

The Last Girl: A Journey from Sufferer to Savior

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ABSTRACT

Nadia Murad is a bold Yazidi girl, who fought against serious sexual and emotional harassment from ISIS enslavement in Iraq. Her touching creation “The last girl” is a story of captivity and her battle against the Islamic state. Her mother and six brothers were killed. The book is the voice of orphan, rape victim, slave and refugee. The book is written by Nadia Murad and Jenna Krajeski, a journalist based in New York. The present article is an effort to analysis the narrative technique, issue of race and difference, refugee and feminism dealt in the book “The last girl”. The work is autobiographical. Most of such books deal with the dream than reality, but here we can feel the touching facts. The timespan of the work is from 2014 to 2017.

Keywords - Narratology, race and difference, refugee and feminisms.

The journey

Nadia was born at Kocho a small village in Iraq. Her father divorced her mother, after that she and her sisters and brothers were brought up under the shelter of her mother. In 2014 ISIS attacked her village and killed her mother and six brothers, and many other innocent people of Yazidi community were massacred. Young unmarried girls like Nadia, her friends and relatives were captured as sex slaves. She and her community underwent severe sexual harassment, cigarette burns and beatings. At last she managed to escape from the militants and seek refuge in a Muslim family, they console her and support to escape. They took a huge risk in helping her. A young man Nasser took her to Kirkuk, at last she met with her remaining family members.

The mode of narrative are mimesis (showing and dramatizing) and diegesis (telling or relating) Nadia describes a rapid summary of long sequence of events and in some occasion she is telling us the exact explanation about the terrible experiences. There are two types of focalization in the work, they are external focalization and internal focalization (Gerard Genette, 1983). The

external focalization means what the character say and do, while internal focalization is what the character think and feel. Nadia can say and do. The work is told with external focalization, So Nadia can be called as the focaliser of the work. The narrator Nadia can be called an intrusive narrator. The last girl is abundant with cultural quotes. Cultural quotes are those elements of common knowledge that we share as a community, therefore do not require a glossary (Promod Nayar, 2010)

Eg. Kuffar (kafar is singular), genocide, Daesh, Layla, Majnun, etc., lots of symbolic codes are also in the narrative style of Nadia. The author describes about the custody at militants camp.

‘Inside the bathroom, I splashed some water on my face and arms. A mirror hung over the sink, but I kept my gaze downward. I couldn’t look at myself. I suspected that I already wouldn’t recognize the girl who looked back. On the wall above the shower, I saw the blood the women from the night before had warned me about. The small reddish –brown stains high up on the tiles were all that was left some Yazidi girls who had come before me’ (132-133)

These lines represent symbolic code where the author uses various technique of narration to convey something dangerous or evil to happen. The style is clear without any obscurity. The duration of the book is infinitively rapid with quick shifts in time, space and plots. Another feature is its metatextuality, means the biographical communities in the main text. The image of the author is predominated in the text, and hence Nadia is an implied author.

The last girl contains most of the narrative functions observed by Vladimir Propp (1968), a Russian formalist. Here the capturer receives information about their victim. They attempt to deceive their victim in order to take possession of their belongings. The victim submits to deception and there by unwillingly helps her enemy. The capturers cause harm or injury to victim and their family members. Here the subject is interrogated and attacked, which prepares the way for her receiving either a magical agent or helper. The heroine is transferred and initial misfortune is liquidated a difficult task is proposed to Nadia. The task is resolved and heroine is recognized and false hero is exposed. The heroine is given a new appearance.

The race and difference is due to their Yazidi identity, this is the base for discrimination and disempowerment. In Kocho youths are raised in unsteady circumstances may challenge with low psycho social relationship and dominated hopelessness. Racial distinction has been the basis of violent and brutal attack against particular races and groups, especially the Yazidis in Kocho. They have been marginalized, and considered as nonbelievers and leads towards genocide. The reason for conflict may be poverty, inequality and illiteracy. Somalia and Darfur, central and east Africa, Yemen and Syria and finally Afghanistan and Iraq are some examples of failed missions. At the same time Middle East and Europe are facing the challenges of ‘migrant and refugee crises’. It was not an accidental event. According to Promod Nayar, 2010 ‘Race has served as a marker of difference, a difference that leads to slavery exploitation and death.’

Nadia was raped by the patriarchal society. Her capturers act as the traditional roles of masculinity, while Nadia fell in to the ditch of cruelty. The book is the story of fall, a fall from bad condition to the worst. Kocho was a hard place for Yazidis to live, because of their religious beliefs but they lived among the perils, while Mosul with its disordered wild unnatural situations.

“Still, no matter the hardship, I never wanted to live anywhere other than Kocho” (24) this fall tortures Nadia, squashes her femineity and she wants to die.

Yazidisam is an old religion based on monotheistic ideology, whose mother tongue is Kurdish. Yazidi religion as being ancient, tells tragic stories in the long history of Yazidis. Yazidi women were taken as sex slaves, and their men, aged parents were killed, because of their religious beliefs. The atrocities against minority groups and the Yazidis have been well documented in the Last girl. Questions of home and home land are predominant in the book.

As per the UNHCR report (2020), at present, 79.5 million people in the world have been evacuated from homes because of many reasons. It may be war conflict and persecution. According to United Nations population fund (2020) At least 1 in 5 refugees or displaced women in complex humanitarian settings have experienced sexual violence, though it is often unreported across the globe. The ongoing migration and refugee crisis has uprooted nearly 50 million children worldwide, leaving them vulnerable to violence and exploitation (UNICEF, 2016). It narrates the important fact that women and children are often marginalized in peacebuilding processes. The captivity of Kocho by ISIS, resulted in demolishing the social fabric along with year old deep trust in social contract.

Now Yazidis are refugees in their motherland-yazidis were nomadic farmers and shepherds who first arrived in mid-1950 at Kocho in Iraq. Immigration and border crossing have been integral to the history of humanity. Nowadays refugee numbers increase in the context of genocidal war. The main issues refugee faced by first world nations are immigration (both legal and illegal), minority rights, human rights, terrorism, defense (military, territorial and cultural) and identity (national, racial and political) , but Yazidis are refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan .Nadia’s brothers Khaled and Saeed were still recovering from their wounds. They had nowhere to go. While Nadia was in a refugee camp, she went to work in nearby field, where the farmer, a Kurd was employing refugees to harvest melon. Nadia says the experience “When he served the, though, I really gagged. It was rancid rice from the camp, plain and stinking on our plates. I felt like crying because the farmer saw us this way that he thought because we were so poor and we lived in the camps, he could feed us anything. And we would be grateful (282)”. It is an event of the material condition of gender roles and women toils on. Nadia comes to realize that individual life, when considered in isolation, has great significance, moral laws have validity, .Nadia has forced to abandoned her village, relatives and customs, showing that she is rootless. She is bound by law. Life has many impact on Nadia. But Nadia’s voice was powerful. She has changed all the titles that conflict gave her: she emerged from rape victim and refugee to Nobel peace prize nominee and United Nations good will ambassador.

Nadia, Adkee, Dimal, Katharine and Mother Shami are all not subaltern, docile or irrational. They are not weak or inferior to men. All women in the community had average education. The condition of schools in Kocho was dreary and dismal. The available education was inadequate or irrelevant, not able to satisfy their need .It reinforce poverty and injustice, which causes desperation and frustration. The only occupation available to women was that of a labour in onion field, we have Nadia Indicating desperation about her own decision to be a labour. The

reason for the subordination of women is education, while the men did have the superior virtues education. But here Nadia, Adkee, and Katharine were faced the situation with immense courage. They are not accepting the concept that, they are made or born to suffer. The divorced mother Shami had overcomes the realities till she was captured by ISIS. Nadia, Adkee, Dimal and Katherine were managed to overcome at least some of the disadvantage of their gender from a male dominated social structure at Mosul, whereas the remaining yazidi girls are triply disadvantaged by virtue of being helpless under undefinable reason or unequal gender relations, class and economic power. The untimely death of mother Shami and Katherine, represents the women who deserve love and care instead of heartless brutality and a question against the power relation of patriarchy.

Conclusion

The settings of last girl is realistic, the village and cities are real places on the map, Kocho, Sinjar city, Mosul, Kirkuk etc. The description of seasons and calendar of religious ceremony are closely connected in her village time. Nadia's life at Mosul was similar to her death. There is the concept of life, death and rebirth. Hence the concept of evolution of incarnation. The concept of mother, the innocent beauty of women characters and the description of nature are real and admirable. Nadia uses universal symbols like: summer, wind, hot sun, noon etc., even though they are masculine in nature. By titling her story as 'The last girl' the author also wants to indicate that no other girl should suffer like the way she did. Nadia, is now involved in advocating for survivors of sexual violence and rebuilding communities in crisis. It was indeed a journey from sufferer to savior.

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