

---

**ENCHANTING VISTA OF MADRAS PORTRAYED IN ARUNDHATHI  
SUBRAMANIAM'S, 'MADRAS'**

---

**Dr. Menaka,**

HOD - Department of English, Sri VidyaKamachi College of Arts and Science for Women,  
Mecheri, Salem.

**Dr. G. Karthiga,**

Assistant Professor of English, Sri VidyaKamachi College of Arts and Science for Women,  
Mecheri, Salem. [E.Mail-gkitech@yahoo.co.in](mailto:E.Mail-gkitech@yahoo.co.in)

---

**Abstract**

Arundhathi Subramaniam is a poet, painter and an author on religion and ethos. She works for conspicuous journals and newspapers as editor. She also worked on literature, traditional dance and theatre which delineated the importance of places that molded people. 'Madras' is a poem from her collection of poems in the book, '*where I live- New and Selected Poems*'. In this poem she delivers the beauty of the city, 'Madras'. She discovers fragments of happiness of home in different places in her poems. Arundhathi Subramaniam is a familiar Indian English poet who stresses on cultural identity exerted by language. *Where I Live* is a more contemplative collection of poems. 'Madras' becomes a significant poem in the collection, where Madras is a place she was not grown up or brought up but which still pulls at her heritages. She recalls her memories about the panoramic view of beach, taste of various food and music. The paper deals with enchantment and views of Arundhathi Subramaniam about the beautiful city 'Madras'.

-----

Arundhathi Subramaniam is a poet and writer from Mumbai. She lives in Mumbai and Coimbatore. As a critic of arts, she writes on literature, dance and theatre for various leading newspapers and magazines. Her works springs between taking a dynamic passion with philosophical point of view on abrupt everyday experiences to engrave traditional or geographical situations skillfully as compass points to a comprehensive sensitive landscape. As an Indian poet in English, she has participated in various international poetry commemorations and conferences in India and Europe. She is awarded with Khush want Singh Memorial Prize for Poetry, Raza Award and Mystic Kalinga Literary Award. She owns the authorship of three works of poetry - '*On Cleaning Bookshelves*', '*Where I Live*' and '*When God is a Traveller*'. As an Indian writer and editor in English, Arundhathi Subramaniam has discovered the divergent ways in which consciousness of place enters poetry, which she has voiced in many of her poems. In the poem 'Madras', she details the place, temper, streetscape and affiliation which is woven skillfully and intelligently. The poem takes the readers to a journey that they would not only relish, but reenter every time they feel an inclination. 'Madras' becomes a significant poem in

the collection, where Madras is a place she was not grown up or brought up but which still pulls at her heritages. She recalls her memories about the panoramic view of beach, taste of various food and music. The poem reveals the experiences from a different world. Arundhathi Subramaniam visits her grandparents' house in Madras. She crafts her poem with cadence and attunement. Her poems bring out various uncertainties that are interlaced around human closeness about bottlenecks experiences and surprises. Even though Madras, now Chennai was struck with many natural disasters, many poets like Arundhathi Subramaniam has conveyed the splendor of the city in their works which makes us recollect the past exquisiteness that is recreated in our minds.

Arundhathi Subramaniam fuses words of vernacular and pluralistic trend in her poem. Crafting poetry is the work of the poet to achieve the effectiveness of the poem. She has used free verse which is a kind of spoken music in the poem, when read aloud rhythm can be celebrated. She brings out artistic expression with words entwined in the poem.

People from all parts of TamilNadu have a unique desirability towards the city, Madras. It is the love spinning in melancholy without specious reason. Every people love Madras for the beauty of the place, culture and hospitality of the people. The city has a collection of reminiscences in heart of many individuals. They recall the memory when they leave place. Arundhathi Subramaniam also has such recollection of sweet memories from some other crook of the place. Even out of the country, she tries to summon up the beautiful memory of taste of variety of food.

Arundhathi Subramaniam addresses the poem in a vernacular style which is the clichés of the city in their daily life. She creates a reconnection to the vernacular language from diverse style of writing to fuse place and language according to the local residents view. She uses the words of places and food to bring out the veracity of the city, Madras. Arundhathi Subramaniam in her first line admits that she is not a native of Madras nor she was brought in that place. But she is familiar with the city because she has her ancestral roots in the place where she visits.

I was neither born nor bred here.  
But I know this city (WIL 51)

Arundhathi Subramaniam in her next lines connects with the culture of the conurbation. She explains about the city of Causarina trees that are grown in the place, the taste of mango which is sour in tongue that can be felt. She gives a comprehensive sketch of picture about how the mango is sliced and the salt in its coarse form spread on the mango. The mango is also further garnished with chilly. She yields with sensory incentives of taste. She portrays about the second longest beach in the world, Marina. It is along sandy beach with full of people. She gives sensory stimuli of sight to the readers.

Of casuarina and tart(sour) mango slices,  
gritty(granules) with salt and chilli

and the truant(traffic) sands of the Marina, (WIL 51)

Arundhathi Subramaniam progresses her poem further with the love the people of Madras had for the actors who were famous in the period. She describes the heroes as having powdered cheeks to make themselves attractive. She further brings the reminiscences of her mother's sari, beautiful moonlight and the sound of MD Ramanathan concert with high power sparkling lights surrounded. When think of Madras, it is important to think of the great legendary MDR, a Carnatic music composer and vocalist. She attractively exposes the experience of sensory stimuli of hearing.

my mother's sari, hectic(excited) with moonlight,  
still crackling with the voltage  
of an MD Ramanathan concert, (WIL 51)

All the experiences move the poem to another world of new phase of the city with golden touch of the old taste, fragrance and sight.

Mylapore the suburban of the city and it is a place of cultural activity which can be found in the temples. Walking through the lanes of Mylapore which is busy in the evenings of summer and the spice route where one can get tamarind and onions are depicted. This even now provides a wide range of spices to add flavor to food. The spiciness is provided more with lyrics. Further she explains about the panoramic view of Bay Bengal. Bay of Bengal forms the backdrop for the beaches in Madras which helps the people to escape from the jostle of the city life. The unperturbed atmosphere is accompanied by daintiness and liveliness. She compares the waves and sounds to opera which reveals the beauty when covered by sun.

.....the vast opera of the Bay of Bengal,  
flambéed with sun, (WIL 51)

Arundhathi Subramaniam brings out the beauty of the language 'Tamil' by unfolding it as the intimate language. She senses the language in her mouth. Tamil is the widely spoken language of the people of Madras. She compares the language to the taste of sarsaparilla pickle with sour cadence. Mahalikizhangu is the Tamil name for Indian sarsaparilla, a root vegetable found in south especially found in traditional Mylapore market. She feels the recipe to be lost where the taste may be as soothing as the home. She delights in the taste. Bringing Tamil in her tongue as flavor lets her engage with the city diligently. She completely immerses herself in the splendor and taste of city where she tries to recall even if she is in a faraway place.

It's no use.  
Cities ratify  
their connections with you  
when you're looking the other way, (WIL 51)

Arundhathi Subramaniam comforts her with the taste even from some other place. Only when people go to another place they sense the missing tang of their past place. This makes them

recall the memoirs of that place where they lost their senses. A city lost emanates back when people take their way to another place. She feels that her place gets connected through summer holidays with movement of memories where her father fluently speaks about her kindergarten school and about her mother.

She also awakes when she feels the taste of coffee in Lucca in Italy. She brings back her memory of coffee that she took in Madras. The Italian coffee brings the images of Indian coffee. She expresses the consistency in the mixture of chicory and pea bury for coffee in her verse. She has the fragrant taste of filter coffee from a shop near Kapaleeshwara temple. The label "Plantation-A" denotes to the premier grade of Washed Arabica grown in India.

City that creeps up on me  
just when I'm about to affirm  
world citizenship. (WIL 51)

Arundhathi Subramaniam loves the city, but the thought remains in her soul which cannot be detached. She trips overseas at the time when she feels to continue herself close to the city. The profundity of her engagement with the city is closely tied. She thinks hard to let memoirs to go on the way. She reconciles with both Indian city and overseas necessity. Tamil and English language poetry helps to us to find several delightful poems about the beautiful city, Madras. The city has been stimulation to so many artistes through the decades.

### Works Cited

- Subramaniam, Arundhathi, 'Where I Live: New and Selected Poems', Tarsel: Bloodaxe, 2009. Print.
- Hopton, Tricia, et al., eds. 'Pockets of Change: Adaptation and Cultural Transition'. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011. Pg-67-68. Print.