

Page Number: 100

Reading With Insight

1. The two accounts that you read above are based in two distant cultures. What is the commonality of theme found in both of them?

Answer.

Both autobiographical passages, based on two different cultures, represent the lives of two ladies from marginalized communities who look back at their childhood and think about their relationship with mainstream culture. 'Memories of childhood' plays autobiographical scenes by two women from culturally marginalized regions in two separate cultures of the world. The thread of commonality that appears in both stories is the feeling of sadness and insult felt by both the women of marginalized societies. One highlights the evil practice of racial prejudice, while the other talks about the hierarchical Indian caste system and untouchability. The first account is by an American Indian woman. The second account is characterized by a contemporary Tamil Dalit writer. The mentioned women relate to two different cultures. Pain and sorrow are experienced by both women in their early life. Native Indians don't get importance and respect for dignity in America. They are obliged to follow their tradition, whims, and trades. The poor Indian lady was pulled out and tied to a chair, and her long and dark hair was shingled. Bama, on the other hand, awakened early to the dehumanization of having been born in a community of untouchables and hence directed all her power into fighting the prejudice of such a system. Both of them fight and protest against injustice and discrimination.

2. It may take a long time for oppression to be resisted, but the seeds of rebellion are sowed early in life. Do you agree that injustice in any form cannot escape being noticed, even by children?

Answer.

Yes, indeed, injustice in any form can't escape being noticed, even by children. The world is full of inequality. While the adults have grown used to this, the innocence of childhood does not understand hate and prejudice. Innocent-looking children have their knowledge of the world and its people. In the case of the two extracts given in Memories of Childhood, this is evident.

Zitkala-Sa understood as soon as she entered the school run by the whites that they meant to transform her into a distinct person from what she had been before. In the story 'The Cutting of my Long Hair', the author describes the emotional torture she has to go through because she is discriminated against based on her race. She wants to have long and heavy hair, it is the culture of society. Only cowards have shingled hair among them. She struggles and says she is defeated.

In the other extract, "We too are human beings", the writer addresses how she and her community is neglected by society under the appearance of untouchability. Bama has a first-hand experience of untouchability in India. The people of high castes don't think of the low castes even as human beings. She had seen an elder conquered by a landlord on the street and she observed how even the elders in her society are disrespected and despised.

3. Bama's experience is that of a victim of the caste system. What kind of discrimination does Zitkala-Sa's experience depict? What are their responses to their respective situations?

Answer.

While Bama was subjected to untouchability and caste discrimination, Zitkala-Sa was a victim of racial prejudice. Zitkala-Sa was packed off to a European missionary school where, being a local tribal, she was looked down upon. Bama and Zitkala-Sa highlight the humiliation and exploitation of the defeated people. They write about women from marginalized societies. Zitkala-Sa belongs to the community of native Americans. She is expelled from her community and separated from its culture. She feels robbed of her name and dignity. The poor girl struggles till she is defeated.

On the other hand, Bama, who saw the violation of untouchability, decided to blur the difference between castes with the knowledge of education. The people who belong to a low caste have to fight against the higher caste. She is motivated by the terms of her elder sibling, now works hard, and stands first in the class. Both Zitkala-Sa and Bama fought with courage against the humiliation they were subjected to.

