

# Gargi

*Do not go too far, Gargi,  
Do not question everything,  
Overstep all limits,  
Lest your head be severed  
And fall to the ground.  
Do not challenge Yagnavalkya  
Do not question the Supreme Power—  
He too is a man.  
Do not break these laws.*

*Be a loving, beloved daughter.  
Adorn a man's bed,  
Then, take into your womb  
A man's seed.  
Do not create new ways of being.  
Do not go too far, Gargi,  
Do not question everything.  
Gargi, burn for a few rupees.  
Sell yourself for a sick son,  
Dance to our tune.  
Gargi, learn to be a bit smart,  
Learn the rules of etiquette,  
Become the ladder for our  
advancement.  
Gargi, you are a goddess,  
You are the better half,  
The chaste wife.  
Gargi, we are incomplete without you.  
Help us become great,  
Help us conquer the world  
And climb to the sky.  
Gargi, become a stepping stone.  
  
You are the embodiment of sacrifice,  
Of self denial,  
Consider the family's welfare.  
Preserve your home.  
Do not question everything, Gargi,  
Do not go too far,  
Lest your head be severed  
And fall to the ground.*

—**Katyayani**  
(translated from Hindi)

*Gargi was a renowned scholar of Vedic times. When she was winning a debate with the sage Yagnavalkya, and he could not answer her questions, he silenced her by threatening to use his powers to make her head fall off if she spoke another word.*

# Perhaps

*Darkness.  
The torchlit procession approaches.  
A sharp smell in the air—what is it?  
Smoke, perhaps,  
and, somewhere,  
a stench like that of being  
burnt alive.*

*The road is not deserted, perhaps.  
Rumours fly thick and fast.  
Supporting her stomach with both  
hands, .  
she stands at the window,  
hidden behind the curtain,  
and keeps watch.*

*In the whole neighbourhood,  
this is the only house .  
belonging to the 'enemies.'  
In the light of the torches,  
the faces look somewhat familiar.  
They are her father's friends, j  
her girlfriends' brothers.*

*Hai Allah !  
Only the day before yesterday,  
that one  
ate sweets at her house.  
Surely she is mistaken —  
These are not the same men—perhaps.  
There is stiff one, door between  
life and death.  
One bridge which has not broken—  
perhaps.  
Radha's mother next door  
is awake, perhaps.  
Surely she will, knock at the door.*

—**Ravindra R. P.**  
(translated from Hindi)