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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 22:1 January 2022

# Factors Behind Radicalization: Analysis of Fatima Bhutto's *The Runaways*

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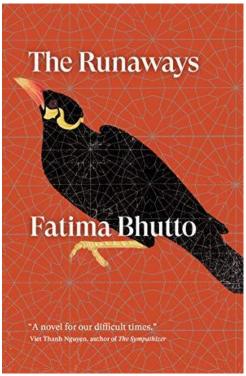
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#### **Abstract**

This research aims at analyzing Fatima Bhutto's novel *The Runaways*, in terms of its portrayal of radicalization and the factors behind it. Bhutto has presented a picture of modern world, particularly England and Pakistan, where individuals adopt the pathway of extremism by

encountering, alienation, inequality, identity crisis, poverty and so forth. The study is carried out under the umbrella of Neumann's understanding of radicalization as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected text. It implicates the causes of radicalization in the current social system of political spheres. The study is conducted qualitatively and designed descriptively. It uses the Textual Analysis Method for the analysis. The data are gathered from the novel *The Runways* by Bhutto. The selected excerpts are sampled for answering the research question that how people get radicalized in the extremist violent discourse of religion. The study concludes that individuals suffering from identity crisis, poverty, social frustration, and religious segregation are easy prey to get radicalized and involved in violence.

**Keywords:** Fatima Bhutto, *The Runaways*, Radicalism, Factors, Violence.

#### Introduction

Fatima Bhutto, the daughter of Murtaza Bhutto, is the niece of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and granddaughter of former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and Murtaza. She was born on May 29th in Kabul in the political family. *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013), *The Runaways* (2018), *The Democracy* (2015), and an autobiographical memoir *Songs of Blood and Sword* (2010) come among her best-known works. Her writings come through her heart, and her knowledge of the country's complicated political and socioeconomic challenges rings throughout the works (Anam, Lodhi & Anwar, 2021). According to Sethna (2014), Bhutto is a skilled writer of political narrative because she uses literary abilities to create an astonishing story of conflict, treachery, political turmoil, and shattered identities.

## **Background**

9/11 of 2001 was clearly the highest catastrophic incident of the twenty-first century. It wreaked havoc on the glob's social and political landscape. It obliterated a massive structure in New York and murdered a significant proportion of individuals Suganami (2003). Terrorism, according to Lepeshkov (2010), is by far the most significant concern of security to the welfare of the citizens and government/state. Moreover, radicalization is a complicated process in which a person as an individual or a community acquires an excessive ideology or mindset that recognizes or disregards the use of violent actions to accomplish a specified sociopolitical position. An individual or groups which advocate terrorist activity are more likely to enter into the terror groups as a result of such project (Anam, Lodhi & Anwar, 2021).

The Runaways (2018) by Bhutto explores radicalism and existential crisis through the perspective of all its hypersensitive characters. The story's main protagonists are Anita Rose, Monty, and Sunny. She discusses how isolation, dissatisfaction, and deprivation constitute a pathway to Radical Islam in the narrative book. Additionally, it fore-grounds the idea of radicalization and particularly being radicalized. In Pakistani and England society, individuals

suffering from identity crisis, poverty, poverty, alienation, religious segregation, and social frustration are easy prey to get radicalized, and they turn themselves up to wage the radical war. Moreover, Bhutto wants to propagate the message, through her work, that equality must be ensured in different spheres of life to shatter the ideas of radicalization. Therefore, this study investigates the different factors behind radicalization and how they influence the common masses which become a reason for radical attitude towards religion. It finds that ongoing pieces of research have not dealt with this subject. Thus, researchers here come up with locating different factors behind radicalization with the help of Neumann's understanding of radicalization as a theoretical lens.

#### **Related Literature**

The previous section has presented the basic introduction to the writer of the novel, the background, research problem of this study. Here, the researchers bring a brief review of related literature to this study. The previous studies on the novel and the basic understanding of factors behind radicalization are presented here.

#### **Previous Studies**

The novel by Bhutto, forms a complicated literary geography including its complicated integration of ideologies - national, and international identities; the connection among passion and self-destruction; and the structure of the grid through which we exist. The characters' sensitivities reveal a new cycle of power dynamics, in which political and personhood, imperial and psychological factors are all deeply intertwined (Khan & Okhlama, 2020). It is a narrative story which discloses the experiences of youth of displacement, and their own fears about identification, and not merely only about radicalism and horrific acts. This book answers the questions that what weakness compels the youth to rely inside the salvation of Islamic terrorism, and how can they abandon their everyday life longings. Bhutto inquires them in an inconspicuous manner, enabling everyone to enter the minds of the fugitives. Her insights are frequently gloomy instead of compassionate, and she avoids facile explanations (Bari, 2019).

Additionally, the writer herself in an interview comments on the novel that there are many factors behind the radical attitude of Muslims towards Islam. It is not the religion itself but social and psychological issues which cause people towards radicalization discussed in the novel. It is a political spectrum of power not all the time religious belief. Common factors in all the characters both male and female are the poverty, alienation and political displacement which emerge as radicalization and being radicalized, and this was aimed to locate in the fictional story, which also caused fear and scariness from the religiously extremist counter reaction (Inskeep, 2020).

Relatively, the researchers (Shah, Riaz, Sajjad & Ahmad, 2022) have studied the traumatic elements in the novels of Bhutto. According to the study, *The Runaways* (2018) also includes the factor behind trauma as an outcome of psychological standing. War, death, loss, language, terror

attacks, departure and past memories of pain come in prime number for affecting the life of ordinary people in the novel. The 21<sup>st</sup> century's culture of terrorism also causes traumatic condition.

## **Radicalization**

According to Dolnik (2009), thinkers, intellectuals, and a number of authors regard radicalization, fundamentalism, strident radicalism, and bloodshed as interchangeable terms. The term means the basic and radical values and principles of a doctrine. According to Rais (2009), scholars and educated people propose a genuine effort to distinguish radicalization from terrorism and extremism. Religious extremists don't really call themselves religious fanatics. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, refer to themselves as the extremists.

According to Naqi (2008), radicalization would lead to extremism in the declaration of one's convictions honesty and ideality factor, as well as their incomparability. *Radicalization* refers to a significant transformation that is recognized 'enthusiastically' regarding a certain issue. *Extremism* is the acceptance or choosing an irrational condition in relation to every issue. *Terrorism*, on the other hand, imposes a forceful load of ideas, goals, or viewpoints on unwilling. According to Roy (1994), the meanings of *modernization* and *religious fanaticism* are evolving. *Religious radicalism* can refer to a group or a person. However, Sial and Anjum (2010) believe that religious sentiments are low in Pakistan, and people are frequently harsh or strong when it comes to matters involving their belief based principles and world affairs. Radicalization aims to spread fear, disturb the social sphere, and avail political goals explicit in the environment. There are multiple sources involved in radicalizing and being part of radicalization; from the prejudice of modern world to mental illness, and other factors like society, social exclusion, political, geopolitical, alienation and racism also cause radical attitude in the masses (Useem & Clayton, 2009 and Abbas & Siddique, 2011).

Hence, it is viewed that a good number of studies on the literature of the novel and radicalization is carried out by the researchers. As per dealing with the problem, the novel is studied through aforementioned limited subjects. Radicalization and its factors are also studied in general. The issue of factors behind radicalization in Bhutto's novel remains untouched. Therefore, the researchers here tryingly investigate the subject in order to fill this gap in the arena of research studies.

#### Method

The research is descriptive in nature, and it has been carried out via qualitative method of Textual Analysis. The research is conducted on the novel, *The Runaways* (2018). The data for textual analysis are collected from the selected thematic excerpts from the novel. The researchers analyze the concept of radicalization in the novel with the help of Peter R. Neumann's essay, The

Trouble with Radicalization (2013) as a theoretical framework. The main objective of this research is to investigate factors behind radicalization displayed in the novel.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Peter R. Neumann wrote the essay, The Trouble with Radicalization (2013), in which he talks about the term *radicalization* and its actual meaning which has actually been mistaken by other scholars. He, in his essay, defines the term that radicalization is not a myth rather its definition has ambiguity. He emphasizes that all the major discussions that have sprung from it are connected to the equivalent inalienable equivocalness. He clarifies that radicalization, at first, is a process. Individuals do not become terrorist or extremist in a day, or they embrace violence by a single influence. In the essay, The Trouble with radicalization, Neuman (2013) also explains the key factors that influence individuals to accept extremism, such as religious segregation, poverty, identity crisis, suppression of people on the basis of power, status quo, and so forth. (Neumann, 2013). Therefore, the current study explores poverty, religious segregation, social frustration, and identity crisis (alienation) as major factors leading to radicalization. Bhutto (2018) has fictionally evaluated them as reasons behind radicalizing Islam.

## **Textual Analysis**

Radicalization is not a new term discovered recently in the last decade, rather it has a history. People radicalized others on the basis of their alienation from society, sense of emptiness in the world, poverty, searching for identity, conflicts of interchanging faiths, etc. to fight against the world. The term radicalization has become potently famous after the 9/11 attacks and it has led the West develop Islamophobia in many circles and started calling them extremist, fundamentalist, violent and so forth. In the twenty-century people from different cultures, backgrounds and countries get radicalized and they take up arms against the world. What makes them so ferocious and why they dive themselves into the process of radicalization, this is what Fatima Bhuto answers in her novel, *The Runaways* (2018). It delineates the story of three individuals who, after the unextinguished sufferings of the world, turn themselves up and start their journey to Mosul, Syria, to fight against the world.

## **Poverty**

"When she was in class four, Anita had her own troubles. She didn't have time to worry about being poor" (Bhutto, 2018, p. 12)

Anita belongs to a very poor family. Her mother is a breadwinner who does massage the rich ladies in order to earn a good living. Anita has always been asked to borrow culinary items from his neighbor, Osama Shah. She has lived a very depressed and pathetic life; she was not given attention when she went to school, she was bullied by her classmates, she had to cross her legs while sitting at the corner of the bench and so forth. She has always dreamed of a beautiful life,

but what she has in realty is the small dirty room and a big brother who hardly earns some money to run his family in the slum of Machar colony, Karachi. In the above mentioned line, Bhutto presents the idea that poverty-stricken family faces multiple problems and are marginalized by the rich neighbors. The grave cause of radicalization is shown here by Bhutto which strengthens Anita to get radicalized.

"Together we will shake your chains to the earth like dew. Together we will make sure no more such things fall upon you." (Bhutto, 2018, p. 85)

Anita keeps on going daily to comrade Osama Shah's flat, because it is the only place where she, somehow, feels still alive. Comrade teaches her the message of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Habib Jalib, Ghalib and Jhalindri. He teaches her how they have conveyed the message of revolution, freedom, true intimacy, and tragedy. He keeps on calling her 'lion', a lion who would fight against the injustice, a lion who would bring revolution, and a lion who would rule alone. He raises a fire in the heart of Anita. Anita wanted to learn everything she lacked in, and Osama is her only true companion who would guide her, shows her the real path, makes her way straight to success, and makes her fearless. Anita has suffered a lot in her life, and now she wants to change her life entirely by hook or crook. In the given excerpt, Bhutto reveals that Anita is instigated by her comrade, Osama Shah to fight against the world, which has always suppressed the weaker, and later she joins the ISIS in Syria. The portrayal of Anita shows that suppression in a society is a great curse.

"Her brother had trained her to lie low; Osama had guided her to fight. Somewhere between the two was where Layla would survive".

(Bhutto, 2018, p. 352)

The story gets a twist when the readers come to know that it is Anita who has changed her name to Layla. It is the same girl who Monty has wished his entire life to spend time with, to love her, to touch her, to make her feel so special in his world of dreams. Anita's brother Ezra has also changed her name to Feroze, because they have found that even their names have given them nothing, and in this world on fire they would fight their wars alone, struggle alone, get their new identity and so forth. Layla's brother Feroze who works for some company and client has made his family's living better, he has bought them a new flat in Gulshan and came out of the slum of Machar colony. Her brother has got her admission in American School where she meets Monty and then the never-ending story takes place. She has seen the worse of the world and now she has risen again to defeat them and to make them see worse. Layla has never thought of going to Syria and fight the war against the world, but it is her sufferings, Osama Shah's lectures and her brother's unbearable act that have led her to embrace the extremism and radicalization. Her brother has made her trip to Dubai where she was taken as the prostitute to satisfy the desires of sexually frustrated

elites. Even her video, while having sex, was made, and it led her to the unending trauma that resulted in making her way to Syria, only place where she could outrage her feelings by killings and doing *jihad*, in order to create her new identity in a world on fire. Fatima Bhutto also reveals that poverty-stricken Anita suffers in her life owing to inequality, and demarcation of society.

#### **Social Frustration**

"Because you and me, Cuz, they'll never accept us. We're the periphery, we'll never be the centre. We're not like them. We come from a different culture. They don't understand our people, our struggles". (Bhutto, 2018, p. 100)

Sunny is from Portsmouth, England. He belongs to a middle class migrant family. He is a British born Indian, because his father has migrated from Lucknow, India. Sunny, in Portsmouth, spends a very flirtatious and sexually frustrated life. He has slept with many white girls and women whether brown or white. After turning nineteen, he has become obsessed with all these. He has felt the sense of emptiness, restless, identity in a world on fire, and so forth. At school he was not given importance, got teased and bullied because of his dual identity; all in all he felt that he never belonged to Portsmouth. His cousin Oz (Ozair), who has recently been from Syria, tells him about the world, especially the West, that they will never acknowledge the Muslims, they would never accept them as humans, they consider Muslims as extremists, they have a very opposite culture, they do not understand how Muslims struggle to fight against the injustice, marginalization, blurred identity, and so forth. Oz urges Sunny to follow what Islam says, to Jihad. He emphasizes Sunny and tells him how the West has squeezed them, their identity, their place, and the only way to squeeze them back is to *Jihad*. The novelist describes the attitude of West towards Muslims. Moreover, the idea presented by Bhutto shows the concept of identity crisis and at the same time Oz urges Sunny that elite class in the England has also done injustice to them which represent social injustice. It can be seen later on that Sunny gets radicalized by his cousin, Oz, and goes to Syria to participate in Jihad.

"Monty only wanted to be the kind of man Layla could be proud of. A real man, not a reflection. Not the small, frightened man he had been when she left him". (Bhutto, 2018, p.188)

Monty belongs to an aristocrat family in Karachi. He is the only son of his parents. In the American School of Karachi, he falls in love with a girl, Layla, who looks very charming, attractive, and beautiful. Monty's life has been so simple before meeting Layla. He has never seen a world filled with tears, sufferings, poverty, violence, suppression and so forth. He has just lived in his world of his dreams; travelling in Audi, having snacks at McDonalds, spending summers in London, and all in all he had everything that a common man had ever wished for. When he first

met Layla, she had asked him that what he knew about the world, and Monty remained as silent as log. His relationship with Layla grew so stronger that he could not live without her. His life began and ended with Layla. But after the sudden departure of Layla, he felt so empty that he never took a sigh of relief then. When he got to know that Layla has travelled to Syria to fight against the world and to *Jihad*, Monty sets himself up and starts preparing to find Layla there. He reaches Mosul and with Sunny he travels by foot to Nineveh through desert. All his endeavours and struggle were only to meet his Layla, and it was Layla for whom he came to Syria and left all of his comforts back in Karachi.

## **Religious Segregation**

"Men who went to mosque but not to war, those were not Muslims." (Bhutto, 2018, p. 117)

Oz (Ozair) continuously keeps on telling Sunny that, Portsmouth, is not a place he belongs to. Many Muslims who just offer prayers and live their lives simply without taking risks, without fighting, without realizing their place, identity, and worth are not Muslims. The only true Muslim is one who leaves his life fighting for his religion and people. Oz encourages Sunny to go to Syria, a place where he would feel his worth, where he would know the real charm of life, where he would be set on the actual path for what God sent him in to this world. Sunny, being alone and desolate in the Portsmouth, England, finds Oz his only companion that can makes him feel alive and strong. He has never witnessed in his past twenty years that he existed or not, but after the arrival of his Cousin Oz from Syria, he feels somehow complete, there is something in Oz's company that has made him feel rugged to stand and fight for himself. The character of Oz, on the one hand, shows the attitude of West towards Muslim who discriminate them with religious perspective. On the other hand, he condemns Muslims who just offer prayers and do not know the true meaning of Islam. These both dimensions in the novel witness that social division is the sole cause of radicalization where middle and poor class is misused.

## **Alienation and Identity Crisis**

"His mother was the only one who supported his coming out here". (Bhutto, 2018, p. 337)

It has been months that Monty is in Syria. He has come here to meet his dream-girl, Layla. But apart from that his mother was, too, happy and satisfied that her son has gone at a place where he would find his actual purpose, a place where he would see the reality, a place where he would know how the world works and how it suppresses the weaker. One day, when Monty's mother, Zahra Ahmed, took Monty to Abdullah Shah Ghazi's Shrine, which is located near the beach in Karachi, Zahra told her son about the bravery of Abdullah Shah Ghazi that how he fought wars,

how he saved his religion, and how he got martyred. His mother, by holding his hand tightly, said that man gains a lot more respect when he fights against the injustice, oppression, poverty, and all in all against the world of cruelty. For the first time, after the departure of Layla, Monty had found himself in peace - a state that makes him free of all sorrows. And when, finally, he has come here, in Syria, to fight the same as his mother had expected, he has felt glad and relaxed somehow. In the given excerpt, the character of Zahra gives different examples of bravery to his son in order to show that religion is the conduct of life and guarantees peace and tranquility. Moreover, she also sheds light on the social and religious demarcation where weaker are used by stronger. Bhutto, in her novel shows the social distinction and sense of alienation prevalent in the world which brings a havoc and radicalization.

"Abu Khalid said, upon *her*. All the alienated, lost and angrythey were all watching Layla". (Bhutto, 2018, p. 271)

Abu Khalid is the commander of jihadist group in Syria. He has got a brave sister, Layla, who delivers bombastic speeches and catches the attention of millions of people. She, through her voice, portrays the sufferings of individuals who are going through identity crisis, who are depressed, alienated, lost in the world, empty, and going in the dark ways of their lives. Abu Khalid accepts that her voice has that rage which would call all the people who are hiding it in their hearts. As she has made her path to fight the war in Syria, he is certain that other people would also join them soon to become the member of their group by listening her long, influential, and outraged lectures. Bhutto presents the idea that how those people, who are radicalized already, radicalize others who are suffering from the feeling of alienation in their real world.

"Now Sunny was a soldier, he was brought out here for something special. He knew that". (Bhutto, 2018, p. 215)

Although Sunny gets hurt so much, when he comes to know that his very cousin, Oz, who he believed and considered the most trustworthy, and a true companion to all his sorrows, has cheated on him. He has made Sunny to go to Syria, fight with their brothers, and he has also promised him that he would come and join him soon. But he has never come, rather he has joined an organization, reforming radical, in order to tell the world how radical individuals threat to humanity, how young men and women are radicalized easily, and how he has got himself back from that extremist world. Sunny gets hurt when he listens to all these, but now the time has passed. He has set his target. He has become a true warrior who will wage a war against the people who always suppressed them, condemned them, and he will do jihad to save his religion, his people, and identity. Sunny thinks that all his life he has suffered a lot, misguided by people, mistreated and misled, but now he is here in Syria where he would achieve his final destination and his path will lead him to the Paradise. Bhutto shows the conspiracy hatched by Oz to instigate Sunny in

order to join Syria against West. The main idea proposed by Bhutto, in her novel *The Runaways* shows that sometimes identity crisis misleads people and they are at stake by others. Thus, the major agenda of being radicalized can be identity crisis as mentioned in the above theoretical framework.

"Sisters, will you compromise everything for your comfort? Free yourself from the lies of Westoxification. Freedom is this". (Bhutto, 2018, p. 290)

Sunny and Monty have been travelling through the desert of Syria to reach Nineveh as soon as possible, where they would meet their brothers who will welcome them and take the Nineveh under their control. One night, campaigning in the midst of the desert, Monty takes Sunny's iPhone in order to search out Layla's upcoming leaked video on YouTube and confirms whether his dream-girl is safe or not. He sees a new uploaded video of Layla escalating her emotions, encouraging her sisters to come out of their homes and fight against the oppression. For her, Europe has always tried to destroy their identity, the West has always ruled them, and they have never considered them equal rather they treated east brutally whether in theoretical way or practical. And now, when she can make her voice reach her millions of sisters who are alienated, suppressed, and under the ties of Western culture, she wants them to get rid of this and embrace the real freedom. Bhutto in her novel shows that Layla, being born in a country where poverty and alienation has sucked the blood of common men, is now in a position to tell their people what is the actual aim of life and to fight against the injustice is to *jihad*, and compromise your comforts for the sake of real freedom.

### **Conclusion**

The novel, *The Runaways* (2018), represents a picture of Pakistani and English society where individuals get radicalized and turn their path on the way to embrace extremism. In the novel, Fatima Bhutto has depicted the pathway that leads individuals towards radicalization and the various causes like poverty, religious segregation, social frustration, and identity crisis make individuals become radicalized. She is of the opinion that individuals do not become violent or extremist on their own, rather there are root causes that make them so. The three characters, Anita, Sunny and Monty are the portrayals of Fatima Bhutto's *The Runaways* (2018), what she calls the path towards radicalization and as being radicalized. Fatima Bhutto illustrates that people, in this modern world, are searching for their identity, place, state, real existence and so forth. And when they cannot avail it, they choose the path which leads to radicalization. Moreover, this study cannot possibly be the final in its findings. The readers and upcoming researchers are welcome to share their valid criticism, and they can also conduct a further study regarding the subject to accomplish the more possible and comprehensive findings.

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