

## 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**

1. I looked like a sliced –
  - (a) Apple
  - (b) Banana
  - (c) Pomegranate
  - (d) none of the above
2. The poem is the articulation of –
  - (a) a girl child
  - (b) a boy
  - (c) 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.