woman’s true ambition should be to rear children, which shows how women are again degraded and only thought of as child bearers. As if having an identity apart from that of mother and wife is an anomaly. You could liberate a woman at her work front, which in itself is seldom given a thought by men, but how will you liberate her from her slavery to the hearth. How will you liberate her from her slavery to the household and kitchen which time and again is enforced on her?

Most of us here do not have the answer to that. We are not here to lay a discourse on how a woman is supposed to live her life. Liberation and emancipation for different women mean different things. And let her have freedom, whichever way she wants to. Let her liberate herself using whichever medium she wants to. Use your voice, and don’t be discouraged when people laugh at you, just like Adjoa was never heard initially but eventually earned her rightful place through persistence

1. **Discuss the major themes of the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ by Ama Ata Aidoo.**

**Or,**

**“Generation conflict is the main theme of the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’. Do you agree, give well justified answer.**

**Ans.** In the short story ‘The Girl Who Can’ by Ama Ata Aidoo ,we find the theme of conflict, innocence, liberty, insecurity, family-connection and pride. It is adopted from her collection of the same name and the story is narrated in the first person by a young seven years old girl. At the end of the short story, we, the readers realise that the writer, Aidoo perhaps is going to explore the theme of conflict.

Nana and Maami often make the argument about two things. The narrator’s skinny legs and the narrator’s father incapability. It is as if Nana has the strong sense of dislike towards Maami when it happens. She does not agree with the fact that the narrator will have the ability to be the mother of children because of her thin legs and those legs will not support the hips that Nana believes are needed for a woman to carry a child.

This may be significant because in various ways Nana may not only criticize the narrator but she might also be criticizing Maami and blaming her for the fact that the narrator as well as the protagonist has such skinny legs. As to Nana’s judgement on the narrator’s father, we, the readers can only think that again Nana is criticizing Maami for her choice of husband. It may convey some readers to suggest that there is a conflict between both Nana and Maami and in this created conflict, Nana always acquires the upper hand possibly due to the insecurities that Maami may feel due to the criticism she gets from Nana.

It is also interesting to observe that the narrator herself does not feel insecure about how her legs look rather she is more inquisitive as to whether or not she will be able to have children. Even though she will have to grow up sufficiently and is only seven years of age. The narrator’s curiosity may be important as it suggests that she is still somewhat innocent as one would expect a seven years old child to be. It is also noticeable that at times the narrator says things which are deemed inappropriate by Nana. Again this may suggest that the narrator is innocent and is merely trying to understand the world around her.

It is also interesting that the narrator is so modest about her achievements when it comes to running. It is as though her abilities in running are normal for the narrator. She doesn’t react anything that Nana says about her legs by telling Nana that she has legs that are suitable for running and that she is proud of herself. If anything the narrator again acts modestly, it is both Nana and Maami who consider what the narrator has done to be an achievement and something in which they are proud of the narrator.

The narrator’s running also connects her with Nana. Who walks to school with the narrator and carries the winning cup home on her back. From going to criticize the narrator Nana is now full of pride. It is as though the narrator has fulfilled her potential without the hindrance of Nana’s traditional beliefs when it comes to the quality of a girl or woman’s legs. If anything the narrator’s abilities when it comes to run free the narrator from the traditional outlook that Nana has when it comes to the abilities of a woman to give birth.

This might be important as Aidoo wants to suggest that the narrator may not necessarily carry on the traditions that Nana has lived her life by. With freedom comes choices and the narrator may choose later on in life to take a different path to Nana and Maami. She is after all physically different in Nana’s eyes so it would not be too much to suggest that mentally the narrator might also be different to Nana and Maami. What is also interesting about the story is the fact that the only real freedom that the narrator has comes with her running and as mentioned the narrator is modest about her abilities. She does not consider herself to be more important than others. Just because she keeps winning races. If anything the narrator has an ability which the reader is left hoping is nurtured by Nana and Maami. That both women continue to be proud of the narrator’s achievements and that they might accept that the narrator’s life may turn out differently to how their life has turned out. It is as though the narrator has not only freedom and choices but she may be independent too, even if she is still a very young girl.

Despite all the criticism that is thrown in the narrator’s direction none of it sticks to the narrator. She may very well continue her life focusing on her running and the fact that she has the long, skinny legs of a runner. Something that is beneficial to the narrator and as such leaves the reader left with a sense of optimism for the narrator’s future. The narrator has choices that the other two important members of the family may never have had.

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