

VOICE OF THE UNWANTED GIRL

Mother, I am the one
you sent away
when the doctor told you
I would be
a girl — In the end they had to
give me an injection to kill me.
Before I died I heard
the traffic rushing outside, the monsoon
slush, the wind sulking through
your beloved Mumbai —
I could have clutched the neon blue

no one wanted —
No one wanted
To touch me - except later in the autopsy room
when they knew my mouth would not search
for anything - and my head could be measured
and bent cut apart.
I looked like a sliced pomegranate.
The fruit you never touched.
Mother, I am the one you sent away
When the doctor told you
I would be a girl - your second girl.
Afterwards, as soon as you could
you put on your grass-green sari -
the orange stems of the parijatak blossoms
glistened in your hair –

Afterwards
everyone smiled.
But now I ask you
to look for me, mother,
look for me because
I won't come to you in your dreams.
Look for me, mother, look
because I won't become a flower
I won't turn into a butterfly
And I am not a part of anyone's song.
Look, mother,
look for the place where you have sent me.
Look for the unspeakable.

for the place that can never be described.
 Look for me, mother, because
 this is what you have done.
 Look for me, mother, because
 this is not 'God's will'.
 Look for me, mother
 because I smell of formaldehyde –
 I smell of formaldehyde
 and still, I wish you would look
 for me, mother.

- Sujata Bhatt

About the Poem

'Voice of the Unwanted Girl' as the title states is the articulation of a victim girl child who questions the inhumanity and horror of female infanticide. The poem, taken from Sujata Bhatt's anthology *My Mother's Way of Wearing a Sari* written with rare sensitivity and social concern, critiques patriarchy and demands for a world in which gender discriminations are erased.

Sujata Bhatt was born in Ahmedabad. She has been called 'one of the finest poets alive today'.

GLOSSARY

slush	:	when snow starts to melt and becomes dirty
sulking	:	being angry and refusing to talk to others
autopsy	:	a medical examination of a dead person to find out the cause of death
pomegranate	:	round fruit with hard skin and thick seeds
glistened	:	shines due to being wet
unspeakable	:	used for emphasizing how bad something is and how much it upsets some one
formaldehyde	:	a gas with no colour and a strong smell, used by being mixed with water to preserve things in a laboratory

Activity 1: COMPREHENSION

A. Tick the correct alternative

- I looked like a sliced –
 - Apple
 - Banana
 - Pomegranate
 - none of the above
- The poem is the articulation of –
 - a girl child
 - a boy
 - mother

- (d) none of the above
- 3. The poem demands for a world in which
 - (a) gender discrimination does not exist
 - (b) nature is protected
 - (c) poor are protected
 - (d) all the above

B. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 10-15 words each:

- 1. To whom is the poem 'Voice of the Unwanted Girl' addressed?
- 2. Why is the girl child killed? In which city does the infanticide take place?
- 3. What does the doctor tell the mother that results in the decision of infanticide?
- 4. What does the killed infant smell of?
- 5. Describe the scene in the autopsy room.
- 6. Why does the mother want to get rid of the Girl Child?

C. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 30-40 words each:

- 1. How does the 'Voice of the Unwanted Girl' question the society?
- 2. What was not the 'God's will'?
- 3. The girl compares herself with many symbols. What are they?

D. Answer to the following questions should not exceed 60-80 words each:

- 1. Why is the mother not concerned with the voice of the Unwanted Girl.
- 2. Articulate the feelings of the victim girl child in your words.