

Survival: short story and homeward bound



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When we talk about the “ theme of survival” in literature, we should not forget the contribution of Margaret Atwood for the Canadian identity.

Margaret Atwood had written a literary criticism book named ‘ Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature’. According to her theories, Margaret Atwood considers Canadian Literature as the expression of Canadian identity. According to this literature, Canadian identity has been defined by a fear of nature, by settler history and by unquestioned adherence to the community. In general, the term ‘ survive’ is defined as ‘ continued living or existing’.

So ‘ survival’ would simply mean the act of continuing to live or exist. ‘ Survival’ and the fight for it has been the struggle of human kind since the beginning of time. Each person lives through their own personal struggle. ‘ Survival’ could also mean surviving in society, physically surviving or even spiritually surviving. Similarly the theme of survival is apparent in the following extracts “ Adarsh”, “ Homeward Bound”, “ Guavas and Khandaan” and “ Getting rid of it”. The theme of survival is represented in “ Adarsh”, a short story by a Mauritian author Mr Videsh Somanah Achadoo. “ Adarsh” is a young boy of aged sixteen.

He is in love with a girl of same age named Antoinette. One day Antoinette told him that she was asked out by a rich guy of 21 years named Ricardo Wilson. Adarsh got drunk with a group of elder boys. There, he saw Richard Wilson and fought with him out of jealousy. In this short story the protagonist wants to survive his past “ Oh, how he wished he could go back in time, back to nine o’clock yesterday evening. ” Adarsh wants to go back yesterday to rectify his bad deeds. He would have chosen to go with Antoinette rather

than staying with that group of elder boys, drinking beer and mocking at him.

In fact Adarsh wanted to go with Antoinette but as he was trying to prove that he is a matured guy, he has been trapped with those elder boys. Adarsh has been characterised as the “ Cite LaChaux drunkards. ” After getting conscious of what he has done, he started to think about those drunkards of Cite LaChaux. He thought that if they had ever realised or survived their mistakes but even though they have realized they would not be able to do anything as no one can go back in their past “ There would have been a time – a moment long ago in each of their lives – when if they have acted differently they would have gone on being ordinary people.

He wondered if they have ever thought about that. It would hurt to think about it, because you cannot ever go back. Maybe they drank so that they would not think about it, so that they could not. ” In this short story, it seemed that the main type of survival is simply how Adarsh learnt to cope with his mistakes “ No one knows me and no one owns me. I’m me that’s all, and as from now I’ll be the best! ” “ Homeward Bound” written by Mira V. Pillay also demonstrates the theme of survival. In this short story, distance plays a very important role.

The author and her husband Anil are settled in England since fifteen years “ Not that they’ve died, although there’ve quite a few deaths in the fifteen years that Anil has lived here, here in England. ” In this story we also have a reflect of the Mauritian society. It shows how the death is announced to someone in far away countries “ Tears don’t trickle so readily when a death

occurs far away. ” The idea of distance shows how the author and her husband survived their life. Going back home was for Anil an emotional thing as well as a happy moment. The narrator is very ironic.

She showed to us the true Mauritian psyche. As when going back home, how the relatives will welcome them, how the relatives will try to give them the best things etc. And also how her husband Anil still have this Mauritian psyche even he was far away home for fifteen years “ He hunched up his shoulders to shrug off his tension, relieved to have cleared part of the coast, but there was more embarrassment in store when our luggage passed the security checks and the custom man plucked soft toys, plastic lorries, bottles of aftershave and what appeared like fifteen millions pairs of socks from our bags.

The theme of survival is present in “ Guavas and Khandaan”. This short story is from a Mauritian extract written by ‘ Shawkat M. Toorawa’. In this story, we experience the theme of survival with the help of Rafik, his father and Zubayr. For Rafik and his father the theme of survival lies in their generation gap. Rafik’s father has chosen a decent boy for her daughter Razia from a good family “ He’s from a good family. ” The latter wants to have the confirmation of the boy’s “ Khandaan” from Rafik.

Rafik’s point of view is that we should not always look at someone’s ancestral relations to come for a conclusion. We should always look at the “ Khandaan’s” present situation. But Rafik’s father explained that if someone has commit a mistake in the past that does not mean the entire “ Khandaan” is to be blamed “ Just because one person does something stupid doesn’t

change the fact that the person is from a good family. ” In this short story there is another character called Zubayr. Zubayr also called Zoob is the best friend of Rafik.

He is doing his PhD at a foreign university. He is in love with Rafik’s sister Razia. But he did not tell anything to anyone. Here we get the theme of survival by Zubayr that is how Zubayr has survived his love. Also we get to know for how long he has been loving Razia “ for five years, three months and three days. ” The parents of Razia has accepted this alliance as it’s better to let their daughter married to someone known than unknown. In Lindsey Collen’s “ Getting rid of it”, the character Jumila is trying to survive society out in Mauritius. She is a feminist.

She narrates how her boss Liz killed herself due to her loneliness. Liz is not satisfied with her marital life. “ And if only he had married someone else. ” Although Liz has two children, she is lonely as her two children study abroad “ They’re at university abroad”. This incident shows the Mauritian reality. They have no time to organize ideas. They just commit suicide for no reason. Secondly the theme of survival lies in how the three friends try to break silence. They want to show in public the mistreatment done to women “ Let’s make this public. We can’t let this go on.

Too much silence is a bad thing. ” They are against abortion. Some people carried foetus in plastic bag. To make this issue become public Sadna decides to put the foetus on the counter at the Line Barracks and get them arrested. They choose Jumila to do that job. But before going to Line Barracks they start to realize that if they are arrested what will happen to

their family and children. Therefore they decide to do a meeting before doing this kind of thing “ The three women had to get a meeting. ” But they could get any privacy as people were around them.

This shows that the island living realism does not allow privacy. “ Survival” is remaining alive. Sadna is trying to survive after the atrocity done by her boss’s husband Cyril. Cyril imprisoned his wife in the house and not let her go anywhere. One day Sadna and Rita, the boss, went out as Cyril was in Rodrigues with the PM. After Cyril has learnt about these things he tied up his wife, beat her and in front of her raped Sadna. Rita blamed herself for Sadna’s condition and she asked Sadna to sue her husband “ Then you sue him. Surviving his mistakes is really difficult to face, especially alone. In “ Adarsh”, the protagonist showed how he survived his mistakes and continued to live his life normally. Also, we came across the theme of survival in the short stories “ Homeward Bound, Guavas and Khandaan and Getting rid of it”. Survival is remaining alive. When analyzing these short stories we come to a conclusion that people survive through many atrocities. Some people tried to survive by learning their mistakes done in the past.