

The Catastrophe of Yazidis: A Study of Nadia Murad's *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*.

Biswajit Pramanik

Independent Scholar

Department Of English

Vidyasagar University

Abstract

The word 'Catastrophe' has been derived from the Greek word 'katastrophé' which means 'overturning' or 'sudden turn or a sense of a sudden reversal of fate'. In this context, the fate of non-Muslim Yazidi women and girls are catastrophic because they are targeted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to achieve their certain political, social, and social goals and to do so they use multi-layered sexual violence, rape, genocide, honor killing, forced conversion, forced marriage and so on and so forth on the Yazidi population, especially the female which are reflected in Nadia Murad's testimony *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*. This paper attempts an exploring how the barbaric ISIS soldiers suddenly attack on Murad's villagers, how they tortured and killed her father, brother and other males, how they captivated the women and girls and continuously raped which bring the catastrophe in Yazidi's people.

Keywords: Catastrophe, Yazidi, Islamic State, Nadia Murad, Testimony, Barbaric, Captivated, Raped

Testimonial writing is the mirror of one's own life. It is a reconstruction of the ruminative past of the individual and an account that serves to explain for the self and others. It reflects his/ her emotion, joy, feeling, pains, anguishes, pathos, pangs, agony, happiness, exuberance and so on and so forth. In this context, Nadia Murad is a renowned name in the contemporary time because she through her testimony *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*, published in 2017 reveals the catastrophe of Yazidis and many atrocities that ISIS perpetrators lashed on both the non-Muslim men and women of different ethnic groups like Yazidis, Kurds, Christians and so and so forth, to induce terror on these communities.

Human birth is an ascription of sorts, ascription to a certain religion, race, and caste status. But Isis militants are not able to understand it. They believe Islam is the only religion and Allah is the only supreme almighty. Therefore, it is their duty to teach the entire world right thing through converting into Islam and to do so they keep on doing the most terrible and inhuman activities on the minority Yazidis such as forced rape, sexual violence, conversion into Islam, forced marriage, genocide, inhuman torture and so on and so forth.

When she was 19 years old in the year of 2014, the Islamic State attacked her village and killed 600 Yazidi men, including several of her family members. She and other young women were taken prisoner and subjected to beatings and rape. She managed to escape, however, and made her way to a refugee camp. There she was offered the opportunity to move to Germany. Since then, she has been continuing to work tirelessly to bring about justice and protection for her people and survivors of sexual violence. She got Nobel Peace prize in 2018 for philanthropic activities. In an interview, she mentions; “I didn’t know about the Nobel Peace Prize before. I knew nothing of the armed conflicts and murders that take place around the world on a daily basis.” (Nadia, 26)

The Yazidis are a small religious, mostly Kurmanji-speaking minority. They are indigenous to the Kurdish regions living in Iraq, Syria and Turkey, a majority Muslim country. They remain in the Middle East today live in the disputed territories of Northern Iraq. The word Yazidi means 'the servant of the creator'. In this context, they have their own faith and personal religious belief which has been transmitted generation after generation. They have been mostly linked to traditional Christianity; one major difference between the two religions is that the Yazidis believe in intermediacy between god and humanity. They believe that one God made the earth; they also believe that God entrusted the earth and everything in it to seven angels, the most prominent and important being Tawsi Melek the Peacock Angel.

Murad’s testimony reveals that she who was born and raised in small village Kocho, near Northern Iraq, with her family. In 2014 the Islamic State (IS) launched a brutal attack on her home village. Several hundred people were massacred, and girls and young women were abducted and held as sex slaves. While a captive of the IS, Nadia Murad was repeatedly subjected to rape and other abuses. After three months she

managed to flee to Germany and recorded her catastrophe and since then, she has been working to help women and children who are victims of abuse and human trafficking.

The worst punishment which Hajji Salman was talking about was gang rape by six militants including Morteja, Yahya, Hossam, and three guards. Morteja was the first to rape Nadia then all five militants while rape makes Nadia unconscious. Salman then sold Nadia again, like an object in the market whose dignity and humanity has been taken away and being passed away from militant to militant. Every Islamic state member treated Nadia with cruelty. Their torture was almost same except Hajji Salman, who was worst and humiliated her very badly. In this context, she pens down;

Hajji Salman was the worst, in the part because he was the first to rape me and in part because he acted the most like he hated me. He hit me if I tried to close my eyes. For him, it was not enough just to rape me – he humiliated me as often he could , spreading honey on his toes and making me lick it off or forcing me to dress up for him.(p. 185)

The punishment and torture of Hajji Salman made Nadia numb. She lost her all fear of the ISIS militants. She didn't inquire as to what the new man was doing, nor did she attempt to persuade him not to touch her. There was rape and nothing else at some point, and this became her daily day; she was so tormented that she stopped caring about escaping or seeing her family. Her previous life fades into obscurity, as though it were a dream. She thought that her body doesn't belong to her, and she doesn't have the energy to speak, fight, or care about what's going on outside. Only rape and numbness followed her reality. She writes “Fear was preferable because it implied that what was happening wasn't natural. You'd feel like your heart was going to burst and you'd throw up; you'd cling desperately to your family and friends and grovel in front of the terrorist; you'd cry until you were blind, but at least you'd done something. Hopelessness was on the brink of death.” ISIS militants taunted and raped her even in the checkpoint room which made her so sick. Terrorists all feel it is their right to injure a woman. All of the women were routinely abused, and some of them were children who were assaulted regardless of whether or not they had reached puberty. One girl was raped while bound to a rope, and the other was raped for the first time while

sleeping. If the girls disobeyed their captors, they were starving and tortured. Nadia reveals how her life in ISIS captivity turned into a living nightmare.

It was clear by now that I didn't belong to the skinny militant Hajji Salman or to any particular man. I was a sabiyya at the checkpoint, and any Islamic State member could come into the room and do whatever he wanted with me. They would keep me in locked room with nothing but a mattress and a bowl of rotting fruit, just waiting for the door to open and another militant to enter. This was my life now. (p. 192)

Nadia's life is the symbol of emancipation and encouragement of the women and girls who have been abused, raped and imprisoned in the cage of the Islamic state which is reflected in her autobiography *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*. It was published in 2017 which deals with the story of a young girl, who was abducted by ISIS militants, brutalized and gang-raped for the long before she managed a narrow escape. This text is written in the first person narrative form, and it is told by the mature voice of the authoress as how the barbaric ISIS soldiers attack her villagers, how they were tortured and killed, how she and other women and girls of her village are captivated and continuously raped and how she manages to escape from there to Germany.

In conclusion it can be said that that genocide and sexual violence are crime against humanity which bears the catastrophe in Yazidis in which human beings specially the minority men and women have been victimized and dehumanized since ages. Therefore, Nadia is now motherless, displaced, migrated, traumatized, grief stricken and the ongoing recipient of ISIS death threats because of her gender and religious identity. In this sense, these are not only her own alone problems but also the whole Yazidis have no space of their own which can dismantle the boundary of gender and religious minority and help them to mingle with the common human mainstream. Hence, despite the emancipation of Yazidis from the cage of ISIS in Iraq, they are still not safe properly. *The Last Girl* thus comes out as a loud cry before the world community against the heinous crime of rape used as weapon of war against the women of Yazidi and Murad fairly wishes to be the last girl to have such an unfortunate fate of being the victim of such weapon. She ends her memoir saying "I want to be the last girl in the world with a story like this", which poses a prickling question — in a macabre scheme of power dynamics and political play, is there a way to keep her wish?

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