



**THE POLITICS OF BELONGING: A READING OF
DIASPORIC IDENTITY IN NAWAAZ AHMED'S
RADIANT FUGITIVES (2021)**

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Abstract

This study examines the issues of identity, belonging, and displacement in Nawaaz Ahmed's *Radiant Fugitives*. It highlights how Ahmed depicts the psychological, cultural, and social issues that define the life in diaspora. Employing postcolonial theory within diasporic domain, complemented by Bhabha's identity theory, the study highlights the tensions between memory and migration, home and exile, and individual and collective identity, demonstrating how characters negotiate their sense of self within unfamiliar and often alienating environments. The study argues that, in addition to portraying the pain and confusion of dislocation, the selected novel also shows the possibilities of resilience, adaptation, and hybrid belonging. The research findings demonstrate that Ahmed portrays multipartite complications of diasporic life and makes significant contributions to the current literary discussions on identity formation, cultural negotiation, and the experience of displacement in an increasingly globalized world. The novel describes diasporic identity as fluid and hybrid, which is affected by the tension between tradition and adaptation, self and community, and memory and the existing realities.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Identity, Belonging, Displacement, Migration, Postcolonial Literature, Transnationalism, Cultural Hybridity.*

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, migration/diaspora has become a central factor shaping personal and collective identities. As a result “Identity crisis/hybrid identity is a dominant theme of literature in the rapidly growing globalized society” (Mortaza et al., 2024, p. 4177). The diaspora experience, which is marked by physical displacement out of the home country and the process of finding their way through the new cultural, social, and emotional landscapes, poses unique challenges and opportunities to self-definition. As a genre, diasporic literature provides a critical perspective through which these experiences are explored, providing an understanding of the conflicts between memory, belonging, and displacement. The literature created by writers who are not living in their homelands is based on the interwoven motifs of home, memory, and displacement; in this case, the homeland is constructed as a physical location and as a re-created ideal in the context of exile. On the other hand, the hostland is a place of cultural contact and negotiation, where new identities can be formed, and where people face alienation, marginalisation, and disruption of cultural transmission. These dynamics are frequently brought out in literary terms capturing the intricate and multilayered nature of diasporic consciousness.

Nawaaz Ahmed is a modern Indian writer. He shows interest in depicting the issue of identity, immigration, and the human experience in the transnational context. *Radiant Fugitives* is his debut novel, capturing the psychological, social and cultural aspects of displacement. The sensitivity to the subtleties of diasporic life is a hallmark of Ahmed’s *Radiant Fugitives*, as the characters struggle with the issues of belonging, memory, and selfhood and have to negotiate the new surroundings. Ahmed (2021) sheds light on the conflicts and opportunities inherent in the process of migration, as a fine commentary on how the personal experience and the larger socio-cultural pressures interact. The characters in the novel navigate psychological as well as cultural challenges of being outside the homeland, and seek to establish very tangible forms of relationship in the new environments. The novel depicts complex relationship between identity and displacement to show that diasporic subjects must choose between the nostalgic pull and the methods of adapting and integrating. It highlights that migration challenges established notions of home and belonging that force people to answer the questions of cultural allegiance, personal identity, and social acceptance.

With subtle characterisation and reminiscent narration, *Radiant Fugitives* makes the psychological and emotional work that goes into the navigation of various cultural systems, and at the same time records the strength and hybrid identities that come as a result of such experiences. The novel shows different reactions to migration through the characters of Seema, Tahera, and Nafeesa, who react to migration in different ways: assimilation and civic participation, religious conservatism and emotional detachment, which makes diaspora not a homogenous state but a heterogeneous one. The discomfort of Tahera in America, the belonging of Seema in America through political and social involvement and the nostalgic feeling of Nafeesa in India all prove the emotional construction of home and not its geographical location. The hybrid appearance of Nafeesa, the linguistic changes of Seema, and the repetitive appearance of memory show that cultural identities intersect and co-exist. This in-betweenness is further supported by the unborn narrator who is a representation of the emotional and generational continuity of diaspora. Displacement leads to family conflict as one of its main outcomes. The religious practice, sexuality, and cultural adaptation differences only heighten the tensions among characters, particularly the two sisters. These disputes are the manifestations of a larger diasporic conflict in which tradition and assimilation tend to come into conflict, redefining the family ties and individual relationships.

Placing *Radiant Fugitives* in the diasporic context, the study explores the way in which the novel negotiates the complicated processes of identity formation, cultural negotiation, and the sense of exile that permeates the life of diaspora. The study argues that displacement portrayed in the novel is more than just the loss and alienation, and the hope of belonging is more than geographic or cultural borders. As a result, the novel makes a significant contribution to the current discourse on the realities of migration as lived, and the subtle processes by which diasporic communities redefine the concept of self and home in a constantly changing world.

2.Literature Review

Diaspora refers to the scattering or movement of people out of their native land to new geographical locations, which may include the preservation of cultural, social and emotional connections to the home country and at the same time adjusting to new surroundings. This experience has a complicated impact on individuals and communities, both psychological issues like nostalgia, alienation, and identity conflict and social and cultural tensions between heritage preservation and host-society assimilation (National Geographic Society, 2023). Diasporic life also creates hybrid identities, in which various cultural forces interact, creating fluid and dynamic self-constructions. Diasporic communities have an economic and political impact on their home countries and host countries in terms of remittances, advocacy, and cultural exchange (Dhar and Raman,

2024). Diaspora study seeks to comprehend these complex experiences, asking how migration determines identity, belonging, social networks, and power relation. It sheds light on the problems of displacement, marginalisation, and creative negotiation of cultures and highlights adaptive and creative measures that help individuals and communities to create significant identities in multi-spaces (Chad, 2025). Through the holistic approach, researchers will be able to value the interaction of memory, culture, and agency in determining the lives of displaced people and the resilience and creativity that arise as a result of living between worlds (Maziar & Erfurth, 2025).

Diaspora literature deals with the experiences, feelings, and struggles of people and communities that are not in their native countries, and who tend to navigate through complicated cultural, social, and psychological landscapes. It explores the problem of identity, belonging, alienation, and displacement, highlighting the way in which migration shapes personal and group-consciousness (Bah, 2024). The question of the equilibrium between memory and adaptation, tradition and modernity, home and host society, is a common theme in diasporic literature, as it is the two-fold pressure of preserving the heritage and adapting to new settings. Diasporic literature highlights the theme of hybrid identities, cultural negotiation, and the imaginative opportunities that exist due to liminality, the in-between spaces between two or more cultures, histories, and languages (AlGharaibeh, 2025). In addition, the works on diaspora explain the political, historical and economic aspects of migration, giving voice to the oppressed or silenced groups and challenging the dominant discourses on nation, ethnicity and belonging. Displacement has psychological and social effects. Diasporic literature does not only record lived experiences but also provides a critical perspective on the study of resilience, adaptation, and self-reconstruction in the context of migration (Dhar and Raman, 2024). Since the classic postcolonial texts to the modern transnational works, works that discuss the theme of diaspora highlight the dynamic between individual memory, cultural heritage, and mobility in the world, thus highlighting that identity and belonging are constantly negotiated processes shaped by history, mobility, and search of home across various spaces (Lahmidi, 2025).

Radiant Fugitives combines the themes of family epic, cultural war, and political subtext with deeply sympathetic characterizations. Its foetus narrator and lyrical prose deals with the themes of estrangement, identity, and reconciliation, but some readers find its structure an imbalance and its pace slow. On the whole, the novel is a strong discussion of love, loss, and belonging in the context of intersecting identities and social pressure (Electric Literature, 2021). Being a highly powerful family drama that breaks the cultural borders, *Radiant Fugitives* represents love, memory, and misunderstanding in a closely interwoven story. The reviewer emphasizes the ability of Ahmed to elicit universal

emotional truths, making faith, identity, and reconciliation emotionally intense in the lyrical context, and thus making the novel both personal and universal (Literary Affairs, 2021). Brewer (2021) highlights that *Radiant Fugitives* is a personal story of Nawaaz Ahmed, a gay Muslim immigrant, who focuses on the theme of identity, religion, and belonging in the context of broken family relationships. The ten years of creative work by Ahmed is a reflection of the active work with narrative voice and cultural complexity that shows how individual experiences influence literary fiction that appeals to the wider tensions of society. According to Catan (2021), Ahmed creates a multigenerational story with a multilayer, which develops through poetic and impressionistic prose and explores politics, sexuality, religion, and family relationships in the course of a transformative week in the life of the women of the Hussein family. The foetus narrator of the novel and the well-rounded characters add emotional and cultural layers to the novel, making the debut daring, sweeping, and evocative.

Despite the recognition of the narrative and thematic richness of *Radiant Fugitives*, little scholarly attention has been given to how it addresses the issue of diasporic identity, belonging and displacement. The current studies tend to separate the cultural, familial, or psychological factors, thus leaving the hybrid selfhood negotiation in the transnational and postcolonial settings under-researched. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a theoretically informed interpretation of the work by Ahmed.

3. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study follows a qualitative and interpretive approach to the analysis of *Radiant Fugitives* by Nawaaz Ahmed with the focus on issues of identity, belonging, and displacement. Using hermeneutic textual analysis, complemented by Bhabha's theory, the study discusses the characters, narrative techniques and motifs that reflect the psychological, cultural and social aspects of the diasporic life. The discussion is placed in the context of diaspora studies and postcolonial theory, which allows exploring the issues of exile, memory, and hybrid identities, and emphasizing the obstacles and strengths of the diasporic experiences.

The term 'postcolonial' refers to all cultures and societies that have been influenced by the historical events of colonization, which are not only limited to the colonial era, but also to the present times (Ashcroft et al., 2007). It "is used to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Walder, 1998, p. 35). The postcolonial theory provides a critical framework of how colonization, migration, and cultural domination history still affect identity, belonging, and displacement experiences. It questions the political, social and psychological heritage of colonial authority, focusing on how individuals and groups of people bargain their sense

of self in the frameworks of marginalization and inequality (Davids, 2025). Postcolonial theory in the diasporic setting sheds light on the sophisticated dynamics where displaced people form hybrid identities that juggle between the cultural heritage of their home countries and the demands and expectations of their host countries. This negotiation tends to create tensions between the memory and adaptation, nostalgia and assimilation, as the diasporic subjects attempt to preserve the ties to their origins and create new forms of belonging (Qasim et al., 2024). By highlighting the interplay of power, cultural continuity, and personal agency, postcolonial theory offers insights into how displacement impacts social relations, psychological well-being, and the formation of identity, revealing both the vulnerabilities and the resilience inherent in diasporic life (Rasool et al., 2025).

The ideas of belonging and identity are the main focus of the postcolonial discourse because the cultures and subjectivities of postcolonial societies continue to develop under the influence of colonization, migration, and displacement. The concept of identity, especially, takes a pivotal position in postcolonial theory since it is the reflection of the existing negotiation between the oppression of the past and the realities of the present that are determined by globalization. “Identity is the most significant concept in postcolonial theory due to colonization and globalization” (Jabeen et al., 2024, p. 1026). The societies and peoples that were formerly colonized are actively involved in the process of rewriting their history, reclaiming the previously suppressed or distorted narratives under the colonial rule, and redefining their role in the contemporary world. It is not only about remembering and facing the past injustices but also about negotiating a sense of belonging to various cultural spaces (Sagar, 2021). Postcolonial identity is not fixed, thus it is constantly being rebuilt as people and communities exercise agency, resist marginalization, and adjust to new realities without losing the links to their past (Ul Hassan & Qasim, 2025). In this perspective, the postcolonial theory brings into view the interrelationship of memory, culture, power and adaptation, and the manner in which identity and belonging are constantly redefined in the presence of displacement, migration, and persistent socio-political issues.

Bhabha is a pioneering postcolonial theorist whose work clarifies the issues of identity, culture and power in postcolonial and diasporic settings. The main ideas of his thought are hybridity, the third space, and cultural negotiation, which undermine the fixed or essentialist conceptions of identity and underline the fluid, dynamic processes in which identities are formed. For Bhabha (1994), identity is never static; it is always negotiated in the “in-between” spaces that emerge when cultures interact. Hybridity, in this framework, arises at the intersection of multiple cultural forces, challenging the binary oppositions enforced by colonial discourse. As Al-Qassab (2025) observes, “Hybridity, for Bhabha, signifies the cultural mingling and interaction that happens in colonial and postcolonial

settings, bringing about the rise of new, hybrid identities that cannot be deftly classified” (p. 313).

Bhabha (1994) extends the concept of hybridity through the notion of the “third space of enunciation,” a political and cultural domain defined by in-betweenness and hybrid identities. As Al-Qassab (2025) observes, “Bhabha also comes up with the notion of the ‘third space,’ which implies the in-between, liminal space where overriding accounts and identities are undermined and novel likelihoods arise” (p. 313). Within this Third Space, hybridity destabilizes hegemonic authority by revealing its internal contradictions and weaknesses. Bhabha (1994) further explains that “the transformational value of [third space] lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One...nor the Other...but something else besides...” (p. 28). As a result, the Third Space is a generative site of critical reflection, reinterpretation, and transformation where all social and cultural entities, nation states, ethnic groups, and diasporic communities are viewed as hybrid and constantly subject to historical processes of cultural exchange, negotiation and resistance. Bhabha’s theory is especially relevant in the context of diaspora, where people live in the world of several cultures and mediate between the motherland and the host culture. Migrants bring the heritage of their home culture with them when they face the demands of their new world, forming a complicated Third Space where identities overlap, intersect and sometimes even conflict. Hybridity becomes a dynamic phenomenon where diasporic subjects engage in the active construction and reconstructions of their identity. The theory by Bhabha, therefore, highlights the fluidity and contingency of identity and how diasporic people transform cultural landscapes and redefine belonging.

Radiant Fugitives by Ahmed illustrates the extent to which diasporic identity, belonging and displacement are shaped by postcolonial past and cultural negotiation. The postcolonial theory emphasizes the colonialism, migration, and marginalization legacies, and the concepts of hybridity and the Third Space by Bhabha demonstrate the fluidity and the negotiated quality of identities. The novel depicts characters who have to deal with conflicts between homeland and host society, memory and adaptation, and tradition and modernity. It demonstrates that displacement creates vulnerability and creative reconstruction of self and belonging within diaspora.

4. Textual Analysis

“Diasporic identity, in its simplest form, is the evolving sense of self among those who have moved from their homelands, adapting and changing while retaining connections to their origins” (Sustainability Directory, 2025, para. 2). *Radiant Fugitives* is a narrative of identity, belonging, and displacement, depicting how people find their

way through the tricky interplay of culture, family, and selfhood in new social environments. The novel explores the many facets of belonging to a place that is both home and foreign through the experiences of characters like Seema, a queer woman who is negotiating personal freedom and cultural demands, and Tahera, whose religious faith is a part of her diasporic existence. The story of the novel, which is narrated in part by Ishraaq, a liminal consciousness between the birth and life, sheds light on the in-between, fluid nature of the diasporic existences, and it is important to note that identity is always negotiated and not pre-determined. The emphasis on the difficulties and creative opportunities of displacement helps Ahmed (2021) to understand how diaspora influences and reinvents the concept of self, family, and home, which makes the novel a valuable tool to study the interaction between homeland and hostland.

Tahera, the youngest daughter of Nafeesa is a symbol of the traditional values and conservatism that is influenced by the Indian and Islamic background and makes her different from her sister Seema. She is a doctor who is professionally successful in America and a mother to two children, Arshad and Amina. As she looks at the city through the air, the luminous trees, houses and streets are in the brightest light she has never seen. This picture of the city that is glowing under her is the symbol of the inner struggle of Tahera, who feels that she is not a part of America and she cannot embrace it as her home. At the same time, the image of flames in San Francisco that threatens and devours her, reflects her sense of alienation and the absence of belonging. Tahera expresses her discontent and lack of confidence in the city being a safe or comfortable place by comparing her environment with ‘Jahannam’, the Arabic word for hell. This is a very good imagery that describes her complicated feelings and the conflict she feels in trying to reconcile her past with her current situation.

Tahera is not the only one who feels this kind of ambivalence towards home. This is shown by her mother, Nafeesa, who left India to join her daughters in America, but she has a different, but not less significant attachment to homeland: “That sliver extends all the way west, wrapping itself around the globe and merging into that other ocean by your homeland's feet. You're transported in an instant to Kanyakumari, to that tip of India's peninsula where three bodies of water meet” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 22). The metaphor of that ‘sliver’ stretching all the way west highlights the long lasting relationship between her present life in America and her Indian origins. Nafeesa feels the immediate connection with Kanyakumari when she associates the ocean with the Indian coastline, which shows her nostalgia and close connection to her native country. Seema, on the contrary, has developed a sense of belonging in America and has built ties that make the country her home: “Half-Tamil, half-Black” Seema corrects. “Her mother's from Chennai and her father's from Jamaica” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 9). She explains to Tahera that she knows San

Francisco's district attorney through her friend Divya, and has been advising her campaign for state attorney general on public relations issues. "The race is very close. Obama is in San Francisco that very evening to drum up funds and support for the midterm elections" (Ahmed, 2021, p. 9). Using the example of Kamala Harris, whose mixed heritage is a diasporic intersection, Seema emphasizes the diversity and interconnectedness of diaspora and gives a sense of comfort and familiarity with her American world, which is in stark contrast to how the sisters are displaced and feel at home. "Diasporas face identity crisis as president of first political issues which are the production of the complex and condensed rootedness of the diaspora as in the past and home" (Asghar & Fatima, 2020, p. 64). The fact that Seema actively took part in the campaign of state attorney with the help of her friend, Divya who was connected with the district attorney of San Francisco, shows that she is interested in the American society and invests in the development of the place she chooses to call her home. The fact that Obama came to San Francisco to campaign in the midterm elections also highlights the importance of the role played by the diasporic people in the political and civic life of the United States. The fact that Seema admires and supports two diasporic leaders is a testimony of the fact that she feels like she belongs there and that she is willing to make a conscious decision to be in America as a homeland of her choice.

"Diaspora identity is a fluid construct, shaped by the interplay of host and home country dynamics" (Dhar & Raman, 2024, p. 256). In *Radiant Fugitives*, Ahmed (2021) describes diaspora as a condition of in-betweenness, where the characters are neither wholly on the land of their origin nor wholly on the land of their residence, which makes them feel more alienated. This marginal place influences their lived experiences, perceptions, and identities in a hybrid, transcultural and sometimes disorienting way. This intermediate state is best embodied in the novel by the image of Nafeesa: "Nafeesa's slight figure in a green saree and white sneakers, pink sweater and blue shawl, a combination completely deficient in color coordination" (Ahmed, 2021, p. 17). The clash between a traditional Indian saree and Western attire, like sneakers and a sweater, is literally presented in the juxtaposition of the two worlds. The conscious opposition of the dress of Nafeesa is a symbolic image of the cultural hybridity that defines the life of diaspora: the green saree is a sign of her Indian roots; the Western objects are used to depict her acculturation to the American society; the blue shawl is an element that connects the two worlds and brings the sense of stability and peace. Seema also exhibits a similar condition of in-betweenness, which is mediated by the language and cultural memory. She feels that she is being drawn back to her cultural and linguistic heritage even though she lives a Westernised life when her nieces welcome her with 'Assalamu Alaikum', Seema Aunty, her response is 'Alaikum Assalam', which automatically links her to her cultural and

linguistic background: “She senses a collapse in time: for the moment, she is both adult and child, both here in San Francisco and back in Chennai” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 26). This shows how diaspora can break down the temporal and spatial boundaries and place people simultaneously in the past and present, in the homeland and the host land, and thus bring out the intricate negotiation of identity in a liminal space. The experience of Tahera is another illustration of the in-betweenness of diaspora since she struggles with how to reconcile her religious faith with the demands of the American society. This tension is clearly expressed in the query which follows:

By the rigidity of her faith and practices, isn't Tahera opening her family to charges of fundamentalism, especially at a time when America has good reason to be suspicious of fundamentalists? Isn't Tahera making it harder for her children to succeed in America by not teaching them the skills they will need to flourish in its culture? If not for herself, she should at least think of her children. This is the lesson to take from the events in Irvine. (Ahmed, 2021, p. 25)

The issue of whether Tahera is putting her family under suspicion due to the rigidity of her faith and practices is a manifestation of the pressure that is being exerted on the diasporic Muslims in the American sociopolitical environment. The fact that America has good reason to be suspicious of fundamentalists is an indication of how national fears influence the determination of opinions regarding the expression of religion, transforming personal faith into a social burden. The implication that Tahera is complicating the lives of her children in America is an indication of the perceived clash of religious adherence and cultural assimilation whereby success in the new society is gauged by the ability to fit into the norms of the new society. The implication of assimilation as a moral obligation, as she must at least consider her children, is that parental care needs to be restricted by making visible religious difference less obvious. The passage places Tahera in a wider context of surveillance and fear by referring to the lesson to be learned in the events in Irvine, to demonstrate how the politics of belonging works to control what identities can be acceptable, safe, or able to belong in the American social order. The way Tahera is so strict with her religious rites reveals the tension of keeping the native standards and the ability of her children to be able to negotiate the American culture, which highlights the multi-dimensional aspect of diaspora as a perpetual bargaining between the past, belonging and adjustment. This liminality is also applied to her children, who live in a state of being both connected and disconnected, which is also reflective of a larger diasporic condition that is also present in the transnational movement of Nafeesa: “Awaiting my arrival in San Francisco: Seema, my mother, and Nafeesa, my grandmother, who came all the way from Chennai, India, to be by her daughter's side, defying her husband Naeemullah's wishes” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 1). The experience of Nafeesa is a representation of the physical and

emotional aspects of diaspora since when she defies her husband, it is a move to a new diasporic space and at the same time, she has long-standing connections with India, thus, pointing to her own in-betweenness between homeland, family, and displacement. This transitional state is intensified by her connection with her grandchildren and the unborn child in the novel, the narrator of the story, who is the carrier of the communal emotional burden of the diasporic world: “I take it all in, hungrily, greedily: Nafeesa’s remorse, Tahera’s fears, Bill’s disillusionment. Arshad’s anguish, Seema’s optimism. America’s turmoil. As if I need to inhale this world into the very cells of my body, every element of it simultaneously, before I can bring myself to take a single breath of its air” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 17). By using unborn narrator, Ahmed (2017) portrays diaspora as a state of mixed feelings, spaces, and identities, and how belonging is constantly negotiated between generations and between continents. Fiction has a strong connection to memory and diaspora because the process of leaving the home country usually triggers nostalgia and the desire to go back to the past. In *Radiant Fugitives*, the memory is aroused by the visit of her mother:

Seema rarely cooks Indian food, or any other cuisine. The spices and provisions in her well-stocked cabinets are a concession to her mother’s visit, purchased at the Indian store the week of Nafeesa’s arrival. Everything she can remember from her mother’s kitchen: rice and dal; chili, coriander, cumin, turmeric; cardamom, clove, cinnamon; tamarind. (Ahmed, 2021, p. 3)

The above text describes Seema as a diasporic person who is physically and culturally alienated to her country of origin. She rarely cooks Indian food, but the appearance of her mother reminds her about her origins and her mother kitchen. Through this moment, the novel illustrates how belonging operates as a negotiated process, shaped by context, relationships, and the quiet politics of inclusion and distance within the diasporic home. Seema’s experience is a typical experience of the diasporic people, as when they are exposed to the artefacts of their culture, they tend to get strong memories of the past. On this note, food can be seen as a medium of memory, which connects both time and space. The constant movement of Seema, between Chennai and Oxford, New York, San Francisco, Boston, and back to San Francisco, also helps to reveal the transnational aspect of her diasporic life: “A sense of loss sweeps over her now, as she imagines their home stripped bare. She has moved a lot in her forty years” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 3). The expression ‘home stripped bare’ is used to represent the rediscovery of memory and impermanence of belonging in diaspora. In spite of these displacements, nostalgia keeps on coming into both Seema and her sister Tahera: “[Tahera] falls back easily into her old role of assistant, deferring to her mother on the quantity of spices to add, how long to stir,

when to cover the pot” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 14). Here, Tahera experiences a wave of nostalgia, reconnecting with her childhood in Chennai and her cultural roots.

Displacement and the subsequent strains that it causes are recurrent themes of diasporic literature. *Radiant Fugitives* is no exception to this rule: the family conflicts and separations that are portrayed in the novel help to understand the psychological and emotional complexity of living in a diaspora. The fact that Seema is no longer close to her father is an illustration of how these tensions are formed to create the diasporic pathways: “Consider this: Tahera has not seen Nafeesa and Seema together for nearly sixteen years. Seema, after all, was cast out of their family by their father” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 1). The long absence highlights the existence of strong family divisions with the rejection of Seema seeming to be based on her defiance of conservative Indian values through her liberal thoughts and sexuality. The struggle against her father becomes a driving force to migration and the building of her diasporic journey. The effect of diaspora on kin relations can also be observed in the long-term separation of mother and daughter that is an indicator of emotional tension and the disintegration of family life. Although the sisters live in the same diasporic environment, they take different paths, which end up in confrontation: “It’s Tahera flinging herself across the table and grabbing Seema by the arms” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 5). This fight is the representation of the larger diasporic issues when the differences in cultural adjustments, religious beliefs, and personal principles are exaggerated in the family; the conservatism of Tahera and his Islamic beliefs conflict with the Americanized way of life of Seema. Intergenerational and inter-family conflicts are also disclosed when Nafeesa tries to bring her daughters together: “I want to see both my daughters at the same time.’...But Tahera’s fraught presence has now made Seema an exile in her own home” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 9). The fact that Nafeesa wants to be reunited with her roots, home, and connection, and that the sisters have conflicting values reveals the tension of negotiating between heritage and assimilation. This proves that diaspora interferes with the sense of belonging and forms liminal spaces in which the conflicts between the sisters are exacerbated.

The attitudes of diasporic communities towards their host nations often tend to be heterogeneous due to the desire to belong, thrive and gain social status. These motivations tend to guide the decisions of the characters in *Radiant Fugitives*. The example of Tahera demonstrates that the diasporic people can achieve respect, and recognition in their host society, and maintain specific identities. The success of Tahera, which is witnessed by her sister, is a demonstration of this principle; her presence in the American society is an embodiment of agency, and integration without having to assimilate culturally. The story of Seema also demonstrates the intricacies of the diasporic identity: “All she needs to say is My father cut me off when I came out as a lesbian” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 6). This quote

shows the discontinuity between her Americanization into the American lifestyle, and her traditional Indian-Muslim upbringing. Her experiences are the best illustration of the multiplicity, and diversity of the diasporic life, where the process of identity negotiation includes ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and cultural adaptation. Although parental influence might warn about complete assimilation to the American culture, the younger generation usually adopts some of the aspects of the host society, thus developing a sense of belonging by being a part of the culture.

5. Conclusion

Ahmed (2021), in *Radiant Fugitives*, introduces the diasporic experience as a complicated process of identity, belonging, and displacement, showing how the characters have to balance between the cultural memory of their native land and the needs of the host society. The novel describes diasporic identity as fluid and hybrid, which is affected by the tension between tradition and adaptation, self and community, and memory and the existing realities. It portrays liminality and cultural negotiation. Ahmed (2021) has refuted the rigid concept of home and nationality and has shown that displacement can be painful but can also lead to resilience, creativity, and new forms of belonging and identity. On the whole, *Radiant Fugitives* highlights the fact that the condition of diaspora is not only a condition of loss but also a condition of possibility, which sheds light on how people can rebuild identity and community in the transnational space, thus making a valuable contribution to the larger discourse on migration, cultural hybridity and politics of belonging.

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