

**POETRY AND CULTURE OF IMPUNITY IN HALIMA AMALI'S *FACES
OF SHAME***

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Michael Ayo AJAO** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

Dr. Clement Eloghosa Odia
Project Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

To God Almighty for a successful academic journey.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which Halima Amali's poetry critiques the culture of impunity with a specific focus on its manifestations, combative strategies, and potential solutions. This study aims to analyze the poetic representation of impunity. It investigates the role of literature in challenging impunity. It explores the envisioned solutions and contributes to the broader conversation on impunity and literature by examining analysis poetry through this lens, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the complex issues, surrounding impunity and the ways in which literature can be used to challenge and transform society.

1.2 Scope of Study

Amali is a prolific poet who has published two collections of poems, namely, *I Want to Join Them* (2016) and *Faces of Shame* (2020). This study will focus on the latter collection, analyzing the poem within the context of socio-political impunity

1.3 Methodology

This study will employ a quantitative research approach, utilizing literary analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine the poems. The analysis will focus on examining how Amali uses literary devices such as imagery, metaphor, and symbolism to depict injustice, looting, and oppression. It will identify and analyze

the themes of denunciation, deposition, revolt, social sanitization, and good leadership in the poetry collection by employing this methodology, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how analysis collection confronts socio-political impunity and advocates for change

1.4 Theoretical Background

Subaltern postcolonial theory represents a critical framework within postcolonial studies, providing a way to analyse and interpret the historical, cultural, and political legacies of colonialism, particularly from the angle of marginalized or silenced groups. Subaltern theory focuses on the voices of those who have been excluded from dominant discourses such as peasants, indigenous people, women, and other oppressed social strata.

The term “subaltern” is associated with the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to groups outside the hegemonic power structure. However, it in the 1980s, it became popular within postcolonial studies in the south Asian subaltern studies. Famous proponents of this theory include scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Spivak’s influential essay “Can the subaltern speak?” (1988) represented a significant shift in the theoretical trajectory of subaltern studies. Spivak interrogated the ability of subaltern subjects particularly women, to represent themselves within dominant epistemological framework. Her conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak without mediation highlighted the deep structural

inequalities embedded in language, discourse, and knowledge production. This insights significantly broadened the scope of subaltern theory by emphasising not just the historical absence of subaltern voices, but also the discursive mechanism that continue to silence them.

In Pallavi Singh's view, the term "subaltern " refers to any person who is subordinated due to their community, caste, class, race, ethnicity, physiology, gender, sexual orientation etc . this definition reveals a whole lot about factors entrenching the culture of subalternism. Thus, the subaltern system is a socially-constructed phenomenon it contributes to postcolonial analysis by disrupting conventional binaries such as colonizer\colonised, centre /periphery and elite/mass. Instead, it advocates for a more nuanced understanding of power, identity, and resistance. One of the major contributions is it emphasis on voice and agency. Subaltern theory insists that marginalized people have their own political naturalities , cultural practices and forms of resistance, even if these do not conform to dominant narratives

As for Anand Maurya the subaltern indicates a deprived person who ensemble within the representation of the oppressor\ oppressed (16). Another significant contribution is critique of historiography subaltern theorist argue that colonial and nationalist histories have both tended to use the voices of subaltern groups. By the reconstructing alternative histories that centre subaltern experience researches can provide more inclusive and accurate accounts of the past

Upendar Gundala avers that:

That people existing at present would readily like to inhabit the situation of a subaltern whose silence is perhaps voiced through the advocating demonstration of an intellectual (24)

Subaltern postcolonial theory offers a powerful lens for examining the enduring impact of colonialism from the perspective of the marginalized. It challenges dominant discourses, highlights the agency of oppressed groups, and calls for a rethinking of historical narratives and contemporary power relations. As a theoretical background, it equips researchers with the tools to conduct ethically relevant scholarship that amplifies voices from the margins.

According to Prashant Jambhulkar and Vivek V. Joshi, “Subaltern Literature, which is one of the branches of post-colonialism discourses oppression, marginalisation, subordination, (525). These categories amplify the themes often presented when the subaltern message is being articulated. Furthermore, prashant and Joshi add that the group includes “the lower and working classes, gender discrimination, disregarded women, poor classes, racial and caste discrimination and other concerns” (525). Subaltern theory also intersects with other critical paradigms, such as feminist theory, critical race theory, and decolonial through, enhancing its relevance to a range of disciplines. The intersectional potential of subaltern theory allows researchers to examine how colonial legacies persist in

contemporary forms of marginalization, including through global capitalism, structural violence, and epistemic injustice.

Hage Lily centres the subaltern study on the masses when the scholar argues that:

Subaltern study concerns the participation of the masses that were subsided and marginalized from a layer discourse and often misrepresented in general discussion due to socio-economic and ideological grounds. (22)

The aim of the subaltern theory is to get the excluded group to participate in the scheme of things. This time, the excluded masses. They are included in the discourse to move the nation forward. Thus, the study seeks to reposition the masses within the polar social structure and also represented them properly and correctly in order to remove biases.

The above view resonates in Hemangi Bhagwat and Madhavi Arekar's who explain that:

In general terms, subaltern refers to the group that is excluded from society's established structures for political representation and therefore denied the means by which people have a voice in their society. (39)

The subaltern group often suffers exclusion in its entirety. They are denied access to societal structures that enable political representation. This invariably means the subalterns do not benefit from political voice because access to it is blocked.

Having explored the subaltern postcolonial theory, it is important to examine the concept of impunity in order to provide the context to this essay. Francisco Cribari-neto and Marcelo Santos explain that “impunity is the exercise of power without accountability” (8) When individuals especially those entrusted with political power exercise power with no intention to be accountable to the people who gave them authority. According to Cribari-Neto and Santos, impunity “can lead to abuse of power, widespread corruption, and the denial of basic human rights” (9). Under the climate of impunity the people live in fear and penury. Consequently, “impunity can also perpetuate injustice, and inequality, as those in power do not fear repercussions for their actions” (10). Where injustice combines with inequality, the people agitate for change and seek ways to redemption.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Halima Amali’s poetry has attracted scant literary attention. However, the subject of impunity has enjoyed considerable engagement from diverse fields. For example, Esther Iria Jamgbadi examines poetry of political impunity in Niyi Osundare’s *Random Blues*. The pivot of the essay is the way Osundare has depicted the scourge of political impunity. Jamgbadi focuses on the various forms by which political impunity manifests. The scholar identifies two aspects of political

impunity namely, impunity in politics and impunity in governance. The paper posits that “in politics, political impunity manifests as political violence and that, in governance, it occurs as public theft and abuse of power” (125). Although the paper treats the subject of political impunity, nothing is said about the ways that this scourge can be combated in our public life. This gap has become necessary to be filled because when impunity is allowed to fester it will ruin development and stifle growth.

Clement Eloghosa Odia also examines the sociological imagination of impunity in Remi Raji’s poetry of social relevance. Odia identifies two manifestations of impunity in Raji’s poetry, namely “violence and public theft as two manifestations of impunity and suggests revolt, denunciation, resistance and physical violence as ways the people could use to combat impunity”. (106) Odia’s essay although identifies two ways the poet has portrayed impunity, it also suggests four strategies that the people can use to combat impunity. as earlier stated, this current essay approaches impunity from a different angle.

Amali’s poetry has also received scholarly attention from Joy Nwiyi and Esther M. Ape who focus on satire and poetic commitment. According to them,

Halima Amali employs a plethora of images to describe the nation’s enemies. She describes them as vultures eating into the nation’s wealth, wolves, hyenas and jackals who destroy the country fiercely

through corrupt practices and contribute to the socio-economic and socio-political crises of the nation. (89)

Animal imagery predominate in Amali's poetry. They are used to symbolise whom the poet describes as "the nation's enemies". Referencing carnivorous animals to contextualise their rapacious capacity in devouring "the nation's wealth". Thus their activities constitute a threat to the country. The gastronomical images employed depict "corrupt practices" and by the behaviour of these rapacious leaders, they end up wreaking economic hardship on the people. Like Jamgbadi and Odia, Nwiy's and Ape do not dwell directly on the culture of impunity.

Similarly, Raphael Chukuemeka Onyejizu demonstrates how Amali versifies unease in postcolonial Nigerian society through representation of politics of corruption and oppression. Although the essay is a comparative study, it however shows "how political leaders in their deployment of corrupt and oppressive schemes advance their kleptomania agenda". (191)

Amali appears to be bothered by the twin evil plagueing Nigeria, namely, corruption and oppression. The scholar, Onyejizu does not engage.

Interpreting Amali's poetry as channel for socio-political engagement, Lorwuese Gogo remarks:

Amali's poetry is rooted in the Marxist and socialist realists. Ideologies as it identifies with the oppressed and unveils revolution

as the means of overthrowing the corrupt ruling elites for the rise of the downtrodden. (7)

Gogo's view is that Amali's poetry expresses people-centric ideological stands where their welfare is paramount. According to the scholar, Gogo believes in revolutionary methods of actualizing change. The essay canvasses the need for the downtrodden to rise up and overthrow the ruling elites who have enslaved them. Like other scholars already reviewed, Loruose does not concern himself with the culture of impunity neither does he canvass combative strategies to end the scourge of impunity.

Both Onyebuchi Nwosuna and Chika Ose-Agbo explore the theme of corruption. According to them:

Her poetry is mass-oriented confrontational, and optimistic as it depicts a dialogue with self and society intertwined with a clarion call for persistent and calculated actions against anti-democratic agents, forces and personages. (91)

Halima Amali's poetry is Marxist pruned as it envisions collectivist poetics for attaining social change. According to Nwosun and Ose-Agbo, the poet interrogates self and society through the lens of socialist conscious praxis. The poem calls for deliberate actions to thwart anti-democratic machinations and instead enthrone democratic culture for social redemption.

1.6 Thesis Statement

Halima Amali's poetry collection, *Faces of Shame*, presents a scathing critique of impunity in Nigerian society, employing powerful poetic devices and themes to expose the manifestation of impunity, articulating accountability as well as envisioning transformative change as ways of combating the culture of impunity.

CHAPTER TWO

MANIFESTATIONS OF IMPUNITY

Impunity, a pervasive and insidious phenomenon, has become a hallmark of many societies, where those in positions of power and authority act with impunity, perpetrating injustices, looting public resources, and oppressing the vulnerable with little to no accountability. This culture of impunity has far-reaching consequences, undermining trust in institutions, eroding social cohesion, and perpetuating cycles of violence and oppression. In the context of Halima Amali's poetry, impunity is a dominant theme, with the poet employing her craft to expose and critique the socio-political structures that enable and perpetuate impunity. Through her poetry, Amali, sheds light on the faces of shame that perpetuate impunity, revealing the complex web of power dynamics, corruption, and complicity that underpin this phenomenon. This chapter therefore argues that impunity manifests in the form of injustice and looting.

2.1 Injustice

Injustice is one of the manifestations of societal dimensions of impunity in the poem beginning with "I want to die" which conveys the unjust treatment of the downtrodden by those in authority. Thus the opening lines have evocative vibrancy that jolts the reader with frightening images:

Pains hover in the air

Dripping unto the heads of the poor

Spreading painfully unto the souls of my nation

A creation of the haves to the downtrodden

Too much to bear

I want to die. (*Faces*, p. 41)

The imaginative power of the poem is to be found in its representation of “pains” as a bird hovering in the air to the extent that the said “pains” metaphorically express the unjust treatment being meted out on the poor in society. Beyond the bird image, there is the image of a drizzling rain “Dripping unto the heads of the poor”. What this dripping image reflects is that the poor are being targeted. This situation highlights the pervading sense of injustice against the poor. According to the speaker, the injustice is a creation of “the haves” in society and directed against the downtrodden. The pains have permeated the entire nation to the extent that the speaker prefers death to living because it is “too much to bear”.

The speaker explains further that:

Looting daily gathers momentum

Driving the populace to the wall

Stripping them of God’s mercies

Chopping in big mounds what is ours

And the poor remains hunger stricken

I want to die. (41)

Injustice connotes unfair treatment. In the context of this poem, those in authority on a daily basis engage in looting but as for the populace, they are being driven to the wall of despair. This device of contrast is masterfully deployed to construct the societal dimension of impunity. To further amplify the sense of injustice, the poet-persona describes the leaders “chopping in big mounds what is ours”. The democratic game appears to favour those in power as they take possession of everything that belongs to the people. The word “chopping” is a pidgin epithet and metaphor for corrupt embezzlement of public wealth. The paradox of their action is that the poor remains in the state of hunger.

In the concluding stanza, the poet provides further details on the pervasive sense of injustice:

I want to die
 For injustice reigns with pride
 Catapulting lies to heaven high
 Shamelessly degrading our stance for truth
 Intimidating us with what is of our sweet
 Building the evil empire of shame.

In the poem, the refrain “I want to die” appears in the three stanzas and it forcefully buttresses a strong message as it helps to establish the sense of helplessness. That the speaker expresses the desire to die shows the intolerable nature of the unfairness in the country. Through contrast, the poet depicts the manifestation of

injustice. Firstly, injustice is said to “reign with pride” especially when connected with the preference for falsehood rather than truth. The image of the catapult is employed to show the level at which “lies” have risen or taken. The alliterative structure: “heaven high” conveys the irony. Lies are not supposed to dwell in heaven but in Nigeria, they have been shot high especially lies told in high places and corridors of power. They have degraded but “shamelessly” the place of truth. Secondly, there is injustice as the people are intimidated with no one to fight for them. In fact, the people are stolen from and get intimidated making life a parade of shame.

In another poem, Amali presents the poor as victims of injustice. This is the preoccupation of the poem, “where are the terrorists?” According to the speaker, the real terrorists are those who pervert justice and entrench injustice. The poem opens with a rhetorical question demanding to know the identity of those who terrorise the country. They are subsequently revealed to be:

N the hallowed chambers

Attending sessions of deceit

In lie coated tongues

Flexing muscles against truth. (25)

The terrorists who manifest socio-political impunity against the poor are legislators. They are found in “hallowed chambers” but their conduct is anything but hallowed. The ironic portrayal of these law makers leave is further amplified by the fact that

they attend “sessions of deceit” and speak with “coated tongues”. All their actions are geared toward flexing muscles against truth. The metaphor of a muscular fighter is evoked to depict how they muster their legislative resources to pervert the truth. The most infuriating aspect of their action is the impunity with which they pervert justice.

Still depicting the impunity, the speaker recounts further:

Daily castrating the angels of boom

And carting away sweats of the downtrodden sucking dry the
nipples of my nation

Incinerating yields for the poor. (25)

By their actions, these legislators hinder the nation from experiencing boom. This is expressed through the metaphor of castration. It depicts the great danger they pose to national growth and development. These legislators are said to do this on daily basis. Apart from that, they are depicted through the metaphor of a child sucking the nipples of the mother. Similarly, the legislators are presented as those sucking dry the wealth of the nation. The tragedy of their action is that they are the ones “carting away sweats of the downtrodden”. This unjust stealing from the poor amounts to “incinerating” their “yields” and leaving them hopeless.

The poet presents the impunity of the injustice dimension in the poem “when thieves legislate” to show that the action affects the entire country:

The nation is doomed

Shouldering failure
 In curse theatrical performances
 Legislated in chambers of shame
 For a traumatic fracture of justice
 And the nation sinks in legislative hell. (60)

The consequences of injustice especially the impunity at which it is allowed to fester is that it runs the nation. The image of doom as deployed in the poem conveys total destruction.

Failure becomes the order of the day. The once hallowed chamber of justice becomes a place of shame because they “fracture” justice. this is the metaphor of total collapse and break down of law and order. The effect of this is that “the nation sinks in legislative hell”.

The poem ends with a scathing paradox:

Wen thieves legislate
 Legislation is theft
 Theft kills a nation
 When thieves legislate
 Theft is filthy wealth
 And the nation fails. (60)

The stanza opens with an irony. Firstly, thieves should not become legislators. Unfortunately, the picture presented is that a situation when thieves legislate, they

steal the legislation. They capture the process and adjust the laws to favour them alone. Hence, this theft kills the nation as it robs it of progress.

The paradox is stretched to an oxymoronic extent when the poet compares “Theft” to filth. That is, any wealth accumulated through theft is filthy. All such wealth fails the nation. Thus injustice is at the root of impunity in Amali’s poetry.

2.2 Looting

Another societal dimension of impunity in the poems of Amali is looting by political leaders. In “They have no shame”, the poet provides details on how politician and leaders enrich themselves at the expense of public good and development:

They walk high
Big chests out
Padded in billion naira notes
Snatched off the bullion van
For a deal in the looters’ workshop. (12)

The poet begins the poem by showing the impunity with which the political class parade the place. According to the speaker, the looters in power, “walk high”, a metaphor for their unrestrained arrogance and impunity that they display without the possibility of prosecution and accountability. They steal billions of naira notes packed full in bullion van. The snatching of these money amounts to a serious

betrayal of the people's trust. The snatch metaphor also conveys the impunity which undergirds the stealing:

They jeer at the underprivileged
 Devouring what is ours
 For a debunk of truth
 Stuffing sewages with their loot
 And they stink in stench of hell fire. (12)

The stanza begins with a stark irony. The politicians who ought to be jeered at are presented as jeering at the people – the populace. This jeering attitude smacks of impunity because having stolen or looted the country empty, they begin to mock or laugh at the law that they put in place to bind the underprivileged. Apart from laughing at the poor, they are said to hide their “loot” in sewages. The olfactory imagery amplifies the sense of corruption which expresses the source of the stolen money. The last line conveys a strong moral disgust and condemnation. The comparison of the smell to “hell fire” creates a vivid and intense image, emphasizing the severity of the stench. The use of sensory language, such as “stink” and “stench” evokes a strong sense of smell and creates a vivid image in the reader's mind. “Hell fire” can be seen as a symbol of moral corruption, evil, or damnation, adding depth and complexity to the poem's meaning. The repetition of the ‘s’ sound in “stink” and “stench” creates an alliterative effect, adding to the lines musicality and emphasis.

The poet ends the poem thus:

They have no shame
 These looters of my nation
 In sinful faces
 Sucking life off the living
 They have no shame. (12)

The above stanza presents a scathing critique of looting as a societal dimension of impunity. the repetition of “The have no shame” emphasises the perpetrators’ lack of remorse or guilt, highlighting the erosion of moral values. The phrase “looters of my nation” underscores the widespread consequences of looting, affecting not just individuals but the entire country. “Sucking life off the living” creates a vivid image of exploitation implying that looting drains resources and vitality from the nation, harming its citizens. “Sinful faces” suggests that those engaging in looting have lost their moral bearings, implying a deep-seated corruption. The poem suggests that looting is a symptom of a broader moral crisis, where perpetrators feel no shame or accountability. By exploring these themes, the poem sheds light on the complex societal dimensions of impunity, highlighting the need for accountability, moral renewal, and systemic change.

The poem, “Enemies of our time” shows how the poet presents looting as a societal dimension of impunity:

Corruption

Unholy theft living freely
 Smearing the poor with pains
 Disarming them of a say
 Enabling dishonest men to soldier on
 And stealing and impunity thrive. (22)

The poet describes corruption as theft. The phrase “unholy theft” emphasises the exploitative nature of corruption, implying a grave injustice. “Smearing the poor with pains” suggests that corruption disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, exacerbating poverty and suffering. Beyond the above, it disenfranchises them. The expression: “Disarming them of a say” implies that corruption silences marginalized voices, denying them a platform to express their concerns or demand accountability. Also, the expression: “Enabling dishonest men to soldier on” suggests that corruption is often allowed to persist, with perpetrators facing little to no consequences.

Theft
 Borrowing our treasury
 Breeding unholy romance with our funds
 In a marriage of lust and money
 Castrating our hopes to decency
 And deprivation reigns. (22)

The poet describes theft as an act of borrowing into public treasury. It emphasises the exploitation of public resources for personal gain. Corruption and immorality fuse into one. the expression: “Breeding unholy romance with our funds” suggests a corrupt and immoral relationship between those in power and public resources. There is a link between obsession and wealth, which implies an insatiable desire for wealth, driving individuals to engage in corrupt practices. Lastly, looting is considered as a terrible act because castrates our “hopes to decency” and it suggests that looting undermines societal values and erodes trust in institutions. The poem reveals looting as a societal dimension of impunity by highlighting systematic corruption with those in power exploiting resources for personal gain. It also emphasises moral decay where corruption is normalised. The poem exposes the consequences of looting, including the erosion of decency and the reign of deprivation.

CHAPTER THREE

ARTICULATING ACCOUNTABILITY

Halima Amali's poetry collection, *Faces of Shame*, offers a powerful exploration of the complexities of accountability and impunity in society. Through her masterful use of language and poetic form, Amali sheds light on the ways in which shame and guilt are negotiated, and the consequences of unchecked impunity. This chapter will undertake a poetic analysis of the above collection, examining how Amali articulates accountability and combats impunity, and exploring the societal dimensions of her work.

Amali employs a tripartite strategy to combat impunity and demand accountability from leaders. Firstly, she denounces bad leaders, laying bare their corrupt and oppressive practices. Secondly, she advocates for the deposition or removal of terrible leaders, emphasizing the need for collective action to bring about change. Finally, she explores the theme of revolt by the people, highlighting the desperation and frustration that can drive citizens to take drastic measures when their demands for accountability are ignored. These three strategies shall be explored.

3.1 Denunciation

The first strategy employed by Amali to articulate accountability is denunciation. This is more evident in the poem, "We shall sing". The poet uses the singing metaphor as a tool for expressing denunciation:

We shall sing
Sing songs of sorrow
Expelling anguish from our hearts
In mountainous heights
Unto these men of merciless souls
Stepping on our souls
To erase our souls. (Amali 14)

The poem employs a powerful denunciation strategy to articulate accountability, targeting "men of merciless souls" who seem to be responsible for the suffering of the speaker and their community. The poet's use of strong language and imagery serves to condemn these individuals and highlight their culpability. The opening lines, "We shall sing/Sing songs of sorrow," suggest a collective expression of pain and grief, while also implying a sense of defiance and resistance. The phrase "Expelling anguish from our heights" indicates a desire to purge the emotional burden caused by these "men of merciless souls".

The image of singing "in mountainous heights" creates a sense of grandeur and amplifies the voice of the poet, making the denunciation more pronounced. The use of "Unto these men" directly addresses the targets of the poet's criticism, emphasizing their responsibility for the suffering. The final line, "To erase our souls," is a powerful indictment of the "men of merciless souls," suggesting that their actions are not only hurtful but also existentially threatening. The poet's

denunciation strategy effectively articulates accountability, demanding that these individuals acknowledge and account for their actions. Overall, the poem's use of denunciation strategy serves as a potent call for accountability, emphasizing the need for those in power to recognize and make amends for their wrongdoing.

In the subsequent stanza, the poet recounts:

We shall sing
Sing songs of hate
Exposing our leaders of impunity
Who daily degrade our hopes
We shall unleash Venoms into them
Spitting hatreds to tear their sinful souls
And demean their beings. (4)

The stanza conveys a powerful message of accountability, with the poet articulating it through several key elements. The use of strong language like "hate," "venoms," and "spitting hatred" creates a confrontational tone, emphasizing the poet's intent to hold leaders accountable for their actions. The line "Exposing our leaders of impunity" suggests a desire to reveal the wrongdoings of those in power, thereby underscoring the need for transparency and accountability. The poet's use of words like "sinful souls" and "demean their beings" conveys a sense of moral judgment, condemning the leaders' actions and implying a need for consequences. The

repeated use of "We shall" creates a sense of collective agency, suggesting that the people will take action to hold their leaders accountable.

The poem touches on themes of social justice, with the poet advocating for accountability and transparency in leadership. The confrontational tone and language suggest a sense of defiance against oppressive or corrupt leadership. The poet's use of strong language conveys a sense of moral outrage emphasizing the need for leaders to be held accountable for their actions.

We shall sing
Sing songs of shame
Expelling disgust
Upon unworthy men
In unstoppable streams of bullets
Showered unto their heads
Loaded in dirty deals. (4)

The stanza conveys a powerful message of condemnation and resistance, with the poet articulating their disgust towards unworthy individuals, likely corrupt or oppressive leaders. The poem starts with "We shall sing," which typically implies a positive or celebratory tone. However, the phrase "sing songs of shame" subverts this expectation, highlighting the poet's intention to critique and condemn. The use of vivid imagery, such as "unstoppable streams of bullets" and "showered unto their heads," creates a powerful and intense picture. This imagery likely symbolizes

verbal attacks, criticism, or resistance rather than literal violence. The metaphorical evocation of and comparison of criticism to "bullets" emphasizes the poet's desire for impactful and unrelenting condemnation. The phrase "unworthy men" and "dirty deals" clearly conveys the poet's moral judgment, expressing or articulating the need for accountability.

We shall sing
Sing against evil and the castration of truth
To wade off pains
Borne into us
To open gate of freedom
And sing the song of victory. (4)

The stanza above states its purpose clearly: "to sing against evil" and "the castration of truth". This sets the tone for a message of resistance and condemnation. The phrase "castration of truth" is a potent metaphor that underscores the poet's concern about the suppression of truth and freedom. The lines "To open gate of freedom/And sing the song of victory" convey a sense of hope and optimism, suggesting that the poet believes in the possibility of overcoming adversity.

In another poem, Amali articulated accountability by denouncing the political and leadership class for perpetuating the culture of impunity in Nigeria:

I wish to be a thief
In this great country

Where stealing is pride
For the one at the top
And impunity is a shield
For no punishment to suffice. (Amali 38)

The poet's desire to be a thief in a country where stealing is glorified for those in power is a satirical commentary on the lack of accountability. By expressing a desire to be a thief in a system where those in power steal with impunity, the poet highlights the hypocrisy of a system that condemns ordinary people for actions that they tolerated or even celebrated in the powerful. The line "impunity is a shield/For no punishment to suffice" critiques the lack of accountability for those in power, implying that they are above the law. The poet's desire to be a thief serves as a commentary on the double standards in the system, where those in power are not held accountable for their actions. By suggesting that stealing is a path to pride and power, the poet implied that the system is morally decayed and that accountability is lacking.

The poem can be seen as a call for change, urging readers to recognize the injustices and demand accountability from those in power. The poet's use of irony highlights the absurdity of a system where stealing is condemned in ordinary people but glorified in those in power. The satirical tone critiques the system and its lack of accountability, encouraging readers to think critically about the issues

presented. Overall, the poet effectively uses satire and irony to articulate the need for accountability in a system where those in power seem to operate above the law.

3.2 Deposition

Another strategy used by Amali to articulate accountability is deposition. This involved getting corrupt and oppressive leaders out of office at all costs. Amali uses the metaphor of stripping the leaders naked as a weapon to hold them accountable. In the poem "Strip them naked" the poet reveals the impunity with which the leaders steal public funds:

These men and women of no piety
In their bloated beings
With bulging naira infested bellies
Stuffed with per diem funds
Stolen from arms and security vaults. (13)

The poet begins the poem by laying the foundation for which she requests the people to depose the leaders. They are described as "men and women" who lack "piety". For this reason, their bodies are said to be "bloated" metaphorically, corrupted, and having "bulging naira infested bellies". These bellies are "stuffed with 'per diem funds'", stolen from "vaults" earmarked for "arms and security". These images create a powerful picture of corruption and greed. Also, the stealing of public funds highlights the severity of the corruption and the potential threat to national security. This picture implied a need for change and accountability.

In the second stanza, the poet urges the people thus:

Strip them naked
 These women of pretentious faces
 Wearing billion Naira adornment
 Concealing their pothole faces of theft
 Thieves of great plethora (Amali. 13)

The phrase "strip them naked" can be interpreted as a metaphor for stripping them of power and exposing their vulnerability. The act of stripping them naked can be seen as a symbol of removing their authority and influence. By exposing their vulnerability, the poem highlights the idea that those in power are not invincible and can be held accountable. The metaphorical stripping of power and exposure of vulnerability can be seen as a call for the deposition of corrupt leaders. It calls for the removal of power and influence. Thus, the poem implies that those in power should be held accountable for their actions. On the surface, it also implies the need to expose the hypocrisy and deception of those who present themselves as virtuous while engaging in corrupt activities. The poem's tone and language convey a strong sense of moral outrage and indignation.

The poet continued to articulate accountability by suggesting that the people depose corrupt and oppressive leaders. This is the cornerstone of the poem "It is our wish". The poem advocated accountability thus:

It is our wish

That men of no honour
 Tagging us "scavengers"
 As they humiliate our wishes
 For a drink for life
 Have their necks twisted for mass grave. (42)

The poet articulates accountability through deposition by expressing a strong desire for leaders who disrespect and dehumanize their people to be removed from power. The lines "It is our wish/That men of no honour" introduce the idea that certain individuals are unworthy of their position. The phrase "Tagging us 'scavengers'" highlights the leaders' disdain for their people, while "As they humiliate our wishes" emphasizes the emotional toll of their actions. The line "For a drink for life" suggests that the people's basic needs are being denied. The final line, "Have their necks twisted for mass grave," is a potent expression of the desire for these leaders to be deposed and held accountable for their actions. The image of a mass grave implied a severe reckoning, underscoring its demand for justice. Through this stanza, the poet articulates accountability by advocating for the removal of leaders who fail to respect and serve their people, emphasising the need for consequence for their actions.

The death expressed in the poem can be seen as a symbolic representation of the people's desire for justice and accountability, rather than a literal call for violence. By invoking their imagery, the poet emphasizes the gravity of the leaders'

wrongdoing and the need for consequence, articulating the theme of accountability and combating impunity. This rhetorical device adds to the poem's emotional impact and underscores the urgency of the people's demands for justice.

It is our wish
That corrupt men
Trampling the hope of tomorrow
As we yearn for a lump down our throats
Have their intestines pulled out with no mercy. (42)

The poet powerfully articulates accountability through deposition by expressing a fervent desire for corrupt leaders to face severe consequences. The lines "It is our wish/That corrupt men" directly address the target of the poet's criticism. The phrase "Trampling the hope of tomorrow" conveys the detrimental impact of corruption on the future, expressing the leaders' culpability. The line "As we yearn for a lump down our throat" suggests a sense of desperation and frustration among the people. The final line, "Have their intestines pulled out with no mercy," is a graphic and intense expression of the desire for these corrupt leaders to be held accountable and removed from power. The use of violent imagery underscores the depth of the people's anger and frustration. Through this poem, the poet articulates accountability by advocating for the deposition of corrupt leaders, emphasizing the need for justice and consequences for their actions. The poem serves as a powerful indictment of corruption and a call to action for accountability.

It is our wish
That monsters of our age
Roaming in streams of theft
Cheering themselves in impunity
And sinful deals against man
Be hung and roasted in shame
That they die hanging in embers of sin.

The poet powerfully articulated accountability by expressing a desire for corrupt leaders to face severe consequences. The lines "It is our wish/That monsters of our age" draws attention to the monstrous nature of these individuals. The phrase "Roaming in streams of theft" expresses their corrupt activities, while "Cheering themselves in impunity" underscores their lack of accountability. The line "And sinful deals against man" expresses the human cost of their actions. The final lines "Be hung and roasted in shame/That they die hanging in embers of sin" is a vivid expression of the desire for these leaders to be held accountable and punished for their wrongdoing. The imagery of being "hung and roasted" served as a potent symbol of the people's demand for justice. Through this poem, the poet articulated accountability by advocating for the removal and punishment of corrupt leaders, articulating the need for consequences for their actions. The poem served as a powerful call to action for accountability and justice.

Halima Amali emerges as a powerful poetic intervention in the discourse of accountability and impunity. Through her nuanced and evocative poetry, Amali sheds light on the complexities of shame, guilt, and responsibility, and offers a searing critique of societal complicity in perpetuating impunity. This analysis has demonstrated the ways in which Amali's poetry articulates accountability and combats impunity, amplifying the significance of her work in sparking critical conversations about societal responsibility and the need for justice

CHAPTER FOUR

ENVISIONING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

In the pursuit of a just and equitable society envisioning transformative change is crucial in combating impunity and promoting accountability. This vision is built on three foundational pillars: social sanitation, good leadership, and peaceful coexistence. By fostering a culture of society responsibility, promoting ethical leadership, and nurturing harmonious relationships among citizens, communities can effectively challenge impunity and ensure that individuals are held accountable for their actions. This essay explores the significance of transformative change in combating impunity, highlighting the interconnected roles of social sanitation, ethical leadership, and peaceful coexistence in shaping a more just and accountable society.

4.1 Social Sanitation

Amali advocates social sanitation as a way of actualizing transformative change.

The poem begins thus:

May the land be cleansed
For birds and holy spirit
Women and men
Young and old
To breathe the breath of happiness.[16]

The poet advocates social sanitation as a way of envisioning transformative change by expressing a desire for the land to be cleansed. The line “May the land be cleansed” is a powerful invocation for purification, suggesting a need to remove corrupt or harmful elements. The poet’s vision for a cleansed land is not just physical but also spiritual and social, as evidenced by the mention of “holy spirits.” This emphasis on spiritual cleansing underscores the poet’s desire for a profound transformation. The inclusion of various groups, such as “Women and men /young and old,” highlights the poet’s vision for a society that values inclusivity and equality. The phrase “To breathe the breath of happiness” suggests that this transformation will bring joy and well-being to all members of society. Through this excerpt, the poet advocates social sanitation as a means of achieving transformative change, emphasizing the need for purification, spiritual renewal, and social harmony. The poet’s vision is one of a society that is cleansed of corruption and negativity, where all individuals can thrive and live in happiness.

May the dirt be washed

Off thieves and robbers

Unholy leaders, men and women of deceit

Established in theft

To bathe in the bath of repentance.[16]

The poet advocates social sanitation by expressing a desire for the removal of corrupt elements from society. The lines “May the dirt be washed /off thieves and

rubbers” suggest a need for purification, targeting those who have engaged in illicit activities the phrase ”unholy leaders, men and women of deceit broadens the scope, emphasising the need for accountability among those in positions of power the line “established in theft” highlights the entrenched nature of corruption. The final line “to bathe the bathe of repentance” suggest a desire for these individuals to acknowledge and make amends for their wrongdoing. The poets use the metaphor of bathing in repentance underscores the need for a profound transformation. Through this excerpt, the poet advocates social sanitation by calling for the removal of corrupt elements and prompting accountability, through purification and repentance .

May my nation revive to light

For her citizen celebrate

A rebirth of holiness

For goodness to thrive

And we have the sigh of relief. (Amali 16)

The poet expresses a desire for national renewal and rejuvenation, invoking a sense of hope and optimism. The line “may my nation revive to life “ suggests a need for transformation and revitalization. The phrase “for citizen to celebrate the rebirth of holiness” emphasises the poet’s vision for a nation that values morality, ethics, and spirituality, the word “rebirth” implies a fresh start, free from corruption and negativity. The line “for goodness to thrive” underscores the poet’s desire for a

society that promotes positivity, kindness, and compassion . the final phrase “and we heave a sigh of relief” suggests a sense of collective relief and joy, implying this transformation will bring a sense of peace and security. Through this excerpt, the poet conveys a powerful message of hope and renewal envisioning a nation that values holiness, goodness, and the well-being of its citizens.

Amali in another poem “when ?” advocates social sanitation in the following stanza:

When shall the rot on our soil air a fragrance
 To enable a wind of change
 Blow brazenly into our huts
 For a breath of relief
 For the dejected to celebrate (Amadi 61)

The poet laments the current state of corruption and decay in their society, using the metaphor of “the rot of our soil”) to convey a sense of moral and social decay. The phrase “ air a fragrance” suggests a desire for purification and renewal. The line “to enable a wind of change\ blow brazenly into our hints” emphasises the poet’s longing for transformation and reform the image of the wind blowing “brazenly” implies a sense of boldness and urgency. The phrase” for a breath of relief” underscores the poet’s desire for respite from the suffering and hardship caused by corruption. The final line “ for the dejected to celebrate “ highlights the

poets vision for a future where the oppressed and marginalized can rejoice and find hope.

When shall women of unholy appeal

In cassocks of pretentious piety

Smoke in mountain high embers of fire

In a barbecue for maggots

And our society is cleansed ? (Amadi 61)

The poet critiques individuals who present themselves as pious righteous but engage in corrupt or deceitful behaviour. The phrase "women of unholy appeals / in cassocks of pretentious piety" suggests hypocrisy and insincerity. The image of "smoke in mountain high embers of fire" creates a vivid picture of judgement or reckoning. The line "in a barbecue for maggots" is a powerful and disturbing metaphor, implying a complete destruction or corruption of these individuals. The final line "and our society is cleansed" suggests that the removal or punishment of these hypocritical individuals is necessary for societal purification and renewal. The poet's use of strong imagery and language emphasizes the need for accountability and authenticity. The poet conveys a strong critique of hypocrisy and corruption, emphasising the need for authenticity and accountability in society.

4.2 Ethical Leadership

Amali envision transformative change by suggesting ethical leadership as another way of combating impunity in her poems. This is evident in the poem, “when we had no leader “

My country waited
From pains of battery
Tearing our homes to pieces
As no man or woman of honour stood
But bowed to pen robbery (62)

The personification of the country emphasises the collective suffering and pains as indicated by the word “ wailed “ the use of “ battery “ suggests a violent and relentless assault; possibly referring to systemic oppression or exploitation. The fact that the suffering is “Tearing our homes to pieces” conveys the destruction of the very fabric of society, leaving individuals and communities shattered. The poet depicts leaders who lack moral quality in the line “ as no man or woman of honour stood. The speaker laments the absence of ethical leaders who could have stood up for what is right failed to do so. To compound the situation, these leaders “bowed to pen-robbery”. The term “ pen-robbery “ suggests corruption, deceit, and exploitation through written or official means. Also the phrase indirectly emphasises the need for accountability and transparency in governance. The use of “our home “ suggests a shared responsibility and the need for collective action

to bring about change. The concept of ethical leader is built round the need for leaders to embody honour, integrity, and a commitment to the well-being of all citizens. The condemnation of pen-robbery suggests a desire for systems and institutions that prioritise fairness and justice.

When we have a leader
 A man of respect and honour
 On a sojourn to a country's survival
 Shall cleanse our corrupt cancerous land
 And grant us solace. (63)

The stanza above conveys a sense of hope and longing for a leader who can bring about positive change and salvation to a country plagued by corruption. The emphasis on the leader's character suggests that integrity, morality and ethics are essential qualities for morality, and ethics are essential qualities for bringing about transformative change. The use of "sojourn" implies implies a journey or a mission highlighting the leaders role in guiding the country towards survivals and prosperity. The metaphor of corruption in "corrupt cancerous land" emphasises the severity of the issue and the need for a strong, effective solution. Promise of "solace" suggests that the leaders presence will bring comfort, peace, and relief to the people. also, the use of "cleanse" suggests a strong commitment to eradicating corruption and impunity, implying a leader who is proactive and determined.

Finally the poets depiction of a corrupt system and a leader who can " cleanse " it implies a strong accountability and transparency.

In another poem "why?" Amali reinforce the need for ethical leadership as a way of envisioning transformative change and bring about an end to culture of impunity :

Why

Have dishonest men turned leaders

Raping our treasure to carcass

Hawking our daughters to evil land

Turning our sons into robots of war

Aborting pregnancies of our mothers

Harvesting sweats of our fathers? (54)

The above except highlights the consequences of dishonest leadership and envisions ethical leadership as a solution firstly, bad leaders are said to be responsible for " raping our treasures to carcass" which symbolize corruption and mismanagement of resources and this ultimately leads to economic devastation secondly, they are said to cause the " hawking" of our daughters to evil land". This represents exploitation and trafficking of women thus highlights the vulnerability of the vulnerable. Another consequence is that they are twining our son into robots and exploitation of youth< striping their humility. Also they are said to be destroying lives and potentials as indexes in the phrase "aborting pregnancies of

our mothers .this mirrors the long term consequences of corrupt leadership. Finally the harvest sweats hard-earned labour, thereby emphasising the disregard for the well-being of citizens.

The poem indirectly prioritises the well-being of citizens, by highlighting the need to protect the vulnerable, economic prosperity, and ensure the safety and dignity of all. The purpose this is to uphold integrity and transparency. Leaders would be accountable, honest, and transparent in their actions and decisions. lastly, they promote justice and equality by ensuring that All citizens are treated fairly and have equal opportunities .

4.3 Peaceful Co-Existence

Besides articulating social sanitation and ethical leadership, Amali also dwells on peaceful co-existence as ways of envisioning transformative change. This compromises one of the most enduring themes of her poetry and it is what excites us in the poem “memories of Maiduguri “

A sweet home

Maiduguri

In bubbling spirit of love

Harnessing mutual unions

In jingle tons

Attesting our togetherness. (67)

This poetic excerpt envisions transformative change through peaceful co-existence in Maiduguri. The poet's affectionate descriptions of the Maiduguri as evident in the phrase. "sweet home" suggests a longing for a peaceful and harmonious community. The emphasis on love highlights the importance of affection, care, and compassion in fostering peaceful co-existence. The poets use of "harnessing" implies a deliberate effort to build and strengthen relationships among community members. The musical connotation of "jingle:" suggests a joyful and celebratory atmosphere, emphasising the beauty of community bonding. The poet's emphasis on "togetherness" underscores the importance of unity and solidarity in achieving transformative change.\

The poet envisions transformative change through peaceful co-existence by fostering a sense of community and building strong relationships and prompting a sense of belonging among community members. By emphasising love and compassion, the poet prioritizes affection, care empathy in interactions with others she also recognizes and appreciates the beauty of diversity and the strength that comes from unity. The poets vision for Maiduguri suggests that transformative change can be achieved through peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, and a deep sense of community.

Peace and holiness

Spread in gallant and gorgeous arms

Of Maiduguri in her motherly fame

For a shield and a shade

We cheer and dance in freedom

A home. (67)

The poets emphasis on peace and holiness highlights their importance in creating a harmonious community the use of “gallant” and “gorgeous” suggests a sense of grandeur, beauty, and welcoming nature. The deception of Maiduguri as a nurturing mother figure draws attention to the city’s caring and protective qualities. The image of a shield and shade conveys a sense of safety security and refuge. There is the emphasis the poet’s collaboration of freedom which depicts the joy and liberation that comes with living in a peaceful and harmonious community. The final word “homes “ emphasizes the sense of belonging, comfort, and security that comes with being part of a community . indirectly suggested is that Maiduguri is a city free from societal impurity; where accountability prevails because leaders and individuals are held accountable for their actions. Also that the absence of impunity allows for a peaceful and harmonized community.

Envisioning transformative change offers a powerful framework for combating impunity and promoting accountability in society. By emphasising social sanitation, ethical leadership and peaceful co-existence, communities can create a robust foundation for challenging impunity and ensuring that individuals are held accountable for their actions. As we strive for a more just and equitable world, it is essential to prioritize these interconnected pillars, fostering a culture of

responsibility promoting ethical leadership, and nurturing harmonious relationships among citizens. Through a society where accountability thrives and impunity is effectively combated.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The pivot of this essay revolves round poetry and culture of impurity in Halima Amali's 'Face of Shame.' It accounts for the various shades of impurity as they manifest in the collection. Impurity as already established manifests in two major ways: injustice and looting. Through various poems, Amali depicts the unjust treatment of the downtrodden by those in authority. The title of the collection is a critique of political figures who through their actions are the real faces of shame beginning with corrupt politicians who embezzle the wealth of the nation leaving the downtrodden helplessly impoverished, the poet demonstrates that all such politicians are unjust to the people they lead. They with impurity steal the money needed to better the lot of the people. To the poet, these men and women are the terrorists plaguing the country. Turning attention to legislators, the poet argued that the country cannot experience boom as these sets of leaders continue to steal and perpetrate impurity at oppressing the people. Through imagery and apt metaphors the poet exposed the impurity with which they operate. Another social dimension of impurity is through corrupt enrichment or looting of the nation's wealth. The leaders enrich themselves at the expense of public good and development. The poet is appalled that the culture of looting with impurity continues without the perpetrators facing prosecution neither do they account for their misdeeds. These vile leaders laugh at the ineffectuality of the legal system to prevent looting. They

only enact laws to gag the masses while the privileged leaders are above the law. The paradox of the looting is that it affects both the individual and the country at large. The poem of Amali suggest that looting is a symptom of a broader moral crisis, where perpetrators feel no shame nor do they feel the need for accountability for their action.

Having presented the two ways impurity manifests, the poet articulates ways of promoting accountability. Two strategies have been examined in this essay. They are denunciation and deposition. Denunciation strategy begins with condensation and resistance by the poet, who through disgust towards corrupt and oppressive leadership, advocates change. Amali articulates accountability by denouncing the political and leadership class for perpetrating the culture of impurity. The poet's desire to become a thief is an ironic depiction of the desire to expose the lack of accountability. It further exemplifies the hypocrisy of a system that condemns ordinary people for actions that they tolerated or even celebrated in the powerful.

There's also the call to deposition of all those held culpable in corrupt cases. The poet uses the metaphor of stripping the leaders naked as a weapon to hold them accountable. The phrase " Strip them naked" can be interpreted as a metaphor for stripping them of power and exposing their vulnerability by exposing their vulnerability, the poet highlights the idea that those in power are not invincible and

as such can be held accountable. This then indirectly equates to a call for the deposition of corrupt leaders.

Amali emerges as a powerful poetic intervention in the discourse of accountability and impurity. Through her evocative poetry, she sheds light on the complexities of shame, guilt, and responsibility and offers a searing critique of societal complicity in perpetuating impurity.

In the pursuit of a better society, Amali envisions transformative changes anchored on three pillars: social sanitation, ethical leadership and peaceful co-existence. Amali advocates a society free of moral corruption as the way to actualising transformative change. To achieve this, Amali expresses the desire for the land to be cleansed. The poet's vision for a cleansed land is not just physical but also spiritual and social. The poet advocates the removal of corrupt elements from society for this to be achieved. Amali's poem express a desire for national renewal and rejuvenation by invoking a sense of hope and optimism.

Amali also suggests ethical leadership as a means of actualising transformative change. The concept of ethical leadership is built round the need for leaders to embody honour, integrity and a commitment to the well-being of all citizens. The poems convey a sense of hope and longing for a leader who can bring about positive change and salvation to a country plagued by corruption. The emphasis on the leader's character suggests that integrity, morality and ethics are essential qualities for bringing about transformative change.

Besides articulating social sanitation and ethical leadership, Amali also recommends peaceful co-existence as ways of envisioning transformative change. To achieve this, the poet believes that fostering a sense of community and building strong relationships and promoting a sense of belonging among community members, transformative change can be achieved.

Envisioning transformative change offers a powerful framework for combating impurity and promoting accountability in society. The pursuit for equitable society where the culture of impurity has no place is a just one. The poet recognises the need for the leadership to embrace ethical revolution while the people embrace peaceful co-existence. Halima Amali's poetry offers a powerful critique of impurity, but its significance and impact have been explored. This essay has addressed the gap by examining the ways in which Amali's poetry portrays the societal dimensions of impurity and resistance, and the implications for promoting social justice and accountability in Nigeria.

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