

= Gargi Vachaknavi =

Gargi Vachaknavi (born about 700 BC) was an ancient Indian philosopher . In Vedic Literature , she is honored as a great natural philosopher , renowned expounder of the Vedas , and known as Brahnavadini , a person with knowledge of Brahma Vidya . In the Sixth and the eighth Brahmana of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad , her name is prominent as she participates in the brahmayajna , a philosophic debate organized by King Janaka of Videha and challenges the sage Yajnavalkya with perplexing questions on the issue of atman (soul) . She is also said to have written many hymns in the Rigveda . She remained a celibate all her life and was held in veneration by the conventional Hindus .

Gargi , the daughter of sage Vachaknu in the lineage of sage Garga (800 @-@ 500 BCE) was named after her father as Gargi Vachaknavi . From a young age she evinced keen interest in Vedic scriptures and became very proficient in fields of philosophy . She became highly knowledgeable in Vedas and Upanishads in the Vedic times and held intellectual debates with the male @-@ philosophers .

= = Early life = =

Gargi was the daughter of sage Vachaknu in the lineage of sage Garga (800 @-@ 500 BCE) and hence named after her father as Gargi Vachaknavi . Right from a young age , Vachaknavi was very intellectual . She acquired knowledge of the Vedas and scriptures and became renowned for her proficiency in these fields of philosophy ; she even surpassed men in her knowledge .

= = Later life = =

Gargi , along with Vadava Pratitheyi and Sulabha Maitreyi are among the prominent females who figure in the Upanishads . She was as knowledgeable in Vedas and Upanishads as men of the Vedic times and could very well contest the male @-@ philosophers in debates. Her name appears in the Grihya Sutras of Asvalayana . She had even awakened her Kundalini (indwelling spiritual energy) . In her dialogue with Pandit Mandan Mishra on the subject of sex she had won her arguments as she was a realized soul . She was a leading scholar who also made rich contributions to propagate education .

= = Debate with Yajnavalkya = =

According to Brihadaranyaka Upanishad , King Janaka of Videha Kingdom held a Rajasuya Yagna and invited all the learned sages , kings and princess of India to participate . The yagna lasted for many days . Large quantities of sandalwood , ghee (clarified butter) and barley (cereal grain) were offered to the Yagna fire creating an atmosphere of spiritual sanctity and aroma . Janaka himself being a scholar was impressed with the large gathering of learned sages . He thought of selecting a scholar from the assembled group of elite scholars , the most accomplished of them all who had maximum knowledge about Brahman . For this purpose , he evolved a plan and offered a prize of 1 @, @ 000 cows with each cow dangled with 10 grams of gold on its horns . The galaxy of scholars , apart from others , included the renowned sage Yajnavalkya and Gargi Vachaknavi . Yajnavalkya , who was aware that he was the most spiritually knowledgeable among the assembled gathering , as he had mastered the art of Kundalini Yoga , ordered his disciple Samsrava to drive away the cow herd to his house . This infuriated the scholars as they felt that he was taking away the prize without contesting in a debate . Some of the local pundits (scholars) did not volunteer for debate with him as they were not sure of their knowledge . However , there were eight renowned sages who challenged him for a debate , which included Gargi , the only lady in the assembled gathering of the learned .

Sages like Asvala , the priest in Janaka 's court , Artabhaga , Bhujyu , Ushasta , and Uddalaka debated with him and asked questions philosophical subjects to which Yajnavalkya provided

convincing replies and they lost the debate . It was then the turn of Gargi to take up the challenge . Gargi , as one of the disputants in the debate , questioned Yajnavalkya on his claim of superiority among the scholars . She held repeated arguments with him . Gargi and Yajnavalkya 's exchange centered on the ultimate " warp " of reality (" warp " means " the basic foundation or material of a structure or entity) . Her initial dialogue with Yajnavalkya tended to be too metaphysical , such as unending status of the soul , away from practical situations . She then changed her approach and asked him pointed questions related to the environment existing in the world , the question of the very origin of all existence . Her question was specific when she asked him " since this whole world is woven back and forth on water , on what then is woven back and forth " , a question that related to the commonly known cosmological metaphor that expressed the unity of the world , its essential interconnectedness . In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3 @. @ 6) , the sequence of her posing a bevy of questions to Yajnavalkya and his replies is narrated as :

She continued with an array of questions such as what was the universe of the suns , what were the moon , the stars , the gods , Indra , and Prajapati . Gargi then pressed on with two more questions . Gargi urged Yajnavalkya to enlighten her on the weave of reality and asked :

Gargi was not satisfied and then posed the next question :

Then she asked a final question , on what was Brahman (world of the imperishable) ? Yajnavalkya put an end to the debate by telling Gargi not to proceed further as otherwise she would lose her mental balance . This riposte put an end to their further dialogue at the conference of the learned . However , at the end of the debate she conceded to the superior knowledge of Yajnavalkya by saying : " venerable Brahmins , you may consider it a great thing if you get off bowing before him . No one , I believe , will defeat him in any argument concerning Brahman . "

Her philosophical views also find mention in the Chandogya Upanishad . Gargi , as Brahnavadini , composed several hymns in Rigveda (in X 39 . V.28) that questioned the origin of all existence . The Yoga Yajnavalkya , a classical text on Yoga is a dialogue between Gargi and sage Yajnavalkya . Gargi was honoured as one of the Navaratnas (nine gems) in the court of King Janaka of Mithila .