

Thematic analysis of a long way gone and sold



In many parts of the world, child exploitation is an everyday activity that causes many children to be taken away from their families and friends. Child exploitation occurs mostly in areas such as Asia and Africa, but modern authors have described its horrors for readers on all continents. In the novel *Sold* by Patricia McCormick, a young, thirteen year-old girl named Lakshmi was sold into prostitution in India due to her lack of knowledge of the outside world. In the memoir *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah, Ishmael was a twelve year-old child soldier in Sierra Leone who killed RUF rebels and plundered villages. Both Ishmael and Lakshmi faced difficulties that forced them to adapt to their violent and abusive situation in order to survive. Therefore, a theme that sustains both of the novels is that learning to adapt is necessary for survival during times of violence and abuse.

Lakshmi learns to adapt to prostitution during her times of abuse because she wanted survive; she becomes a prostitute in order to pay off her debt and she had to sleep with a large number of men. When Lakshmi was washing herself with a bucket of water, she realizes that “ no matter how often I wash and scrub and wash and scrub, I cannot seem to rinse the men from my body” (McCormick 129). Lakshmi’s body is filled with the odor of men and she realized that she is slowly adapting to prostitution for her own survival. The theme also describes Lakshmi’s adaptation into prostitution when she imagines her life as a TV remote control. At the Happiness House, Lakshmi “ pretend[s] that what goes on at night when the customers are here is not something that is happening to me. I pretend it is a TV show that I am watching from far, far away. I pretend I have a button I press to make everything go quiet” (McCormick 157). Lakshmi is pretending her life is

shown from a TV's point of view in order to cope with the abuse she receives at the brothel. Lakshmi also adapted to the unsanitary brothel and Mumtaz's cruel abuse. After living at the Happiness House for a long time, Lakshmi had "no longer notice[d] the smell of the indoor privy. And I long ago stopped feeling the blows of Mumtaz's strap" (McCormick 153). Lakshmi's senses of smell and touch had already adapted to the Mumtaz's abuse and the brothel's foul odor because she wanted to survive in the brothel. In essence, the theme of learning to adapt is necessary for survival during times of violence and abuse fits in for Lakshmi because she had to adapt to the abuses at the Happiness House.

In a similar manner, Ishmael Beah also had to learn to adapt to war violence and abuse because it was the only way he could survive. Ishmael had used drugs to order to adapt to the harsh life of being a child soldier. Ishmael had "took turns at the guarding posts around the village, smoking marijuana and sniffing brown brown... They gave me a lot of energy" (Beah 121). In order to adapt to times of war violence and abuse, Ishmael took drugs that gave him a large abundance of energy and deprived him of his feelings, which allowed Ishmael to kill enemies more easily. Ishmael also adapted to the killings of the rebels by imagining each rebel as the killer of his family. During the war, Ishmael visualize each rebels as "simply another rebel who was responsible for the death of my family, as I had come to truly believe" (Beah 125).

Ishmael adapts to times of violence by imagining each of the rebels as a person who was responsible for his family's death. Ishmael survived in the army mainly because he had adapted to the usage of guns for his own protection. The corporal had told Ishmael that "this gun is your source of

power in these times. It will protect you all you need, if you know how to use it well" (Beah 124). Ishmael used guns to kill the RUF rebels, which allowed him to adapt to the war violence and survive against many enemies.

Ultimately, the theme of learning to adapt is necessary for survival in times of violence is true for Ishmael because he adapted to drug usage and unemotional method of killings.

Sold and A Long Way Gone both articulate the theme that in order to survive, adaptation is required during times of violence and abuse. Lakshmi was sold into prostitution and she had to create methods to cope with her depression and emptiness so she could survive in the harsh adultery business. After many months at the brothel, Lakshmi's body had already adapted to the smell of men and the brothel, along with Mumtaz's cruel punishments.

Ishmael adapted to violence and abuse by joining the Sierra Leone Armed Forces Army to fight against the RUF rebels, who were the main cause of his family's death. Drugs were used to aid Ishmael to kill rebels more easily because it gave him a large abundance of energy as well as deprivation of emotions. Ishmael also practiced using guns and visualizing the rebels as people who were responsible for his family's death in order to ensure his own survival and make killing rebels more impactful upon himself. Adaptation plays an important role to ensure the survival of a person during times of violence and abuse. People who do not adapt during times of violence and abuse will usually find themselves dead or nearly dead.

Work Cited

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2007. 1-229. Print. McCormick, Patricia. *Sold*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2006. 1-263. Print.