

First They Killed My Father

- **Introduction**

First person account of Khmer Rouge unprecedented reign that turned Cambodia upside down, culturally, politically, economically and emotionally. Unique account of a child surviving the 'killing fields' period and gives her naïve perspective. Initially worrying whether her skirt is too short, emerges at the end of the book as a mature, independent woman capable beyond her years. It is a chronology of survival, a testament of endurance and a tribute to the Khmer Rouge children. Loungs childhood eyes shows how Khmer Rouge evacuated cities when they came to power and forced entire populations to live out their Agrarian ideology. The events in the text illustrate the impact of the regimes practices and policies on the individual and the society. Her principle was to document the lengths she and her family went in order to survive, to provide a memorial to her lost relatives and an indictment of the murderous Pol Pot regime by exposing the hypocrisy of its ideological claims.

Khmer Rouge period is not generally regarded as war but a regime so repressive that virtually no-one could oppose it with arms.

- **Ung family in trouble**

Ung family epitomises everything the Khmer Rouge seek to destroy. Pa is a member of the Lon Nol army and speak French, Ma is Chinese and they are educated middle class and they are Urban. Conscripted as a major into the new government of General Lon Nol, her father was the incarnation of all the Khmer Rouge wanted to obliterate. Posing as peasants, Loungs family moves from village to village, barely surviving on meagre rations. When those become scarce, they catch beetles, crickets etc, *"In Phnom Penh, I would have thrown up if someone told me I would have to eat those things. Now, when the only alternative is to starve, I fight others for a dead animal lying in the road. Surviving for another day has become the most important thing for me."*

While presenting the historical record of the Khmer Rouge reign, Loung reveals her own character as the events in the text are presented chronologically. The traumatic events are etched in the victims mind, "this is Cambodia as a child remembers it" Chronology allows us to see how the Ung members are forced to mature rapidly, develop personally, grow stronger and more resilient psychologically. It also allows us to see her experiences and see how she progressively grows to understand the Khmer Rouge.

- Pa explains Cambodian contemporary history to the boys
- We gain information of regime when family arrive at Ro Leap
- Khmer Rouge obsession with Young child soldiers

Loneliness and Isolation

It is ironic that the Khmer Rouge boasts a world of collective living where Loung and her family live in isolation. There is a parallel in that as the people are forced in herds, they are also forced into themselves. Loung discovers loneliness for the first time. She presents herself as a loud, difficult, attention seeking girl with few cares. Loung allows us to witness how her values change from the materialistic self-centred child to one who grows to appreciate sacrifice, her father's wisdom, her own inner strength and to care for others. Despite a tradition where she had „learnt to be silent with [her] emotions, Loung is explicit in describing her physical responses, reactions and fears. In order to survive, she had to hide her identity, her education, her former life of privilege, “To talk is to bring danger to the family. At five years old, I am beginning to know what loneliness feels like, silent and alone and suspecting that everyone wants to hurt me.”

- I feel like I have to vomit
- My heart pounds quickly against my chest
- A smell so putrid that my stomach coils
- Dark thunderous, powerful hatred rises in me as I scream

Silence

The secrecy and silence employed by the Ung family become paramount in their survival, whilst rendering the previously loud and assertive Loung voiceless, “We have all learnt to be silent with our emotions.” Their freedom to speak is severely hampered as in order to survive, all knowledge of their past lives is not to surface, “I cannot mention the food I wish to eat, the movies I have seen, or the cycle I have ridden.” Loung recognises from the outset that her main contribution to the family's survival is to remain silent. Part of the decision to remain silent is the fact that she is “afraid to speak”. The foster family internalise this fear and steer clear of the Ung's who in turn, “dare not ask them questions”. There is no spirit of comradeship inside the camps where everyone is too suspicious of each other. She is “silent and alone and suspecting that everyone wants to hurt me”. Secrecy is vital to mask the fact they are urban, educated, middle-class Chinese-Cambodians and the Pa was previously enlisted in the Lon Nol army. To maintain secrecy the family moves several times in order to prevent them from being found out and killed. Although they are not usually prone to showing emotion during the Khmer Rouge period, this is accentuated in an emotional outpouring, “She [Keav] knows she cannot show her emotion, or the supervisor will think she is weak and not worth keeping alive.” Each and every member of the Ung family sacrifices a part of them but the fact that they are rendered voiceless plays a pivotal role in the emotional trauma they will face.

Loung's quietening down represents the Khmer Rouge's power to claim self-advocacy and autonomy. Loung, temporarily silenced, reclaimed her voice. Loung does not recount to her family members, her experiences under the Khmer Rouge as, “children are not asked for opinions, feelings, or what they individually endure”

Fear and hatred

For such a young age, Loung experiences more fear than most people would in a lifetime. She first fears threats to herself during the evacuation when her blissful life is turned upside down, “*gone is the air of mystery, now I am simply afraid*”. Loung cannot go to school, play with friends and celebrate birthdays while Kim, “knows he has to endure cruelty to feed his family”. Most children would have no knowledge of what empowers them, and they are more likely to be scared of nightmares or of that of their own hatred. Through experiencing hatred, Loung discovers in herself, the desire to kill. It is her anger and desire for revenge which play a pivotal role in her survival, “I stay more and more to myself”. Loungs values, concerns and priorities change considerably. She demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of consequences and authority. A significant marker of Loungs rapid maturity is marked by her desire to kill. This desire, mainly to “kill Pol Pot” is perpetuated through the Khmer rouge. Loung is catapulted into a bizarre world created by the Khmer Rouge where she learns the values of lying, cheating, stealing and understanding guilt and sacrifice.

While her parents seem to be aware of the political danger after the evacuation of Phnom Penh, Loung’s fear grows as the war progresses. From being, “riddled with fear” as they leave the city, Loungs terror depends with the magnitude of what she sees is happening around her, which becomes transmuted into rage and hatred. As her family is constants on the run from an enemy who is always present, having to watch who they befriends or confide in, while being worked strenuously on starvation rations, emotions of resentments of a sense of injustice can be all consuming.

Besides the day-to-day horrors, her fears are often expressed by the way of dreams or nightmares where she sees, “ghosts and monsters coming to kill me”. She wants to cut herself open to let out the poison, the evil inside of her.

As families living becomes more precarious, it frightens her greatly to admit, “the Angkar has taught me to hate so deeply that I now have the power to destroy and kill”
“My hate empowers and scares me:
“Sadness makes me want to kill myself to escape the hopelessness”
“Rage makes me want to survive and live so that I may kill”

The wider picture

Loung joins these tightly focused single event vignettes with her bigger picture recording of what is happening around her, in her family and in the rest of the village and in the rest of the country.

Childhood

Loung witnesses fanaticism, and brutality and passes on to us these experiences tinged with anger and hatred but with little political comment. The child’s tone of the text gives

it its authenticity. It is a chronological, present tense autobiography of a dark period in Cambodian history and it is a first person narrative which provides intimacy as well as immediately providing a depth of revelation and understanding, which brings us closer to Loungs thoughts, feelings and experiences. She reflects on the past to show the stark difference between the pre-Khmer Rouge period to the current life. Snap shot techniques are used for more significant events and hence illustrate to the reader, with lasting impression how children take on life-endangering tasks, normally assigned to adults.

- Loung firing a gun into the shadows.
- Loung dislodging a dead soldier floating in the river
- Loungs brothers practising in case they come under attack during the night
- Loungs vignettes together create a fairly accurate and complete picture of life in rural Cambodia during and immediate after the Khmer Rouge period.

Loungs initial tone conveys the youth and joy where “children with colourful T-shirts and shorts play” which soon turns sombre and bitter in a society where, “bright colours only serve to corrupt your mind.” Under the impact of the Khmer Rouge, she has made to prematurely step out of childhood and accept responsibilities far beyond her years. The five year old, once blissfully swinging her legs under her breakfast table is bayoneting a dummy ‘Youn’ with intense hatred, four years later. As the tone changes, we are taken through a journey with Loung as she is transformed from the fun-loving Phnom Penh school girl to a traumatised ‘child soldier’ seething with anger and vengeance. Even though she has lost her childhood, her naïve tone generates authenticity, “I have never seen a mans penis before”. During the evacuation, Loung does not understand why they cannot return home, and reacts as a child would, “My hopes are crushed, I wipe my forearm across my nose, dragging snot all over my cheek.” Loungs understanding of the Khmer Rouge is also presented in a genuinely childish way, “I don’t care much about politics, All I know is that I am supposed to act dumb and never speak of our lives in the city”

Burning of her red dress exemplified Khmer Rouges unorthodox social order.

Survival

FTKMF depicts the people of Cambodia, struggle for survival physically and emotionally. While this struggle is occurring at a personal level, the text goes deeper to show that the cultural traditions and beliefs previously exercised by the community are also under serious threat. Loung Ung’s expose of the civic disruption and turmoil caused by the communist Khmer Rouge show how her and her family struggle to try and negotiate a path to freedom and survive. The dilemmas of morality versus survival become apparent as the struggle of the individuals against the oppressors intensify, “By taking her food, I have helped kill her, but I cannot return the rice.” This text show the great difficulties, Loung and her family take in order to survive physically and

emotionally from the hatred, cruelty and the indoctrination of the Khmer Rouges anti-Marxist reign.

Despite the fact that she wasn't present to witness the deaths of her parents and two sisters, she imagines what they might have been like. This seems to fuel her determination to survive and to make the Khmer Rouge pay for the wrong that has been done to her family. While she is being trained as a child soldier to fight against the Vietnamese, her strong spirit and determination to avenge the deaths of her family members are quite evident. *"I stab it, each time envisioning not the body of a Youn, but that of Pol Pot."* Louns anger grows as she, "charges to the chest before Met Bong" demonstrating how her anger is intensified. *"My skin vibrates with hate and rage."* She envisions the dummy as Pol Pot, "I hate Pol Pot"

Family destroyed

The Khmer Rouge's political ideology mercilessly exploits the fabric of each family, with separation being the only answer to survive. The Khmer Rouge's practise of hunting down government officials and sympathisers put the whole family in danger. Those who ties to the western value of who were communist enemies were hunted down and exterminated. Pa recognises that the family splitting is the only means for them to survive. He acknowledges that "it is good for the family to be separated". Ma, who acts on Pa's advice makes the pragmatic decision to send the three older children away, "don't go together and don't come back". Louns powerful instinct to survive is laden with the loss of several of her family members. She is torn with grief, especially with the deaths of her parents, which in turn remove the pillars of solidarity which she relied on so much. The separation of the family and loss of family identity is a constant motif throughout Louns memoir. The Angkar, relying on the false allegiance of the Cambodian people, break down traditional family loyalties, making the strive to survive all the more harder. Louns defence system cannot cope with the death of her parents, "My wall crumbles...I want to hit my head hard". Her grief is intense so much so that she blacks out, "It is as if I am drifting away". The passage gives Ma a voice so we are meant to empathise with their family, "my mind makes up for the death". The strength of the family bond is evident as Ma thinks, "I must be strong for Geak". The soldier shows no understanding and "tears apart", emotionally intense we know how important the family bond and the lack of humanity, "his face darkens,". When Loung obtains a foster family, she has a desperate need for family, Loung craves love and has hope of having family, showing her hope love has not diminished. She demonstrates further, that she does possess the strength, "I have everything Pa gave me". Although her anger fuelled her will to survive, so did the words of Pa.

The political change in Cambodia saw the upheaval for the country where farms and rural towns house labour camps posing as collective farms. With Phnom Penh empties, and those capable of organising resistance eliminated. The closeness of the family with Pa and Ma's resolve to sacrifice themselves make the reunion possible.

Taking on oppressors values

In the name of survival, the constant dilemma of surviving against what is morally righteous plagues Loung and her family. This terrifying world of persecution and hardship sees Loung and her family, torn from their city lifestyle to commit acts they would not normally. They are compelled to steal and cheat, in order to be one step ahead of their oppressors. Humankind's capacity to reveal itself in times of desperation can mean an unwilling representation of unintentional values by each individual. Through the changes in Loung's behaviour, we see the human instinct to take on the values of the oppressor. Feeling of depression and rage lead her to hate with a passion that is "so strong it feels alive" and that is "empowers and scares [her]". Her anger, not unlike that of the Khmer Rouge soldier sustains her survival.

Loung discriminates the village people. Even Pa loses composure as everybody is on the edge. Loung believes she will be "reincarnated in a low form"

Collective sacrifice

Throughout this memoir we find sacrifice of a number of levels, person sacrifices of a voice and dignity and the collective sacrifice of cultural beliefs, all in the name of survival. In times of distress, such as those under the Angkar, values such as honour, truth and honesty are compromised. Pa bribes one of the soldiers with Ma's gold necklace in aid of their survival. Despite Pa's rank and social position, he is submissive to the Khmer Rouge cadre and soldiers, "From now on we are to give the soldiers whatever they want. For Kim, "Ma's little monkey," he has to "endure cruelty to feed his family. The responsibility is great as he runs grave risks gathering food for his family while suffering consequent beatings and emotional distress.

Through Loung Ung's observations we witness a terrifying world of summary execution and hardship as the family tries to survive. The savagery of the war deaths, permeate the text as we witness the horrid consequences of the Khmer Rouge regime that virtually enslaved the whole population. The trauma's of persistent fear of the unknown takes its toll on their suffering and their will to survive. It is through Loung's struggle to survive that ultimately allows her to surpass her antagonistic hatred toward the Khmer Rouge and act on the loving and spiritual words of her deceased father. Loung and her family's story of survival parallels that of the many Cambodians who have suffered under the totalitarian regime. Although many of the Cambodians have survived physically, from a regime that permanently scarred their country, many did not survive the emotional guilt and trauma that survival implied. Thus survival for Loung included working as a campaigner against landmines. Survival remained a relentless challenge and responsibility for those who remained alive.

While the greatest tragedy of war is large scale death and destruction, the loss of childhood innocence is another unfortunate outcome for many of the children who survive such as Loung Ung. Rather than being the first victims, the loss of innocence is a sad legacy affecting the survivors. The author of the memoir of her survival as a child of

the genocide regime. Even though war features very little in Ung's story, one could argue that the violent brutality of the Pol Pot regime was so great, that it had an impact equivalent to the worst of wars. Loung's loss of innocence was a consequence of war and a brutal peace as horrific as war. Her survival skills eventually produce a tough young girl with the mature courage to survive an indoctrination, a rape attempt and escape to Vietnam. Beginning of book shows the childhood pleasures, abundance of food, fun, play. Under regime, threat of starvation, loss of parents force her to become self-reliant, hate becomes motivator in survival, becomes aware of the evil nature and cruel hypocrisy of regime, cannot relate to people, fear of friends betraying for extra rations. Toughness demonstrated in ability to survive rape attempt and escape to Vietnam and be immune to the indoctrination in children's camp, shows adult independence of spirit.

Loung training as a child soldier was subject to indoctrination. Faced with the excruciating knowledge that half her family, both parents and two sisters were now dead by execution, starvation and disease, Loung channelled her rage and hatred of Pol Pot into an indomitable will to live.

"As I tell people about genocide and the aftermath of war, I get the opportunity to redeem myself. I've had that chance to do something that's worth my being alive." As almost one fourth of the Cambodian population lost their lives in this tragic genocide, With FTKMF, Loung bears poignant witness to this senseless slaughter. Her harrowing story of the degradation of human spirit and loss of innocence, of the atrocities she saw and her struggle to survive against all odds is one of incomprehensible tragedy and inspirational triumph. *"Though the Angkar says we are all equal in Democratic Kampuchea, we are not. We live and are treated like slaves"*

Ung and Pa

Ung is the second youngest of seven children and often feels misunderstood by everyone except her father. Her mother feels that she is troublesome and worries that she will not grow up to be a proper lady and her siblings regard her as being "spoiled and a troublemaker," but her father tells her that she is really a "diamond in the rough."

Human Life not valued in times of war

Even though there was no war, it was a peace so brutal that it mirrored significantly the worst of wars. Not only are those involved with the military used as human fodder, civilians become a means to an end, losing their capacity to be fully human in a situation where the quest for survival can bring out man's baser qualities. Human life is no longer valued. Even though those whom the Khmer Rouge were not determined to kill outright, people not classified as "enemies of the state" were treated with amazing cruelty and contempt.

While Khmer Rouge would classify Loung's family as "enemies of the state", their identity as supporters of the old regime is never actually established. For all local authorities know at various places where family seeks refuge, Ung are ordinary citizens,

still starved to death and treated with utmost degradation. Khmer Rouges, ultra-Marxist agrarian philosophy states that no-one is allowed to own property or possessions of any kind. Loung watches as her red dress is burnt, meals are taken communally and dress and hair length is standardised. People are expected to work hard and not reap any of the benefits. Kim's responsibilities lie well beyond his years, stealing corn to help his starving family survive and ma's desperate attempt to bribe a woman for a chicken to help sustain the ebbing life of Geak. In this regime, no value is placed on an individual human life

Not only civilians lose touch with what it is to be civilised human beings. Loung provides readers with overwhelming evidence of the abuse of power by the Khmer Rouge and those with status bestowed upon them by the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge expunged life of all its individuality and value.

Living under the political repression ultimately dehumanises people, their capacity to be fully human is denied them. Life under the Khmer Rouge is dehumanising. Loung comes to learn this slowly but we can judge her immersion in this philosophy by the change we witness in her through the course of her experience. The spoiled girl now willing to steal from her family and a dying old lady, internalises a hatred and desire to kill. This is evident in her attitude to death at the beginning through to her ability to leave the burning girl after the Youn Invasion. The hardness that grows in her, hardness crucial to her eventual survival, but which testifies to the devaluation of human life by the Khmer Rouge in their war against their own people. The way she describes death demonstrates the way in which she is inured to it. On the road out of Phnom Penh she is "repulsed" by the dead body, and yet she is unnerved and feels "nothing" at the subsequent death of others. The changes in Loung show that the Khmer Rouge don't value life, in that the average mischievous child is transformed to someone capable of killing Pol Pot if only she had the ability. The little girl terrified by the sight of a dead body revels in the slow execution of a Khmer Rouge Soldier. The hardness grows in Loung, crucial to her eventual survival.

Loss

The separation and loss of parents at such a young age deprived many of the parental love and care so vital in one's childhood. Loung is torn with grief especially with the loss of Pa. The experiences of the oppressive regime allowed many children to mature rapidly including Loung who grew more resilient and intuitive as she battled to endure hardships physically and psychologically. The Pol Pot regime exposed many children to something not in their normal spectrum of experience, death, destruction and loss. Loung's immature mind at first cannot comprehend the purpose of the regime, "my mind spins as if caught in a whirlpool of info I will never be able to understand." Many of the children, in order to survive step out of their childhood prematurely and accept responsibility beyond their years. Loung's values change from materialistic self-centred child in Phnom Penh to one who grows to appreciate sacrifice, her father's wisdom and inner strength to care for others.

A significant marker of Loung's rapid maturity is expressed in their desire to kill. Her pledge to revenge is perpetuated through the Khmer Rouge. Throughout these experiences, she emerges with a powerful instinct to survive the brutalities which many others succumbed to. A traumatised child soldier seething with anger and vengeance, the execution provides her with an opportunity to fulfil her desire for revenge as "seeing only one of them killed is not enough" Through experiencing hatred, Loung discovers in herself the desire to kill but it is this anger and desire for revenge which play a pivotal role in her survival. Loung's personal fury and anger begins to translate as hatred as a rhetoric of hatred preoccupies her mind and thoughts, "I want to kill Pol Pot" Although this desire for revenge motivates her survival, the rhetoric of hatred that sustains this is not of normal nine year old but a tormented victim of brutality. Little girl terrified by the sight of dead body becomes part of a crowd revelling the slow execution of a soldier.

Hatred – she feels a moral obligation to overcome the guilt, "I have the hardest time saying words to her".

She is consumed by hatred, "blood for blood". "Images of sisters murderers"

Physical damage

The Angkar war efforts enlisted young children into labour camps for unrelenting hard labour. Day to day survival included acting as child slaves for the Khmer Rouge and being trained in the use of implements such as "sick, the hoe, the rake, the hammer, the machete, the wooden stick and a rifle" as effective weapons of war. Children are turned into a functionary of the Angkar and the war effort and are trained to use 6-inch knives on dummies of Yous in combat practise.

Loung

Growing up in a middle class family, Loung has virtually everything she wants including Pa's support for her antics which he sees as "clear signs of cleverness" From this comfortable environment, Loung is catapulted into the brutality of the Khmer Rouge regime. At the cost of her childhood and the innocence that upheld it, Loung is endowed with a new found wisdom and maturity to survive indoctrination and rape attempt.

Guilt

The Khmer Rouge oppressed the people physically and politically, but it was the colonization of their minds, that was their greatest evil triumph. In times of civil war, Loung shows us that even the youngest and most innocent internalise the guilt for the wrongs done by those much older and much more powerful. Those who should own the guilt successfully transfer it to their victims through the imposition of such dire need that conventional morality is rendered impotent. Loung has previously internalised her parents' conventional values and she continues to assess behaviours by these outdated *morè*s. Throughout this memoir, Loung conveys to us the layers of guilt that emerge from surviving a traumatic event and their eternal effect on the survivors' lives. The guilt arisen

from surviving the event and the measure taken to survive torment Loung's conscience during the regime and long after it

The lengths which Loung take to survive parallel the principles extolled by the Angkar, emanating an intense guilt. The food shortage in Cambodia and the fluctuating rations results in an intense hunger. This hunger dictates Loung's actions to such an extent that she steals rice from her family and later, from an old lady at the infirmary. Through Loung's childish perspective, these actions implicate herself as a factor in other people's sufferings. As she steals rice from the old woman Loung believes she has "helped kill her". It is her stealing from the family's store of rice, however that disturbs her intensely. Loung correlates this action directly with Geak's starvation, describing her actions as stealing, "the food from her mouth". She can no longer think of Geak without remembering this act, believing she has played a pivotal role in her suffering and guilt.

First They Killed My Father suggest that the greatest weapons of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Similarly, the fact that the Khmer Rouge stole from and brutalised Cambodia's weak and innocent, Loung feels she also stole from the ultimate innocent, Geak, becoming an accomplice to the Khmer Rouge. By stealing food and causing her sister's starvation. She is in this way too, "splattered with blood." Her guilt for her actions drive her to make attempts to atone for what she has done by giving some of her rice to a woman with a baby and ill husband and by incessantly chastising herself for her "selfishness". Loung shows us through this experience the role guilt plays in the perception of one self and the power it has to drive one to atone.

This guilt that Loung feels during her childhood manifests itself later as "survivors guilt" and propels a need to redeem herself for her survival. Throughout her memoir, Loung describes the goodness of those in her family, contrasting this with her shortcomings which she highlights. She focuses on her family's sacrifices for each other; Chou stealing food, Ma trading her gold necklace for meat whilst describing her own shame at having "done nothing". This offers an insight into "survivors guilt"; her dismay at why people like Pa, a "devout Buddhist", and a person who "does not like to hurt other people" died while she, a girl who is fuelled by murderous thoughts, and steals only food for herself, is granted survival.

This guilt felt at her survival at the expense of others in her family, driven to "redeem herself" by giving her life a meaning and offer those who died a voice. Ung demonstrates the powerful effect of guilt and that it continues to dictate. Ung demonstrates the powerful effects of guilt and that it continues to dictate our life. Loung shows us guilt plays an important role in the way survivors choose to live their lives after such horrid conditions.

Loung's guilt at her survival arises from her belief that she trampled on others to ensure it, mirroring the ruthlessness of the Angkar. The guilt of this permeates her life though she makes attempts to "shut out" the tragedies as demonstrated by her eagerness to "immerse herself in American culture". These feelings drive her to justify her own survival by

lending acknowledgement and increasing awareness of those who didn't survive and giving them a voice.

Ung exhibits guilt at her actions during her time in Cambodia and her resulting survival. This guilt is omnipresent throughout her life and after her escape from the Khmer Rouge. This fuels her strong desire to redeem herself, demonstrating clearly that guilt and the desire to absolve it is the driving force in the lives of the survivors.

Survival can breed atrocities as well as the ability to oppose the totalitarian regime. We see the repudiation of human values and the perpetuation of violence. The seeds in the microcosm of the five year old heart.

This "stained nation" embedded into "Khmer Rouge topsoil" feels a collective guilt. This is demonstrated when Loung repeatedly feels she has not done enough, "I have done nothing". It is shown also when she returns at the end of her time in America and unwittingly wears the clothes of the Khmer Rouge. Loung seems to be symbolically representing the possibility in all of us to be perpetrators, however inadvertently; the potential in all of us to bear guilt for the blood shed. Writing this memoir is a way of expiating her guilt.

Rural Decimation

Under the new rural-based economy, the attempt to store Cambodia back to its 'glorious past' came at great costs to the survival of the land, physically, spiritually and culturally. With little bureaucratic control, the Khmer Rouge drove the people to the countryside to take part in massive labour gangs. Ironically, the agrarian ideology implemented by the Khmer Rouge resulted in poor crop production and utter disrespect for the land. The exploitation of the Cambodian culture and religion can vividly be seen with the destruction of the temples and the extermination of religious peoples alike. Paradoxically, the masses of people were forced into a herd, while being forced into themselves.

*"The land is dry" factually and metaphorically
"As far as the eye can see...rice fields are unattended"*

*"blood for blood, life for life"
"ignoring pleas and cries for help"
"A pool of bloody slowly seeps into the dirt"
"Khmer Rouge topsoil"*

Natural Stuff

*"death is chasing me again"
"I wonder where the gods go now that their houses are destroyed"*

In Khmer Rouge

"I cannot mention the food I wish to eat, the movies I have seen or the cyclo I have ridden in"

"We are equal and do not have to cower anyone."

"They brought with themselves bad habits and fancy titles"

"self serving" government

"Laughter is a distant memory, I cherish the echo of a different time"

"We lived against each other, spying"

"We dare not ask them questions"

"Unfamiliar gesture of friendship"

"generation of children missing"

"Cambodian's eat constantly"

The rhythm of the day follows economic necessity. The win out of individuality over solidarity is precipitated throughout the text.

Loungs red dress symbolise is emblematic of the memories of freedom, and childhood.

Sacrifice

Pa doesn't eat as much as the others and is having to sacrifice his dignity and morality. Loung is having to sacrifice her sacrifice her identity

Selflessness

Kim working for chief and stealing corn. Kim's bravery courage and "endures cruelty for the survival of his family", "it's time to brave"

Meng and Khouy bringing food and Meng raising Loung on seven day work.

Culture/Lives threatened

Family safety, trust, childhood, innocence.

Loung

Loung learns self control and starts to realise, Met Bongs are too only doing their job. She soon gains the ability to analyse Angkar actions, and is able to understand prerequisites of the Angkar.

She learns self control

"I don't have any time to be weak"

"I do this easily...but against my will"

"Cannot allow weakness to control me"

Culture

Religion, values and morals, trust, language, identity.

Chou

Chou is submissive, "they can beat me"

Kim

“Rarely says more than a few words”

Geak

“stops asking for Pa”

Indoctrination

Angkar trains their minds “brainwash children into giving total loyalty” so they can desensitise children to violence so that they are ready to fight and “kill even their traitor parents;