

Study Material for Class XI (Arts & Science) English

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SUMMARY OF VOICE OF THE UNWANTED GIRL (A Poem by Sujata Bhatt)

Voice of The Unwanted Girl by Sujata Bhatt focuses on the pathetic condition of women in India. The gender discrimination and inequality showed to them defeats the whole purpose of women empowerment. In this poem, the unborn girl child is the speaker who has been denied the right to live by a brutal and heinous act of foetus killing. The act of foetus killing means killing of the child before its birth. This irrational act has adversely affected the male-female ratio in India. The number of girl child has fallen down, alarmingly. The preference of the male child and non- acceptance of female child result into such evils. It can raise serious social issues as well as result into imbalance of nature.

*Mother, I am the one you sent away when
the doctor told you, I would be
"A Girl"*

The poem *Voice of The Unwanted Girl* begins with a voice of protest against the cruel act of female foeticide. As the title suggests, the speaker of the poem is an unborn girl who is brutally and thoughtlessly killed after it was determined that it was a girl. It is extremely unfortunate to find the discrimination against a girl child in this modern age. The poem reveals the insensitive act of people.

In the poem, the foetus shares her views on both stages, that is, before killing and afterwards. The unborn girl child pathetically complains to her mother when she is denied birth in this world. The decision of killing the unborn child by her parents, specially, by the mother, fills her with sadness. The tone of agony and distress is felt in the poem. There is sadness and pain expressed over the non-acceptance of the girl child. The pain and pathos could not undermine the protest.

The act of killing the unborn child had left her desires unfulfilled. Before her birth when she was in her mother's womb she was able to experience the activity of the world outside. She could hear 'the traffic rushing' and 'the monsoon slush'. But the callous decision of patriarchal hegemony snatched the opportunity from her to see and enjoy the world outside. She was not allowed to enjoy the beautiful environment. She was not allowed to live, grow and flourish. It was very unfortunate.

*The wind sulking through your beloved Mumbai. I could
have clutched the neon blue.*

In the lines above the speaker describes the hollowness of the city of Mumbai. The term 'beloved Mumbai' symbolises growth, development and progressiveness. The term has an ironical significance because in reality the city of Mumbai failed to stop such malpractices like sex determination and female foeticide to happen. The sordid tale of atrocity against female remained like a blot on development and progressiveness.

The speaker laments on her own gruesome condition. As she was the second girl child she was undesirable for all. She painfully narrates about the atrocity done to her. She was taken out from her mother's womb into bits and pieces. Blood spilled all over gave her a look of sliced pomegranate. She was a fruit that her mother never touched. The pain inflicted in this process of killing her in the mother's womb seems to be ignored and neglected. The poet through the unborn child condemns the insensitive attitude of people. There is no sign of regret or realization of the great sin committed.

The child is agonised to see the indifference in her mother's behaviour. The indifference in her attitude is depicted as she drapes herself in 'grass green sari' and decorates her hair with 'the orange stems parijatak flower'. The unborn child feels hurt to see the mother become ignorant of the whole incident. The root of patriarchy is so deep that no one tried to sense the loss.

*Afterwards everyone smiled, but now I
Ask you, to look for me, mother. look for me*

These lines express the sadness and pain of the unborn child which no one is aware of. No one could realize her struggle to exist and live like others. Everything becomes normal for everyone but for the unborn child things became different. She asks her mother to look for her though she will be found nowhere. In this patriarchal set up the desire of this unborn child is curbed. She has been forced to leave the world as she was a girl child. She is no more a part of her mother's dream. Her desires were all crushed before she could bloom as a flower or fly like a butterfly. She is no more, 'a part of anyone's song'. The images of flower and butterfly indicate life which she could have enjoyed if she was allowed to exist.

*--mother, this is not "God's
Will". Look for me, mother*

In the above lines, the child complains to her mother that it was not God's will; rather, it was the will of her parents who had arbitrarily denied her existence. Gender discrimination is not done by God. In fact, female becomes the victim of gender discrimination created by the patriarchal set up. She persists that her mother must search for her. She must look for her where she lies dead. It was the destination decided by her mother. The consent of the mother is the reason for resentment of the unborn child.

*..... I smell of
formaldehyde and still, I wish
You would look for me, mother.....*

These lines express a strong quest of identity and the craving for existence. Mother who has also become a part of this age-old patriarchal set up must realise this evil.

Sujata Bhatt exhibits her strong female sensibility in this poem. Each and every line emphatically expresses the purpose of the poem. The images and symbols have been aptly used to arouse the feelings of pain, agony, despair, distrust and apathy. The images of 'sliced pomegranate', and 'smell of formaldehyde', arouse a feeling of pity. The 'monsoon slush', 'rushing traffic' and 'neon blue' describe some moments of the living world. The wind that sulks through the city of Mumbai is an image of disappointment that the beloved city of Mumbai proves of. The harsh reality of Mumbai is evident. The impact of the language of the poem is felt as desired. The evil of female foeticide is inhuman and unnatural. The poet has successfully created awareness towards such evil practices.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- *Voice of The Unwanted Girl- A Poem by Sujata Bhatt
- *Sujata Bhatt- Born in Ahmedabad, India, in 1956.
She is now settled in Germany. She is a famous poet.
Recipient of many awards, like, Commonwealth Poetry Prize, Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize, and many others.
- *Theme- Contemporary Social Issue-The brutal practice of female foeticide
- *Speaker- The unborn girl child
- *The place – Bombay (Symbol of modernity, development and progressiveness)
- *Language- Use of images indicating the dangers of modernity and sterility of thought.
There is sadness, distress and protest in tone.