

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

**Societal Trauma and Identity Formation in *Hope Ablaze*: A Psychosocial
Exploration of Memory and Belonging**



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Abstract

This study examines societal trauma and identity formation in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze*, focusing on the relationship between discrimination, memory, familial responses, and poetic expression. It investigates how public suspicion and media distortion shape Nida's understanding of herself and how family relationships and poetry mediate her negotiation of voice, agency, and belonging. The research adopts a qualitative, interpretive literary design, employing close reading and thematic analysis. Cathy Caruth's account of traumatic experience and Ruth Leys' critical genealogy of trauma provide the principal theoretical framework, supported by perspectives on collective memory and injurious speech. The analysis reveals that accusations based on religious identity and familial association impose a suspect identity upon Nida, while manipulated representations of her poetry undermine her narrative authority. Protective familial restrictions further complicate her creative agency, and repetitive memories preserve the emotional consequences of domestic conflict. Ancestral stories offer resources for understanding cultural belonging, while poetry enables her to reconsider inherited obligations and articulate personal purposes. The study concludes that identity in *Hope Ablaze* develops through an ongoing interaction between societal exclusion, intimate relationships, historical remembrance, and creative expression. It contributes to scholarship on contemporary South Asian diasporic fiction by examining how these interconnected processes shape the pursuit of recognition and belonging.

Keywords: societal trauma; identity formation; familial memory; Islamophobia; poetic expression; belonging; *Hope Ablaze*

Introduction and Background of the Study

This paper investigates societal trauma and identity formation in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* (2024) through a psychosocial exploration of memory and belonging. It explores the influence of discriminatory anger, political suspicion, and expressions of censorship in the personal and familial lives of a young Pakistani American Muslim hero. Islamophobia, cultural memory, and emotion scholarship are offered as further context to Islamophobia and public response narratives and individuals' experiences. The central issue is negotiating identity to a young person when danger and foreignness is assumed at their community and in their creative practices.

Social-psychological dimension of the study involves emotional experience and the meaning it brings to him through the rhythm of the same relationships and institutions. Emotions of fear, uncertainty, and expression are explored, as well as political rhetoric, community demands, and interpersonal experiences and reactions. This way, the individual will not be blamed for his or her suffering all the way. It also differentiates between distress in literature vs. clinical diagnosis. The study asks how the novel represents the consequences of exclusion, rather than assuming that every adverse encounter produces an identical traumatic response.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth (1996) explores the complicated relationship between overwhelming experience, understanding, and subsequent narration. Her

writing focuses the lens on the role literature plays in articulating experiences that cannot be simply understood. For the present study, this perspective supplies questions about how a character communicates injury and how the significance of an encounter may develop beyond its immediate occurrence. It additionally promotes awareness at the connection of expression and its own constraints, especially whenever a protagonist may find himself or herself uncertain of his or her capacity for verbal exposition or writing.

Leys (2000), however, demonstrates that trauma theory contains competing assumptions about memory, subjectivity, and representation. She uses the idea of trauma as an unchanging category as her object of historical study to question that category. Through the act of studying trauma as an unchanging explanatory category, she challenges it. Placing Leys in dialogue with Caruth encourages the present research to examine the circumstances of suffering rather than impose a predetermined psychological pattern on the novel. Any indication of failure to articulate an idea should then be understood in the context of the story they are telling. They can have a fearful component, a political axe to grind, a problem with creative expression or a personal offense, and meanings need to be researched in the text.

Hope Ablaze has been set in a historical backdrop that still reflects ongoing repercussions from the War on Terror against Muslim Americans. Here the distinction is essential in that the Muslim identity needs to be differentiated from the publics in which it can be expressed. In *Islamophobia and Racism in America*, student and educator Erik Love explores how anti-Muslim exclusion is embedded in the broader context of racism and the civil-rights movement. Based on interviews with advocates, Love (2017) examines the ways that organizations react to discrimination and the challenge of recognizing it. His contribution to the work is significant both in recognising exclusion as a social and institutional issue, and that it is not just a cluster of 'bad attitudes'.

Khaled A. Beydoun (2018) places the current focus on Islamophobia in America within a longer timeframe, into law, racialization and the War on Terror. His narrative challenges the idea that since September 2001 Muslims are or has been the sole target of anti-Muslim of hostility. In this paper, such historical contextualization will also help readers from reading the difficulties the protagonist faced as isolated misunderstandings. It provides queries regarding how public establishment norms and narratives set expectations relating to Muslim visibility, loyalty and belonging. These are the questions used to guide the literary analysis, rather than historical generalizations using evidence from the novel.

The other key aspect of this background is representation. During the War on Terror, Evelyn Alsultany (2012) explores how Arabs and Muslims were depicted on American television, news and advertising. She does not show that seemingly contrasting or positive depictions do not necessarily decenter the stereotype of race, nor do they serve to preclude its association. Having worked with public perception and exposure, control over perception is not assured by public visibility; hence her work is relevant to *Hope Ablaze*. The study raises therefore protagonists' question of who interprets his words, how these interpretations circulate, and what consequences follow once he turns his words into the public sphere that opens up to the citizens.

How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? brings to the fore the stories of young Arab and Muslim Americans and their attempts to reconcile with the uncertainty, suspicion, and discrimination they face, plus the hopes they hold for a life of significance. Bayoumi

(2008) takes us through archetypes of challenges in education, work and interactions with government authorities. Through his work, he contextualizes the examination and reflection upon the relationship between youth, public judgment and belonging. However, there should be some careful caution with respect to how the experience of the Arab American and Pakistani American is treated as distinct experiences. It is important to note that while their comparison can help them formulate questions about exclusion, it may not be appropriate for considering other communities alike in culture.

Nida's aspirations as a poet are tied to those of her uncle, Mamou Abdul-Hafeedh, who was jailed during the War on Terror; Against this backdrop, *Hope Ablaze* follows Nida. As she gets illegally searched during a political gathering, Nida writes a prejudicial poem about the candidate. The poem is then passed through a nationwide competition she participated in, but failed to win, and becomes the center of public interest, ruining her life. Her loss of the ability to write poetry is the main part of the story, as the publisher's description explains. As described in the publisher's description, this is also her loss of the ability to write poetry. The idea of political and family injury, of unpredictable outcomes of art's visibility resides on this premise.

The novel thus constitutes a vehicle for examining the nature of expression in terms of possibility of agency but also as a site of vulnerability. A poem can articulate an experience that dominant accounts neglect, yet its circulation can expose its author to interpretations she cannot fully control. The present paper takes this tension up the lens of constructions of self-representation and constructions of public judgment. Nida's creative identity is explored in the context of the conditions that render speech consequential. The research does not presume that artistic expression is an automatic generator of empowerment, but rather invites consideration of the potentials, interruptions, and costs of the narrative construction.

More evidence can be found in Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Concerns surrounding language, body and political involvement, such as terrorism, migration and belonging, are linked to emotion in Ahmed's 2004 work. She points attention towards the function emotions have in social relationships. When applied here, it evokes questions about what holds some back from participation, what can come up from public judgment, and the ways in which community, in particular, can foster a sense of belonging. These are 'interpreting' questions to be introduced via the language and characterization of the novel.

The second aspect of memory ties the protagonist's present situation to situations that come before. Halbwachs (1992) discusses this idea of recollection from a social perspective that is based on the social configurations around which people remember. He has been a supporter of a focus on family and community issues as context that impact on what is remembered and what that memory means. *Hope Ablaze* examines how prior experiences with injury may inform expectations around visibility/expression. It is not necessary to validate recollection towards being a fixed message handed down from one era to the next. With the significance and meaning of the past, family members can have divergent views on the relevance and safety, and on opportunities and responsibilities.

The postmemory is helpful in differentiating the directly experienced suffering from the later engagement of another generation with the past, as Hirsch is discussing in 2012. Helpful when family narratives or images form a strong connection to situations that the younger person was unable to see. It must be used, however selectively; the

history of Nida's own experience of discrimination cannot be passed down. This study thus presents distinctions between personal encounters, familial recollections, and more general narratives of culture, as they interact in the negotiation of identity.

Alexander et al. (2004) discuss the meaning of suffering within social groups and how they make sense of it and relate it to collective identity and responsibility. Their work introduces other ways of working that examine public constructions of traumatic significance, as well as individual experience. This is important because the trauma of society is not just the aggregate of individual psychological traumas. In the present paper, it adopts this term to explore the novel's depictions of the more familiar vulnerabilities, public narratives of injury and the jeopardy to belonging. It is sensitive to differences within the community rather than one size fits all understanding.

Another aspect of the inquiry is family protection and the individual aspiration. Restrictions can be interpreted differently for those who apply them and those who have to endure them in a setting where citizens' expression can have consequences. The study investigates the potential of having to limiting opportunities and a safety concern running concurrently with a youth. This tension between social and private life enables the study of the social life from outside the family to be engaged with as a negotiation rather than a generational disagreement.

The focus in this paper then becomes somewhat different from that of the thesis, as it focuses on societal exclusion as it relates to creative expression and construction of identity in *Hope Ablaze*. The argument that it proposes is that belonging arises from personal aspiration, from remembered injury, to community attachment, and to public recognition. Caruth and Leys guide the examination of trauma and representation, while the supporting scholarship establishes questions about racialization, emotion, and memory. Through this framework, the study explores how Nida's struggle to articulate her experience becomes inseparable from the social conditions under which her voice is received.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how societal trauma and memories of discrimination shape identity and belonging in *Hope Ablaze*.
2. To analyze how poetry and familial responses mediate Nida's negotiation of voice, agency, and belonging under sociopolitical pressures in *Hope Ablaze*.

Research Questions

1. How do societal trauma and memories of discrimination shape identity and belonging in *Hope Ablaze*?
2. How do poetry and familial responses mediate Nida's negotiation of voice, agency, and belonging under sociopolitical pressures in *Hope Ablaze*?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it investigates the relationship between societal trauma, memory, and identity in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze*. By concentrating on Nida's experiences as a young Pakistani American Muslim poet, the research examines how public suspicion and discrimination intersect with personal aspirations and community attachments. Develops a sustained investigation of the instances where belonging is evoked into questioning and voice becomes significant.

In theoretical terms it is an analysis of traumatic representation that is shaped by a critical discussion between Cathy Caruth and Ruth Leys. Caruth's method interrogates

the question of how the disturbing experience becomes articulated, while Leys' method prompts questioning of the lessons that are drawn from the disturbing experience. Supportive perspectives relating to the novel and memory and Islamophobia make these questions relevant to the novel's social context. The framework allows for the study to analyze Nida's immediate experiences and experiences in the family, as well as in broader narratives of shared vulnerabilities.

In a methodological manner, the study adopts "close reading" approach and thematic analysis to examine the relationship between close reading and sociopolitical experience. Special emphasis is placed on expressions of interruption, characterization and dialogue, in addition to poetry. This method focuses on the novel as a communication of exclusion, instead of just an example of social conditions. Poetry is explored as a performance in which the protagonist is identifying the experiences of the subject and coming to understand that the experiences he or she is shared with society will be one he or she regularly encounters.

Given the context, the research project adds to the conversation about the current South Asian diasporic literature, in that of Pakistani Americans and Islamist involvement. Its themes bring together the wider implications of the War on Terror and the nature of 'everyday' relationships, creative dreams and public engagement. It also focuses on the differences in each family and community and enables the understanding of what protective responses are and how individual aspirations can be comprehended within their unique context.

The research also works toward the investigation of agency through the exploration of the stresses around voice and safety. The anxiety and the desire to be seen are taken into account, as is the anxiety with which Nida's family sees her, in view of her description. Nida's desire to express her is set against the familial anxieties of what is dangerous about being visible when spoken to. This focus allows the study of the relationship between care and restriction, and how the young person manages them. Belonging is thus seen as a dynamic process of relationship where attachment and disagreement play a role.

Finally, the study offers an interpretive base for researchers and students who are interested in studies on trauma, representations of Muslims, diasporic identity and expressions of resistance in literature. Its analysis of poetry and familial responses can guide future studies of how the fiction suggests the connection between exclusion and self-articulation. The contribution remains literary and contextual, explaining how *Hope Ablaze* negotiates memory, voice, and belonging without assuming that its characters represent all Muslim American experiences.

Literature Review

This review draws on scholarship concerning post-9/11 racialization, citizenship, diasporic identity, literary trauma, and the politics of expression to contextualize Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* (2024). These regions investigate the profound impact of familial responses on Nida's voice and agency and through the novel tell the stories of Nida's personal trauma and her attempts to give voice to her own truth.

Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11 is especially fitting in terms of a context for thinking about and discussing Muslim youth and belonging. Building on the current literature on the impact of September 2001 on South Asian Muslim immigrants in the United States, Miaaia (2009) examines the ways in which these youth were included or excluded in the nation. Her ethnography style of work brings youthful life

experiences into relation with the political context. In the context of the present study, this link provides questions related to the development of Nida's aspirations in an environment that might undermine Nida's legitimacy. In addition, Mia's work takes a measured look at the opportunity available for young people to interpret their situations as active people—not just as passive victims of hostility. dukeupress.edu

In *Homeland Insecurity*, Louise A. Cainkar (2009) discusses Arab American and Muslim American communities in Chicago, Illinois, as they navigated a new existence in America after the 9/11 attacks. Her work draws parallels between the watchfulness and hatred of government and feelings of sensitivity and sense of exclusion. It also flags a rise in civic engagement and community organization in its respondents. Of course, it's a critical combination in the context of reading as agency because exposure to discrimination doesn't have to mean you lack agency. Studies of community attachment and participation propose that such interest goes hand in hand with feelings of insecurity, with Cainkar's research offering contextual support for the study of insecurity. However, her results can't be applied directly to Nida, this novel has to create a specific link between exclusiveness and activity.

Against a political and historical background, Deepa Kumar provides a historical account of Islamophobia. Kumar (2012) contests those explanations that attribute the existence of Islamophobia solely to religious intolerance, links it to racism, and raises other issues like surveillance, arrest and deportation. Her approach allows for a study of the meaning of individual encounters in the context of institutional conditions. When applied to Rana's novel it points out the conditions in which the expression of Muslims is linked to suspicion. This is the critical lens used to evaluate and understand Nida's experience in the present study without presuming that all disagreement is the cause of the same political "mechanism" regulating the narrative.

In the article, "*The Citizen and the Terrorist*," Itey Volpp looks at how post-9/11 discourse was able to join in the category of those people who were seen as being Middle Eastern, Arab, and/or Muslim. Their connection with terrorism can also work to the detriment of their status as citizens, as Volpp put it in 2002. This separation of citizenship and recognition is useful for the purposes of examining concepts of 'belonging' in *Hope Ablaze*. Someone can be an insider of the country, and still be treated as an outsider. Volpp's work thus provides questions regarding the nature of boundaries formulated through suspicion and related to participation and expression. It also demands close focus on the authenticity of the character's identity and identity forced upon an individual.

Mahmood Mamdani (2004) rejects the "cultural/cultural" or "religious/religious" description and analysis of Muslims in *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*. He traces these categorizations back to politics and international power. This approach is important in the analysis of Muslim characters whose public acceptance can be related to what they said; some said compliant others said critical. As such, the present study can then investigate the possibility of expectations placed on Nida for appropriate expression and fidelity. What is established in advance by Mamdani's work are certainly not the ways in which each character or institution can be interpreted in the novel, since both the historical questions and the answers are raised.

Based on the relationship between War on Terror, national recognition, sexuality, and racialized exclusion, *Terrorist Assemblages* brings a perspective from the work of Jasbir K. Puar. In seemingly progressive claims, apparently progressive claims can do so in ways that form unequally (Puar 2007). She has blurred the binary contrast

between two sets of national narratives: inclusive and exclusionary. In this paper it is the relevance to the context of the conditions under which minority subjects can be recognized as acceptable members of society that are relevant. These questions are only used as a point of reference for the study without assuming that the full framework of his study would be directly projected onto Nida's situation. It needs to be relevant to variations of the novel's representations.

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* offers other ideas to think about about discrimination beyond personal animosity. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) launch discussions about racial structures, legal interpretation, and the importance of disregarded viewpoints. Their point of view facilitates exploration of the connection between the dominant story and individual voices. In *Hope Ablaze*, poetry is studied as a potential resolution of an account which doesn't consider the protagonists experience. But the effect it is intended to create on the level of "counter-narrative", to its language, circulation and reception, is not assumed from any single act of writing.

Stuart Hall's *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* provides an alternative understanding of identity as the historically constructed and one that may be altered. The distinction of an understanding based on shared origins and an understanding attentive to difference and becoming is drawn between these by Hall (1990). This lens serves as a tool to explore Nida's identity as a woman who has connections to family history, community among Muslims, and the present society in the United States. She doesn't have to sacrifice the feeling of belonging over so-called full cultural oppositions. Hall's argument rather leads to questioning of the means by which identification is formed through variations and representations. While drawing on Caribbean histories, the conceptual significance of his essay can also be examined without a conceptualization of different diasporic experiences.

In Homi K. Bhabha's study on the formation of culture, notions like hybridity, ambivalence and liminality are discussed. Bhabha (1994) rejects the bare or complete notion of cultures, which assume a complete uniformity and other absolute interpretation. With his work he adds a complementary view to the negotiation of identity in overlapping cultural contexts. In the current study, this takes into consideration attention to Nida's transition between the inherited attachments, family expectations, and public involvement. It also strives to prevent the assumption of Pakistani and American identities being mutually exclusive. This negotiation would, however, need to be understood in the context of unequal conditions because it does not eliminate the discrimination or the restriction on expression which multiple affiliations may entail.

In *The Politics of Belonging*, Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) explores how a political programme constructs the meaning of 'membership' and how it will impact upon people based on their social position. Her research considers the themes around nationalism, citizenship, religion and alternative modes of attachment. The latter may prove useful to authorities and to everyone as a distinction between how one feels part of a community and how the political processes of the community determine who is included and who is not. *Hope Ablaze*, through the distinction, is able to explore belonging from a number of perspectives – family, religious community and nation. Such attachments can interrelate positively, but can also generate conflicting expectations for playability and protectiveness.

In Arab America, Nadine Naber's work as a writer and scholar links issues of identity

formation, gender, religion, families and polit enacted. This work explores the lives of second generation Arab American young adults from a transnational feminist lens, where what appears to be internal cultural discussions interact with broader political contexts as detailed by Naber (2012). Her work is pertinent to the second question because she is writing against the tendency to separate family expectations from public ones in the process. It includes questions regarding the negotiation of protection, authority and aspiration in minority communities. Despite the distinction between the experiences of the Arab-American and the Pakistani American community, Naber's research is contextual, offering no direct evidence about Nida and her family.

Excitable Speech deals with the connection among speech, wounding, doing, and control. Butler (1997) studies political debates in which speech is given some significance to their behavior. Her approach is applicable to a novel in which poetry becomes a part of the public sphere and the poet herself is subject to extraneous interpretations. The words of Nida in the present study can then be studied as expressions of action in certain audiences, contexts and consequences. From this point of view the feeling of being heard does not appear to be a straightforwardly positive one, as speech can be subversive without meaning to be. The importance of poetry thus needs to be checked both in the content and in the reception conditions of these poems.

Bell hooks (1989) writes about relationships where some should be subservient and ally's response of speaking back is a workplace of moving from silence to speech. Through her work, she sheds light on the creative voice she developed and how she worked with the expectations she encountered. It also relates personal articulation to social situation instead of assigning to it the entirety of self-confidence as a personal accomplishment. These questions are used carefully in the present research, because the novel might, and also can, express possibilities and risks: Talking is not automatically a freedom, a recovery.

Essays and Speeches on Racism, Sexism, Difference, and the Potential of Action are a series of essays and speeches by Audre Lorde in which she discusses racism, sexism, difference, and what can be done. Lorde (1984) provides a window into a way in which the subaltern can become a critical countervoice. Her work is equally pertinent to the research theme of the poetry because she considers the combination of creative and intellectual expression to be social struggle. It invites contemplation of Nida's voice beyond 'repairing wound;' writing might also express attachment, aspirations, a desired future. For discussion purposes, it is important that Lorde's historically specific position remains visible, and not be subsumed into a discussion of Pakistani American Muslim experience.

In Michelle Balaev's Trends in Literary Trauma Theory, Balaev gives a valuable critical analysis of depicting trauma in fiction. Balaev (2008) looks at psychological models that have been dominant, and proposes some alternatives that will account for the space and retooling of the self. Her approach is complementary to the J. thesis because it calls into question uniform explanations of a traumatic experience in the function of the thesis' discussion of Leys as a critical interlocutor. In the present paper, it calls for analyses of surroundings, relations, and trajectory of opportunities in Nida as well as emotional reactions. It is thus not appropriate to examine interrupted expression solely within the context of a necessarily fractured identity and should instead be explored with particular regard to the roles these narrative contexts play.

Together, these sources establish connections between discrimination, public recognition, relational identity, and expression. While everyday struggles of post-9/11 exclusion are highlighted by Maira and Cainkar, questions regarding the political and institutional structuring of this exclusion are raised by Kumar, Volpp, Mamdani, Puar and Delgado and Stefancic. Hall and Bhabha, Yuval-Davis and Naber affirm the idea of negotiated processes of identity and, more particularly, belonging. Held by Butler, hooks and Lorde, attention is drawn to the ramifications and potential of voice and context, and Balaev encourages a parsing of literary trauma for contextual specificity. These viewpoints do not alter the main features of the principal framework of Caruth and Leys framework, but they do provide a complement.

The present study brings this scholarship into a focused examination of *Hope Ablaze*. It examines the ways in which memories of discrimination are interwoven with Nida's own personal experiences in life, and the role of poetry and familial reactions in influencing Nida's negotiation of agency. The idea for its contribution was the linking of "the conditions of belonging" to the literature of a young person's voice. The study does not say there is no previous research on Rana's novel, but rather identifies a particular interpretive angle or question, one that deals with the connections between public suspicion, remembered injury, familial protection, and creative self-articulation. Each part of that argument must be established through close reading of the primary text.

Research Gap

Scholarship on trauma, Islamophobia, citizenship, and diasporic identity provides substantial insight into the social conditions affecting Muslim belonging. The conversations outline a specific question about how memories of discrimination play out, alongside the moment-to-moment experience of exclusion, in a young protagonist's identity; and how poetry and familial responses impact this negotiation of voice and agency in *Hope Ablaze*. In this study these dimensions are discussed in combination, that is, in relation to the links and political context that involve creative expression in making public it significant. By juxtaposing Cathy Caruth's account of traumatic representational processes with Ruth Leys's work about trauma theory, the research reflects the ways in which traumatic symptoms and the disruption of expression occur without offering a single psychological explanation. Additionally, supporting scholarship on memory and belonging help set apart Nidah's own experiences and remembrances from those of her family and broader story of collective vulnerability. Accordingly, the study addresses a specific analytical problem concerning the relationship between societal trauma, memory, poetic expression, and familial protection in *Hope Ablaze*. It contributes to reflecting on the role that safety-seeker behaviour can play in limiting participation and self-expression in play can open opportunities and risks. This focus builds a psychosocial perspective on identity as a process of negotiation due to public recognition, community attachment, and aspirations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design, using literary analysis to examine societal trauma, memory, and identity in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* (2024). Qualitative inquiry is used for investigating meanings in a social,

cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus the study explores the impact of discrimination and political doubt on relationships, family identity and creative aspiration in the case of Nida. For this reason discrimination and political suspicion are shown to have an impact on Nida's creative aspirations, family relationships and sense of belonging.

Close reading will be the focal point for the data analysis as well as topics on language, characterization, narrative perspective, dialogue, and poetry. Selected passages of text are interpreted in reference to the research questions, while arguments are developed in the context of the research questions and supported with textual evidence (Barry, 2009). The theoretical framework problematizes Caruth's account of traumatic representation while engaging with Leys's critical analysis of trauma theory and by factoring in concepts of memory, racialization and belonging. This way, we can look at the silence, fear or difficulties in creating and understand them without automatically attributing them to trauma.

The study focuses on literary representation of experience and identity in *Hope Ablaze*. Its findings offer text-specific interpretations rather than clinical diagnoses or generalizations about Pakistani American or Muslim American communities.

Research Methods

The study combines close reading with thematic analysis. The textual corpus consists of the entire novel and the theoretical and contextual literature used in this unit of text is secondary. Passages are selected purposefully based on their connection to issues of societal exclusion, remembered discrimination, identity, poetic expression, familial protection and community belonging. Each passage is understood in the context of the larger scene and its connection to the story.

Close reading involves analyzing the textual details of the language in which Nida communicates experience and the effect on others' communication when they hear or read it. Special focus on the interplay between prose and poetry, imagery, metaphor, the narrative voice and the movement of the emotional presentation. Analysis differentiates between the perception of the protagonist and characters, leaving clues of disagreement or uncertainty present.

Patterns are sorted under the questions of the research using themed analysis. Memory of the text, preliminary coding, and elaboration of themes, review, definition, and interpretation follow the account written by Braun and Clarke (2006). These processes are modified for literary analysis because the meaning of a passage is determined both by its structure and its function within that structure and in its context, and by its connections with other topics. Themes are therefore interpreted as patterns (more often repeated themes) rather than topics.

First coding takes place with regard to types of public suspicion, public exclusion, remembered injury, creative interruption, familial concern, community support, and claims of belonging. These categories are open to revision for those during reading. Passages are juxtaposed to a wide range of themes both within and across each passage, such as the interplay between discrimination and self-awareness, between protection and participation, among the consequences of poetic visibility.

The first research question is explored in passages that link the pressures of society with the other memories with Nida's awareness of identity and belonging. The second is being dealt with through poetry, discussion with the child about his/her expression, and the family's responses to community involvement. It's not about the creative

agency and the family relationship as two separate factors, it's the combination of them that is the subject of the analysis.

To strengthen interpretive transparency, the study records passage selections, coding decisions, and the reasoning connecting textual details with theoretical concepts. It also considers evidence that complicates the proposed argument, including moments of joy, support, disagreement, or continuity.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs a psychosocial framework grounded principally in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) and Ruth Leys's *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000). Psychosocial" refers to the personal versus the social context in which the relationships between personal responses occur. It is without doubt that this structure exists to encompass emotional experience and family interaction, public history, and pressures of institutions, and maintains a focus on representation in literature.

Caruth (1996) looks at the complex relationship of traumatic experience, knowledge and expressive representation. Her insight is helpful in posing questions regarding the means by which Nida communicates distress and the importance of a moment encounter may have after it. It also focuses on the correlation of expression and its restrictions. The analysis, however, does not presume a priori that the novel needs to have fractured chronology and that all the interruptions of poetic expression have a similar traumatic "explanation."

Leys (2000) offer a critical counterpoint by outlining a history of trauma theory and assumptions on which it rests. Her work inspires a consideration of interpretations of suffering that attempt to generate specific kinds of memory, narration, and identity. When used with *Hope Ablaze*, a different context demands a focus on the specifics of the settings where silence, fear and creative challenge exist. This is because Caruth and Leys don't constitute a unified theoretical stance, but rather critical interlocutors.

A study of familiar and communal memory can be substantiated by Halbwachs's (1992) work on collective memory. It points out the role of the relationships in which past experiences make a difference today. The study takes the perspective that these different kinds of encounters are called to distinction between Nida's immediate experiences of discrimination from experiences recalled by someone else, and that there may be consequences for expectations of safety and participation of remembered discrimination.

Yuval-Davis's (2011) definition of belonging provides additional clarification between the Micro Level of Feeling and the Political Level in which membership is accepted or rejected. This allows the research to focus on Nida's relationships with family, community, and country without assuming the same kind of relationship exists in all three realms. Furthermore, it takes care of the differences in the conditions of acceptable participation, which are understood by the characters.

Butler's (1997) considerations on speech and its political ramifications shed light on the analysis of poetry. Her methodology includes questions on the consequences of expression in terms of its audience, circulation, and interpretation. In the study, then, the question of how poetry offers Nida an arena for her agency is explored within the understanding that affixing agency does not necessarily guarantee control in how her utterances are received by others.

These lenses bring trauma, memory, belonging and voice together in the social and relational world of the novel. Caruth and Leys remain central to the analysis of traumatic representation; Halbwachs, Yuval-Davis, and Butler provide supporting concepts for specific textual questions. Their application remains responsive to the primary text, enabling the research to examine identity formation through the interaction of personal aspiration, remembered injury, familial concern, and public recognition.

Data Analysis

This section analyzes societal trauma, memory, and identity formation in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* (2024) through close readings of selected textual passages. It casts light on the public criticisms, media manipulation, familial limitations, refinement of memory and familial stories that affect Nida's sense of self and belonging. The analysis is based on the work of Caruth (1996) on traumatic experience and Leys (2000) on an examination of the concept of trauma theory, across which is added scholarship on injurious speech and collective memory. Special focus is placed on poetry as a medium used by Nida to negotiate his family responsibilities, personal agency and his reaction to social exclusion. The analysis is organized in such a way that the text evidence are related to the theoretical framework and the themes of the text are examined to explore the relationship between social pressures, remembered experiences, and the formation of identities.

Societal Discrimination and the Imposition of Identity

Societal discrimination in *Hope Ablaze* operates through public narratives that assign meanings to Nida's religion, ancestry, and family relationships. These stories limit her options to make herself appear as an individual who has his or her own aims and motivations. Having an uncle comes into play especially because public debate reads relations as an indicator of shared political ideologies. The following passage illustrates how an externally imposed identity can displace personal self-definition.

"Nida Siddiqui is the niece of convicted terrorist Abdul-Hafeedh and shares the jihadist ideologies of her uncle." (Rana, 2024, p. 52)

This passage demonstrates how Nida's public identity is constructed through familial association rather than an examination of her own words or actions. The sentence starts with her already having mentioned her relationship with AbdulHafeedh and proceeds directly to saying that she has his ideology. This is a transformation that makes kin services seem to be more political in terms of allegiance. So Nida is not even given the chance to describe her relationship with her uncle, much less elaborate on her own stance. She comes into the public eye when others label her with an accusation.

The charge also alters the notion of family identity. In her personal world, Mamou evokes feelings of love, art education and heritage. The same link is a suspicious link in the public statement, however. Thus the family becomes complexly signified both at home and in the public sphere. The family relationship is thus henceforth double signified, both in terms of their domestic and political contexts. This tension can expose the social exclusion as it comes into the intimate relationship: Nida cannot represent the relationship as something that carries significance but has to deal with the damaging interpretation on her bond with it.

Looking at the socio-cultural approach of the study, it reveals the emotion that may

arise due to social classification. Keeping these well-articulated perspectives of the ongoing impact of disturbing experience in mind, we might now turn our attention to Leys' (2000) critical genealogy, which asks us to reflect on the way trauma is theorized now. Specifically, in this instance, families' membership is being transformed into presumed guilt. Nida, thus negotiates her identity in a social environment, which restricts her visibility, understandability and recognition.

Media Distortion and the Appropriation of Voice

Media is other form of injury as Nida's poems permeate in alternative interpretation and it is not what Nida wanted. The public exposure draws the attention of its hearers, but not necessarily of an accurate rendition of its message. This novel explores what can happen when one's words are given such a form that they become evidence of a dangerous identity. The next quote in this passage exemplifies an awareness of Nida of something that is missing between her purpose to create and her mediated presence. "It was so eerie. I didn't appear as a girl spitting verse to inspire. I looked like the monster they made me out to be." (Rana, 2024, p. 53)

The passage exposes the distance between Nida's intentions and the public image produced from her expression. When she talks about herself as a "girl spitting verse to inspire", she highlights the aspects of youthfulness, creativity, and the intent to convey significance. The word "monster," on the other hand, projects her as a monster threatening from regular people sympathy. Opposition is what shows up the virulence of misrepresentation. Creed becomes the representation of a creative act that goes against what the speaker thinks of herself.

The term being used here "they made me out to be" makes it clear that this image is an outside construct. Nida faces a representation that seems to take the place of her actions. When her words are "out of context," then others can interpret those words and present a new story that no longer matches what was original to her. The decline of narrative authority is thus seen as an important aspect of social harm in the passage. Her suffering lies not only with the image she had in a negative sense, but also from her inability to circulate it to whom she would like.

Butler's (1997) discussion of injurious speech helps explain how public language can position a person within damaging social classifications. Through exclusion, Nida's experience demonstrates, not only can speech be interpreted, but there can be a restriction on speaking as well. Her poetry is heard, but in its circulation, she is haunted by an identity that doesn't come over to her. By using the speech/participation connection to indicate belonging, the passage shows that when the hostile descriptions outweigh what is intended, participation is destabilized.

Familial Protection and Restricted Agency

This affects the significance of the consequences of public hostility, directly impacting decisions around participation in art in Nida's own household. It's in a setting where things can be seen and a target of criticism and accusations. In the process of protecting, they provide for her, but also restrict her freedom of expression. The following quote reflects both the maternal protection and the power of creative choice of the daughter.

"What if you perform? I can't risk that." (Rana, 2024, p. 170)

Nida's mother's statement demonstrates how public insecurity influences decisions within the family. The question presents the possibility of artistic participation as a

risk, rather than a typical opportunity. The next rejection puts safety as the critical priority. Because of its succinctness, it emphasizes the consequential nature of its possibility: its creative value will not be addressed until the possibility of its performance is closed off. So external forces affect Nida's internal situation in which she can build her ambitions.

There's a conflict in the passage about the need for protection and individual freedom. Nida's mom's need to avoid "the rest" is that she stunts Nida in participating in an important part of her growing identity. Emotional cost of protection. The house becomes an object of concern and attachment and chokes off possibilities for expression. This complexity makes it difficult to view this relationship as one of opposition between parents and teenagers.

In a psychosocial way, exchanging acts as a representation of the aspects of social hostilities that affect inter-personal relationships. The text provides evidence to support the notion that parents' judgments depend upon their anticipation of danger, though it does not create any clinical conditions either in character. Nida is negotiated through communication with the family and not by itself. Her relation to public voice is thus shaped by familial responses as the mothers attempt to keep their daughters and make them behave in a way that is acceptable for others.

Repetitive Memory and Emotional Disturbance

Memory in *Hope Ablaze* carries the impact of conflict beyond the events beyond time. Nida's flashbacks to her family's guilt constantly return to her consciousness, illustrating that "the circle can be complete and stay in the here and now". The writer achieves this persistence through the use of figurative language in the novel. The next excerpt offers a retrospective that is less than definitive and more like a recollection than a consensus reached about the past.

"My memories played it like a broken record. My eyes saw Amma blaming me, over and over." (Rana, 2024, p. 88)

The metaphor of the "broken record" represents memory as an experience that repeats without reaching resolution. In both cases, Nida sees the confrontation again and again and cannot get it out of his head. Amma blaming Nida keeps coming back to him in his mind instead of being able to move on and remember what happened. Above, the words "over and over" echo this movement in the words. We are dealing with the past, and it is emotional for a reason – this changes our understanding of events and experiences ending vs. being carried internally.

The repetitiveness can be given a relational significance by the remembered figure of Amma. The charge is meaningful in as much as it is from someone who has recognized and loved Nida, which is significant to him. Her unease stems from her fear that what she has done has impacted her family's relationship with her. There is therefore a coming together of public critique and at-home assessment – external pressures gain additional emotional dimension from a residing relation which may additionally serve to reassure.

Caruth's (1996) discussion of the return of disturbing experience offers a perspective on the passage's temporal structure. However, this is not sufficient to make the clinical diagnosis. The literary evidence is more precise: Rana is an encounter that has a meaningful emotional content; it is one that is experienced again in the remembering. Remembered blame contributes to Nida being confused about herself, and her sense of "family belongingness".

Fragmented Family History and Ancestral Belonging

Through its exploration of identity and its links to the past alongside immediate, lived experiences of discrimination, Nida's connection to her racial past expands the novel. Where the novel explores identity and connection to its own past in addition to lived discrimination, Nida's contact with her racial past does also expand the novel. Family stories are a means of coming to know linkages with previous generations initially through incomplete or fragmentary histories. The text traverses how these creations can acquire significance in imaginative interaction. The following illustrates the connection between family storytelling, historical consciousness and growing belonging.

"Some of those stories Mamou had mentioned in passing, of an old village his great-great-uncle had lived in. But these bits of my history had been spoken of only ever in pieces, never fully realized until this dream." (Rana, 2024, p. 289)

Throughout this passage, family history is described in terms of stage by stage and partial inheritance. The terminology "in passing" and "bits" and "in pieces" seems to indicate that Nida's knowledge is not shaped by a continuous history. Within family communication the past is there, but needs to be fully realised. As the fragments become "my history" in her own mind, she is beginning to awaken to the relationship between a family's story and shaping a personal identity.

The dream allows for literature-like connection of these fragments. Amongst other things, it is vital for Nida to reinterpret the previous telling as a result of it. Through imaginative encounter, details received from Mamou become more coherent with their emotional nature. The dream does not give any witness testimony of ancestors. Rather, it is about how descendants relating to them from a different historical locale gain the significance of inherited accounts.

To understand how the family relation plays a part in this is made easier by reading an account of the social frameworks of memory by Halbwachs (1992). Nida's perception of the past are reflected from the communications made within Mamou and her interpretations of these communications. In other words, memory does not automatically pass to someone but rather helps to form an identity. Her tribal nostalgia emerges as she identifies similarities in stories that used to be isolated and her current knowledge of herself.

Poetry and the Negotiation of Personal Identity

Poetry offers a forum through which Nida reflects on relationships and expectations that are integral to her identity. Her creative work draws her to Mamou and her past, and questions her own intention. Writing is then inherited and also an activity which the meaning of which she must work out. The following text elucidates this negotiation in formulating poses about the sources and uses of artistic expression.

"Why do I write? For Mamou? To always live in his dead shadow? For my legacy? For my ancestors who endured so much yet persisted? Or did I write for me?" (Rana, 2024, p. 289)

The sequence is a swirl of such identity as Nida's artistic identity is "unstable" and "an object of agile questioning." Every question begins with a potential aim for the author to express in his/her writing: family loyalty, personal legacy, family remembrance, or personal desire. They do accumulate, indicating that poetry has a number of obligations at once. Nida struggles to come to a decision about what she wants and what she feels she should be doing for others. Identity formation develops

into a reflective process of inborn attachments and personal aspirations.

Mamou's "shadow" implies the struggle to forge an artistic identity, influenced by an important family member. His significance is continuity but it also suggests that Nida's creativity-invention scheme continues from the perspective of another actor. Similarly, there is a link between writing and historical responsibility via ancestral endurance. These connections provide significance to poetry and contribute to the issue of individual authorial voice.

Finally, the reader should pose the question: "Or did I write for me?" which brings about a new kind of relationship with the poetry. It allows for individual desire as well as family and family-of-origin bonds. Transitions in the psychosocial matrix are displayed in this moment as it is a time for rethinking of relationships and obligations. Poetry opens up a place of dialogue for Nida to explore inherited expectations and define what she wants to do, a place where the study's topic of creative expression is examined as a way to negotiate her voice, identity and belonging.

Conclusion

This study examined societal trauma and identity formation in Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze*, focusing on how discrimination, familial responses, memory, and poetry influence Nida's negotiation of belonging. Analysis shows that her emotional problems arise from the interplay between the public representation and private relationship. Charges of religious identity and familial affiliation jeopardize her own ability to claim her own identity, and her own poetry is obscured by misguided interpretations of her meaning.

The results suggest that societal hostility also contributes to changing domestic relationships. The safety restrictions imposed on Nida's mother show how safety can restrict creative participation. The family becomes as a result the base for attachment, while outside pressures gain personal power within these family contexts. For Nida, the wish to remember how she harms her mother in such repetitive ways further highlights how relational conflict is not only emotionally alive in the moment but afterward, as well. Her identity emerges in the superpositioning of the needs for protection, faithfulness, esteem and freedom.

The analysis also sheds light on the significance of ancestral memory in Nida's sense of belonging. Through her imaginative relationship with family history, it becomes meaningful, connecting to the stories communicated through Mamou. The fragments of stories communicated through Mamou become meaningful through her imaginative relationship with family history. The stories relate present joings to past experiences of endurance and do not make her experiences exactly the same as her forebears. The result is that memory aids in the sense of identity in terms of interpretation, communication among family members and the slow recognition of historical relationships.

Poems become a focal point for Nida to maneuver through such interrelationships. Writing gives her an opportunity to reflect on the expectations she's inherited and to think about her own creative intents, while also allowing her to assert herself against any public distortion of her artistic creativity. She ventures into the expression of self-directedness as a way to assert her identity on the narrative. The development does not suggest that discrimination does not yet exist or that the expression of art is yet a sure vehicle to recovery, but simply suggests that of course you might be able to move through difficult circumstances, environment, and experiences. This is not to say that

discrimination isn't still there, and that the expression of art is yet a sure vehicle to recovery, but simply this, you can move.

In reading the novel, both within the frame of traumatic experience as related by Caruth and the trauma critique as a critical genealogy of trauma, this study links emotions of disturbance to prevailing conditions and contexts of representation and understanding of trauma. It is pioneering in demonstrating how present-day South Asian diasporic fiction imbues aspects of marginalization, intimate care, intergenerational trauma and personal expression with a shared narrative of identity construction. *Hope Ablaze* presents belonging as an ongoing negotiation shaped by public judgment and sustained through relationships, remembrance, and the effort to speak in one's own voice.

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Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

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