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CIVILIZATIONAL FAULTLINES: RADICALIZATION AND DISILLUSIONMENT IN KAMILA
SHAMSIE'S *HOMEFIRE*

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ABSTRACT

A reworking of Sophocles' *Antigone* placed in a modern context, Kamila Shamsie's *Homefire* (2017) is a powerful commentary on the burning issues of our times. The enticing narrative revolves around the Pasha siblings – Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz and follows their trajectories. It traces the effects of the looming shadow cast by their deceased terrorist father on the siblings' life in the present. It exposes the predicaments of British Muslims and the collision of love and politics. It vocalizes the wounds of the oppressed and the searing consequences of asymmetrical power dynamics. The novel raises important questions on loyalties, justice, the quest for identity, extremist ideology and mannerisms, and the pervasive use of violence. It deals with the themes of marginalization, alienation, fundamentalism, and sacrifice. It also delineates disharmony in personal relationships, the hypnotizing influence of social relationships, and a pressing need for acceptance and belonging. The narrative also unravels the emergence of bold and dynamic 'New Women'. Shamsie intricately weaves the threads of human vulnerabilities and divulges striking contrasts that went into knitting together the characters of this heart-wrenching novel. The proposed paper seeks to explore the dynamics of radicalization by investigating the core issues and contributors in the process. It also aims to understand disillusionment as an inevitable consequence of the radicalization process by examining its diverse strands.

Keywords: Radicalization, disillusionment, New Women, alienation, sacrifice, vulnerabilities

The radicalization of youth refers to the process by which young individuals adopt extreme beliefs, and ideologies, or engage in violent or extremist activities. It is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including social, political, economic, and psychological elements. A continual upsurge in extremism and radicalization is a menace that is haunting the global village in the current scenario. Extremism exists in both violent and non-violent forms, bound together by a single thread. It can be understood as a deviation in mannerisms, attitudes, and beliefs from established and prevailing norms. Andreas Beelmann in her research paper entitled *A Social-Developmental Model of Radicalization: A Systematic Integration of Existing Theories and Empirical Research* observes that "The process by which such patterns of attitudes and action emerge individually and ontogenetically over the course of development can then be labeled *radicalization*." Radical ideologies often provide a narrative that justifies and glorifies violence as a necessary means to achieve specific

goals. These ideologies may advocate for the overthrow of existing systems, the establishment of a utopian society, or the attainment of political or religious supremacy.

Kamila Shamsie's cutting-edge novel, *Homefire* (2017) is a fierce exploration into the themes of radicalization, identity, and the impact of extremism on individuals and families. The story follows the lives of three British-Pakistani siblings: Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz in London. The novel highlights how Parvaiz, the son, follows in his father's footsteps and joins ISIS in Syria but as soon as he realizes he has committed a serious mistake, he wishes to return. His twin sister, Aneeka, makes all the possible efforts to help him return to Britain but all her efforts to bring her younger one back 'home' suffer a downright failure as Parvaiz is shot dead in his attempt to escape and Aneeka, along with Eamonn, loses her life in a terrorist attack. Hailing from a Muslim background, Karamat Lone had only been able to build his political career at the cost of rejecting his Muslim faith and beliefs. Shamsie, with great subtlety, has brought to the fore the complexities, fears, and difficulties faced by the Muslim diaspora in Britain. The narrative exhibits radicalization and subsequent disillusionment as the central themes that are explored through the characters' journeys. The novel delves into the complexities of radicalization and its impact on individuals and their relationships.

Personal relationships and peer groups can play a significant role in the radicalization process. The influence of friends, family members, or charismatic leaders can shape young individuals' perspectives and push them toward extremist ideologies. Peer groups provide a sense of belonging and acceptance. Parvaiz's friends were all "scattered emotionally and geographically by the demands of post-school life." (118) and therefore, he became increasingly susceptible to Farooq's exploitation. Peers can exploit emotional vulnerabilities, such as feelings of anger, frustration, or a sense of injustice, to draw individuals towards extremist ideologies. Emotional manipulation can be particularly effective in times of personal crisis or social unrest.

Marginalized individuals often feel excluded from mainstream society, experiencing limited opportunities, unequal treatment, and a lack of representation. Discrimination based on factors such as race, religion, ethnicity, or social class can undermine an individual's sense of identity and belonging. Parvaiz and his family were discriminated against on account of their past, a 'jihadi subtext', directly impacting their Muslim identity, thus worsening their case. When individuals face persistent marginalization, they may seek alternative identities or groups that offer acceptance and validation for their experiences. This becomes their only understanding of challenging or dismantling the existing systems. The desire for belonging and acceptance is a fundamental human need, and when this need is not met through conventional means, it can contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to radicalization. It can make individuals more receptive to adopting these radical identities as a way to find purpose and a sense of self. When individuals feel socially excluded or marginalized, they may seek alternative groups or communities that offer acceptance and validation. Farooq constantly tapped on his vulnerability by arranging a meeting every day. Radical groups create a tightly-knit community that provides emotional support, friendship, and a sense of belonging. This sense of community can be appealing, especially for individuals who feel isolated or disconnected from their peers. These groups may use persuasive tactics, emotional manipulation, or propaganda that promises a sense of belonging and purpose to potential recruits. These tactics capitalize on individuals' vulnerability and desire for acceptance to lure them into radical ideologies. However, in her research paper titled *Islamic Radicalization in the UK: Index of Radicalization*, Anna Wojtowicz opines that "Individuals at any time and given any circumstance may enter, exit and re-enter the radicalization process." (51)

Isolation can lead individuals to search for a sense of identity and purpose. Isma's anticipated absence from their lives triggered Parvaiz's isolation. But his feelings of isolation were intensified as Aneeka got increasingly mired with her life at LSE and stayed out at times. The growing absence of his sisters from his life made him increasingly vulnerable to Farooq's scheme. Parvaiz even felt that he doesn't have an identity of his own and his identity is instead reduced to merely "Aneeka's brother." (124) This denial of a concrete identity juxtaposed with a promise to carve out his own, pushes Parvaiz towards Farooq. Extremist groups often offer a clear and rigid identity, along with a sense of belonging and a cause to fight for. Isolation can exacerbate feelings of anger, frustration, loneliness, or alienation. His isolation deepened when his sisters decided to rent their house after Isma leaves, without his consent, and announce that they can move back in once Isma had finished

her Ph.D. and Aneeka became a lawyer, hinting at their financial soundness, leaving him out of the conversation. Shamsie comments that “Parvaiz would have felt the blade of being omitted from the conversation.” (120) He further felt a disconnect with Aneeka when her lack of interest in knowing about their father clashed with his own curiosity. Aneeka “was unlinking the chains that held them together, casting him into darkness without the accompanying sound of her heartbeat” (139) Extremist ideologies can exploit these emotions and offer a sense of empowerment, purpose, or revenge, promising individuals a way to channel their emotions and make a perceived impact. Parvaiz became emotionally vulnerable and teary-eyed on listening to the fabricated stories about his father’s valor and his idea of keeping Parvaiz close by renaming himself, Abu Parvaiz. Farooq capitalized on his vulnerability by immediately drawing him “close in a cologne-scented embrace, and said, ‘I’m glad I’ve found you, brother.’” (126) Isolated individuals may also have limited exposure to counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies. A lack of access to diverse perspectives increases their susceptibility to radicalization.

Isolation can lead to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are surrounded by like-minded individuals who reinforce their existing beliefs and perspectives. In these echo chambers, confirmation bias becomes stronger, making it difficult for individuals to critically evaluate their ideas and consider alternative viewpoints. This can further entrench radical beliefs and behaviors. Echo chambers within radical communities serve to amplify and reinforce extremist views through constant affirmation and validation. When individuals are consistently exposed to extremist content, discussions, and narratives without any counterbalancing viewpoints, it becomes easier for radical beliefs to be accepted and internalized without question. With his endorsing radical ideas, Farooq had become a bosom friend to Parvaiz, who felt it was “a friendship so deep it was lodged within you, could not be cut out without leaving a profound, perhaps fatal, wound.” (134) Within echo chambers, peer pressure and social validation play a significant role in radicalization. Parvaiz’s experience of peer pressure and need for conformity is underlined when he was actively involved with the fundraiser for the library campaign but anxiously anticipated boys would “report back to Farooq that with the world ablaze with injustice Parvaiz Pasha thought the cause to which he should devote his time was a local library.” (143) Radical communities often create a sense of identity, belonging, and camaraderie among their members. In these tightly-knit communities, individuals may feel pressure to conform to the dominant radical ideologies to maintain social acceptance and avoid being ostracized.

Personal trauma, such as a terrorist father, experiencing estrangement from the system, and having capable sisters, also contribute to the process of radicalization. Adil Pasha’s jihadi history had a profound emotional impact on Parvaiz. Parvaiz and Aneeka were targeted by their classmates in school. He remembers the humiliation with which his schoolmates once specifically asked him, “if it were true his father was a jihadi who’d been killed in Guantanamo.” (125) It led to feelings of confusion, anger, resentment, and a sense of betrayal. These emotions, combined with a shattered sense of identity, can create an environment conducive to radicalization. Radical groups exploit these vulnerabilities by providing a new identity and a sense of belonging that resonates with the individual’s personal trauma. Feeling estranged or disconnected from the social and political system can contribute to radicalization. After poisoning Parvaiz’s mind with an evil and prejudiced image of Britain Farooq questions him, “How can you live in this mirage of democracy and freedom? What kind of man are you, what kind of son are you?” (148) Parvaiz was physically abused to convince him of the torture and pain his father was put through by inflicting a similar kind of pain on him and the narratives of injustice and brutalities against his father were the measures collectively used to coerce him into radical ideology. Unable to think of the atrocities committed against his father, he takes the first step towards radicalization by asking Farooq to tie him again saying, “I want to feel my father’s pain and waited for the agony to resume after kneeling down.” (141) When individuals perceive the system as unjust, oppressive, or unresponsive to their needs or grievances, they may seek alternative ideologies and movements that promise to challenge or overthrow the existing system. Parvaiz felt an acute sense of absence of a father-son bonding from his life which only intensified as the years passed. He held the oppressive system responsible for his loss and the grievance inadvertently made him more receptive to radical ideas. Parvaiz’s sisters, Isma and Aneeka, were capable and were doing well in their respective fields. Aneeka had earned a scholarship for pursuing law at LSE and Isma was leaving for her Ph.D.

from Massachusetts. It was only Parvaiz who lacked a definite career path and financial stability. His journey to radicalization began with Isma's announcement of her leaving for America. The influence of family members, particularly siblings, can be significant in shaping an individual's beliefs and choices. Wojtowicz posits that "Recruitment is often personality-driven, based on family ties or local allegiances. Furthermore, it is based on peer pressure, a promise of status, financial rewards, social-economic factors, social injustice and dysfunction." (49)

The lack of job prospects can engender an experience of economic disenfranchisement, leading to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and a sense of being left behind by society. Isma's constant badgering regarding the household's monthly expenditure and Parvaiz's paltry income and his lack of job prospects makes him feel dejected. Shamsie writes:

Isma said a number...She invoked this number every time she wanted to remind Parvaiz that his earnings as a greengrocer's assistant were insufficient, that the time he spent building up his sound reel rather than chasing after job postings was wasteful. She didn't believe he was good enough to find work doing what he loved, didn't see that his sound reel was as much of an investment in the future as Aneeka's law degree. (119)

This economic marginalization can create fertile ground for radical ideologies to take hold, as individuals may seek alternative avenues for empowerment and economic stability. Marcela Santos Brígida in her article entitled, *Necropolitics and National Identity* closely observes that "Parvaiz internalizes his anger at being oppressed on a daily basis. His feelings of loneliness and destitution grow stronger as Isma prepares to leave for America and Aneeka becomes increasingly consumed by the new world the LSE offers her. After being groomed by men connected to ISIS, Parvaiz becomes radicalized." Farooq, a representative of a radical group, consciously exploits Parvaiz's economic vulnerabilities by presenting himself and his organization as viable alternatives to mainstream society and offering financial incentives or promises of employment. Isma's comment that "A total lack of career prospects is the real problem." (117) further highlights his economic instability. The lack of job prospects can foster a sense of injustice, particularly when individuals perceive that opportunities are denied to them based on factors such as socioeconomic background, discrimination, or corruption. Radical ideologies may present themselves as a solution to these perceived injustices, providing an outlet for expressing grievances and seeking change.

A perceived pervasive sense of injustice and inequality can lead to frustration and anger and can erode an individual's trust in existing institutions and systems, such as the government, law enforcement, or the justice system. Victimized by their Muslim ethnicity and because of their terrorist father, Isma, and Parvaiz share an apprehension about getting Isma's visa for America rejected. The discrimination made Parvaiz resentful. Shamsie expresses "How he hated his life, this neighborhood, the inevitability of everything." (123) When individuals feel that the system is failing them or is inherently corrupt, they may seek alternative ideologies and movements that claim to provide justice or bring about systemic change. When people identify with a marginalized or oppressed group, they may seek solidarity and empowerment through radical ideologies that promise to address their shared grievances. Parvaiz vocalizes his exasperation at the unjust treatment and oppression of the Muslim community in Britain. He tells Aneeka, "They only gave you a scholarship because you tick their "inclusive" and "diverse" boxes." (130) He woundedly voices out that "Muslim men need to be detained, harassed, pressed against the ground with a heel on our throat." (132) When individuals believe that peaceful means of addressing their grievances have failed or are inadequate, they may turn to radical ideologies that advocate for more aggressive or militant actions. Parvaiz felt a severe disconnect with his surroundings and a strong pull towards Farooq and his ideologies "watching all the lives within their narrow frames slide past on the tracks in the darkness, allowing the wound to fester so that tomorrow he could tell Farooq about it and receive the antiseptic of his new friend's indignation." (133) The perceived injustice becomes a motivating factor that legitimizes or rationalizes their engagement in extremist activities.

A utopian vision of a radically transformed world promises a better future, often characterized by ideals such as social justice, equality, or a particular ideological vision. This vision can be enticing to individuals who

feel disillusioned with the current state of affairs and who desire significant societal changes. Farooq promises Parvaiz a utopia which was “A land of order and beauty and life and youth.” (147) Radical ideologies that promote violent change often offer individuals a sense of empowerment. They portray violence as a means to challenge oppressive systems and institutions and as a way for individuals to assert agency and control over their lives. This sense of empowerment can be particularly attractive to individuals who feel marginalized, powerless, or frustrated by the status quo. Farooq lures him into a utopian vision telling him that there exists

A place where migrants coming in to join are treated like kings, given more in benefits than the locals to acknowledge all they've given up to reach there. A place where skin color doesn't matter. Where schools and hospitals are free, and rich and poor have the same facilities. Where men are men...Where someone like you would find himself working in a state-of-the-art studio, living like a prince. Your own villa, your own car. Where you could speak openly about your father, with pride, not shame. (144)

Individuals who become radicalized may come to believe that violence is the only way to dismantle the current system and create the envisioned utopia. Farooq reiterates the 'Caliphate's' message of reciprocating death with a barbaric one and offering a promising vision of “a nation that wielded its sword on your behalf and told you acquiescence wasn't the only option.” (149) A utopian vision of the world can foster a strong sense of identity and belonging among radicalized individuals. They may perceive themselves as part of a vanguard or revolutionary movement working towards a common goal.

Ideological narratives serve as a mechanism of radicalization by presenting a simplified and black-and-white view of complex issues. They may demonize certain groups or individuals, portraying them as the root cause of societal problems. By creating an "us versus them" dynamic, which creates a dichotomy between their own group and perceived enemies or oppressors, these narratives create a sense of identity and solidarity among followers, while fueling anger and resentment towards the perceived enemy. This demonization can dehumanize others and legitimize or rationalize violence against them contributing to radicalization. Ideological narratives often tap into real or perceived grievances experienced by individuals or communities. They frame these grievances within a broader ideological framework and present ideology as the solution to these issues. Some ideological narratives rely on conspiracy theories and misinformation to shape individuals' worldviews. Farooq provided a manipulated view of the historical narratives including “the ascent of Islam, the thousand years of Muslim supremacy...the bloodlust with which the Christians had avenged themselves for their centuries of humiliation: imperialism, with its racist underpinnings of a 'civilizing mission'.” (129) Martyn Frampton, et.al. in their research article entitled *Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities* state that “This readiness to believe in conspiracy theories and the mentality of victimhood to which it speaks is having a pernicious effect on British Muslims and the way they see the world. It is holding us back – as a community – and ensuring that we remain locked in a paranoid and at times fearful worldview.” These narratives often propagate mistrust in mainstream institutions, fuel skepticism toward factual information, and create an alternative reality that reinforces the ideology. Ideological narratives often appeal to individuals' emotions, tapping into their hopes, fears, frustrations, or desires for social change. By invoking strong emotional responses, these narratives can sway individuals towards radical ideologies that promise to address their emotional needs or provide a sense of purpose and belonging. Emotional appeals can override critical thinking and rational evaluation of the ideology's premises.

Extremist ideologies provide a set of beliefs, values, and narratives that can shape an individual's worldview. Through propaganda, online content, and direct engagement, extremist groups actively work to indoctrinate individuals into their ideology. They promote a radical interpretation of religious, political, or social ideologies that justifies and glorifies violence as a means to achieve their objectives. Wojtowicz observes that “Terrorists do not all fall from the sky. They emerge from a set of strongly held beliefs. They are radicalized. Then they become terrorists.” (51) Farooq invokes the bedrock ideals of the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity and questions, “Where would those ideals be without the Reign of Terror that nurtured and protected them with blood, eliminating all enemies, internal and external, that threatened the new Utopia.” (147) Extremist ideologies often portray their followers as heroes or warriors fighting for a noble cause. This narrative of heroism and purpose can be highly appealing to individuals seeking meaning and validation in their lives.

Extremist recruiters and propagandists selectively interpret religious texts and teachings to support their extremist agenda. They cherry-pick verses or passages out of context and distort their meaning to justify violence, intolerance, or the pursuit of radical objectives. Farooq attempts to create a rift among the Pasha siblings by presenting a distorted version of the Quran by quoting that "Men are in charge of women because Allah has made one of them to excel the other." (130) inciting him to take charge of his sole and rightful authority to decide and dispose of his property. By presenting these interpretations as the only "true" or "pure" understanding of religious doctrine, they seek to convince individuals that violence is a religious duty or pathway to salvation. By manipulating religious symbols, narratives, and values, they tap into an individual's religious identity, reinforcing the notion that radicalization and violence are justified. Farooq offers Parvaiz "an emasculated version of Islam, bankrolled in mosques by the British government which wants to keep us all compliant." (131) convincing him that their actions are sanctioned by religious scripture. Shahid, a character from Azhar Abidi's novel *Twilight* resonates with Farooq's beliefs that "Muslims have no allies. We have never had any allies. The Christians and Jews are our natural foes. They've come to dominate the world because we are weak. They will see to it that we never rise." (78) This manipulation can convince individuals that they are key players in a cosmic battle between good and evil. Extremist groups often foster a sense of religious superiority and exclusivity. They claim to possess the "true" interpretation of religious teachings, labeling others as infidels, heretics, or apostates.

The influence of a strong charismatic figure can be a significant factor in the process of radicalization. With his powerful body-built and his masculine beard, Farooq had "An instant glamour to him" (123) that made him strikingly admirable. Charismatic leaders can evoke powerful emotions such as anger, frustration, fear, or hope, and use them to fuel radicalization. By playing on these emotions, Farooq influenced Parvaiz's perceptions and created a strong emotional attachment to him and his ideology or cause. Charismatic leaders often build a cult of personality around themselves, creating an aura of reverence, infallibility, and exceptionalism. Farooq had such a lasting influence that before leaving for Raqqa, Parvaiz changed his phone's password from the twins' birthday to "the day he first met Farooq." (149) By manipulating and redefining their followers' sense of self, charismatic figures can effectively channel personal frustrations into radical ideologies, forging a strong bond between the individual and the cause.

The valorization of one's father or the glorification of a perceived glorious past can contribute to the process of radicalization. Farooq repeatedly used the narrative about Parvaiz's father, and the tales of his valor to justify his ways and coax Parvaiz into taking the same route. He tells him that his father "entered the fight for justice." (125) Farooq narrated the heroism of his father, Abu Parvaiz, "a man of courage who fought injustice, saw beyond the lie of national boundaries, kept his comrades' spirits up through times of darkness." (128) Farooq glorified and idealized his father's image and justified his absence from his children's life by elaborating how Abu Parvaiz had realized the injustices of an unjust world and stood against them, selflessly. He says that "he understood that a man has larger responsibilities than the ones his wife and mother want to chain him to." (128) When individuals idolize and idealize their fathers who were involved in extremist activities or held radical beliefs, they may feel compelled to follow in their footsteps as a way to honor their legacy. The narratives of his father's valor, his pain, and his fight and sacrifice for justice made Parvaiz realize that "he [Parvaiz] was in the wrong place." (139) The glorification created a sense of duty and obligation to carry on his work, without critically examining the consequences or validity of his actions. Shamsie comments that "beyond his own suffering, he had turned his head towards the wall, towards the photograph of his father, and there was this understanding, *I am you for the first time.*" (139-140) Individuals may feel disconnected or dissatisfied with the current state of affairs and look to a romanticized past as a solution or an ideal to strive for and may see themselves as part of a lineage or legacy that they feel obligated to uphold. Parvaiz started seeing himself as part of a larger historical narrative, a select group with a unique mission or purpose.

The experience of real or imagined oppression can be a significant cause of radicalization. Individuals who feel oppressed, marginalized, or victimized may experience a deep sense of injustice. This perception of injustice can arise from real experiences of discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, political repression, or perceived grievances that may or may not be grounded in reality. Farooq distorts and subverts the whole

concept of Britain as a welfare state telling Parvaiz that “a welfare state was something you built up instead of tearing down, when it saw migrants as people to be welcomed, not turned away.” (144) The experience of oppression can lead individuals to seek solidarity and a sense of belonging. Extremist groups capitalize on this by presenting themselves as a community that understands and shares their grievances. They offer a sense of kinship and a supportive network, fostering a strong group identity centered around the struggle against oppression.

The sense of empowerment through engaging in retribution can indeed contribute to the process of radicalization. Engaging in acts of retribution against perceived oppressors can provide individuals with a sense of psychological satisfaction. Retribution can reinforce and validate the beliefs held by individuals who feel marginalized or oppressed. Parvaiz viewed engaging in retribution as an integral part of his identity formation process. He assumed the role of a responsible son and decided to take up the work that his father would've done by taking on the oppressors himself. Individuals may perceive themselves as warriors, freedom fighters, or agents of justice, further solidifying their commitment to radical ideologies. Acts of retribution can hold symbolic significance for individuals and their communities. Parvaiz viewed these actions as a means to reclaim his dignity, restore honor, or exert control in the face of perceived oppression.

Individuals who have been radicalized often hold idealistic and utopian visions of the future they hope to achieve through their radical actions. However, as they become more involved in extremist activities, they may encounter the stark contrast between their expectations and the realities on the ground. This can include the failure to achieve their desired goals, the realization of the human costs involved in violence, or the discovery of internal divisions and conflicts within their own radical group. The reality of radicalization involves a further escalation of violence and brutality. Parvaiz was unable to endure the sight of beheadings, tremors start running through his body and he silently recites ‘Ayat-al-Kursi’ to calm his shaking heart. Working on the “sound effects of beheadings, crucifixions, whipping.” (169) made him immune to the sounds of violence. He reflects, “Some men were men in their dying screams, some were animals. He, Mohammad bin Bagram, now numbered himself among the animals.” (170) The experience of engaging in or witnessing extreme violence led him to a deep sense of disillusionment as the brutal reality clashed with his initial ideological motivations. Over time, individuals may start questioning the ideological purity and coherence of the radical beliefs they have embraced. After Farooq dropped his garb of righteousness, Parvaiz “mistrusted his own need for an approving father figure.” (168) Farooq abandoned him just after arriving in Raqqa, and didn't fulfill his promise of helping Parvaiz know his father more closely. With fake promises, his disillusionment occurred at the very onset. This realization shattered his confidence in the validity and effectiveness of the radical ideology, leading to disillusionment.

The reality of radicalization can also bring personal consequences that individuals may not have anticipated. This can include legal repercussions, social isolation, damaged relationships, or personal harm. Parvaiz admits that “he was his father's son in his abandonment of a family who had always deserved better than him.” (167) As he faced the real-life consequences of his actions, he experienced regret, guilt, and a profound sense of disillusionment with the path he had chosen. Parvaiz was enveloped in a feeling of homesickness, yearning to see Isma and Aneeka. He desperately wanted to go back home but was equally well aware of the impossibility of his return. Shamsie narrates, “Home. A place from a past he'd turned his back on, and to which MI5 would make sure he never returned.” (170) In his celebrated book *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie posits that “past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.” Individuals who become radicalized often have unrealistic expectations about the outcomes of their actions. They may believe that their radical ideologies will swiftly and dramatically bring about the desired societal change. However, they may find that their extremist activities fail to gain widespread support, fail to attract attention or fail to inspire the mass change they anticipated. Radical actions can have counterproductive outcomes, further contributing to disillusionment. The officers from the Met were interrogating his sisters back in London and Parvaiz was helpless, enraged, and anxious at the thought of the torture he has subjected his innocent sisters to, thus regretting his decision. He realized his mistake and longed to return. Violence and extremism can lead to increased repression from authorities, public backlash, and further entrenchment of the existing systems they sought to challenge. As individuals witness the unintended negative consequences of their actions, they may

question the efficacy and morality of their radical approach. Engaging in radical actions often requires personal sacrifices and exposure to risks. As the personal costs and sacrifices mounted, Parvaiz began to question whether his actions were worth the toll he had taken on his life and well-being.

Individuals may have been promised a utopian society, liberation from oppression, or significant societal change but when these expectations are not met, and the promised goals remain unattainable, it can lead to a deep sense of disillusionment. Radical ideologies and extremist groups often rely on powerful rhetoric and propaganda to recruit and radicalize youth. They may paint an idealized picture of the future, promising swift and dramatic transformations. However, as the radicalized youth become more involved in the movement, they may realize that the rhetoric does not align with the reality on the ground. Parvaiz had come to realize that the radicals delighted in inflicting pain and commented that "The one thing that the violent respect is more violence." (165) This realization erodes his faith in the cause and the leader who made those promises.

Getting trapped in a hostile environment can certainly contribute to disillusionment. Individuals may encounter resistance, rejection, or even hostility from the people around them. Shamsie comments, "He knew by then the nature of the joyless, heartless, unforgiving hellhole for which he'd left his life." (167) Parvaiz's experience of an escalation of violence, repression, or persecution from authorities led him to a pressing sense of disillusionment. He found himself engaging in behaviors that went against his own ethical or moral compass. This conflict led to his disillusionment and a desire to distance himself from the radical ideology he once embraced. The constant threat of violence, instability, or persecution can wear down the radicalized youth's resolve and create a longing for a more secure and peaceful existence.

When radicalized individuals witness or participate in acts of indiscriminate violence that result in civilian casualties or the loss of innocent lives, it can create significant moral and ethical dilemmas. They may experience deep inner conflict as they grapple with the realization that their actions are causing harm to innocent people, contradicting their own sense of morality and ethics. This moral dissonance led to a sense of disillusionment as Parvaiz began to question the righteousness of their cause and the methods employed. Witnessing the suffering and loss of innocent lives evoked feelings of empathy and compassion in his heart. The emotional impact of seeing the devastating consequences of violence on innocent people can challenge their dehumanization of the perceived enemy and erode the ideological justifications for their actions. Engaging in acts of indiscriminate violence can result in unintended consequences and collateral damage. This realization led to a sense of disillusionment as he recognized the futility and counterproductivity of their violent actions. It has a profound psychological impact on radicalized individuals. They may experience guilt, remorse, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. These psychological burdens can further intensify their disillusionment and prompt a reevaluation of their beliefs and actions.

Exposure to violence or witnessing the violence perpetrated by their own group can create a disillusioning effect. The realization that the group he had joined to fight against oppression replicates similar dynamics of control, exploitation, or exclusion, made Parvaiz feel betrayed and disillusioned. He came to understand that the powerful everywhere spoke the language of violence to oppress and intimidate the powerless. Extremist ideologies often make grand promises of justice, empowerment, or societal transformation. However, when individuals realize that these promises remain unfulfilled or are mere rhetoric without tangible outcomes, it can lead to disillusionment. Disillusionment can occur if they find themselves stripped of their individuality, forced into conformity, or subject to strict control by the group. The loss of personal autonomy and the feeling of being manipulated or used as a pawn can prompt them to question their involvement and seek alternative paths.

The utopian vision or promise offered by radical ideologies, which often diverges significantly from reality, can indeed contribute to the disillusionment of radicalized individuals. Radicalized youth are often attracted to extremist ideologies because they promise a seemingly idealistic vision of a perfect society or better world. But as Parvaiz became more involved and observed the actual outcomes and progress, he realized that the promised vision remains elusive or unattainable. "He didn't know how to break out of these currents of history, how to shake free of these demons he had attached to his own heels." (171) As individuals delve deeper

into the ideology and its associated narratives, they may encounter contradictions and inconsistencies within the belief system. Damon L. Perry in her article, *Mainstream Islamism in Britain: Educating for the Islamic Revival* exposes the maliciousness of such a belief system by stating that “These ideas and practices include the discriminatory treatment of women in shari’a councils; the preaching of misogynistic, homophobic, antisemitic, and supremacist views in mosques; the education of Muslim children according to such views; and the unlawful sex-segregation of Muslim children in schools.” The Shariah classes taught him that “everyone he loved was either he loved was either an infidel or an apostate, and that both categories deserve to die.” (167) His beliefs further received a blow with ‘The State’s’ treatment of women. He was disgusted with the concept of ‘Hisba’- the morality police and its unfair treatment, cruelty, and humiliation of women who took off their veils. His helplessness of being barred from helping her and leaving her to suffer caused him to turn away in revulsion. This contradiction of their own propagated beliefs can lead to disillusionment and erode the followers’ faith in the movement. Radical ideologies tend to oversimplify complex social, political, or economic issues by offering straightforward solutions. However, as radicalized individuals engage with these issues in practice, they may realize the inherent complexity and multi-faceted nature of the problems they seek to address. Parvaiz, helplessly cries, “No, I just...I can’t stay here. I can’t do it. They’ve taken my passport so I have to but I can’t. I thought if I learnt the rules...but I can’t. I can’t. I just want to come home.” (174) Farooq, the charismatic leader, was, in fact, a recruiter of radical agents who was training his cousins when he met Parvaiz for the first time. Almost instantly, he had found his prey which culminated in Parvaiz becoming “the enemy” (175) of Britain, making his return to ‘home’ imaginary and impossible. Rushdie postulates that “... exiles or migrants or expatriates, are haunted by an urge to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt.” And this was precisely the case with Parvaiz. The realization that the pursuit of the utopian vision has resulted in suffering, chaos, or the perpetuation of injustice can undermine an individual’s commitment and contribute to disillusionment. Parvaiz’s disillusionment concluded with his killing by his own ‘brother’.

Through the characters’ journeys, Kamila Shamsie portrays the gradual erosion of faith and the subsequent disillusionment that can occur within the context of radicalization. The novel explores the emotional toll on individuals, the strained relationships within families, and the profound impact on personal and collective identities. The novel, *Home Fire* explores the complex motivations and personal struggles that lead to radicalization. By portraying the characters’ journeys, Kamila Shamsie sheds light on the intricate dynamics of radicalization and raises important questions about identity, loyalty, and the search for meaning. *Home Fire* prompts readers to reflect on the allure and seduction of extremist ideologies while also highlighting the human cost and the devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities. It depicts the dangers of extremist ideologies, the motivations behind radicalization, and the potential for disillusionment when faced with the reality of violence and its consequences. It raises important questions about the complexities of human experiences and the search for belonging, identity, and purpose in a world marked by conflict and extremism. Shamsie not only critically examines and exposes the factors that contribute to radicalization but also warns her readers to consider the consequences of extremist ideologies and their disillusioning effect on individuals and society.

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