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## Ila Railkar

### We are daughters

They told us girls in tender years  
To be like you O Goddess fair  
We heard of your justice divine  
Our heads bent in ardent prayer

They scolded us for playing rough  
"How you dirty your pretty dress!"  
And sneered at us wearing make-up

Yet calling our bare faces a mess

They pushed us hard to do our best  
"You better use the chance we give"  
But if we failed, would pounce to say  
Beneath men rightly must we live

They washed our feet as little girls  
To worship the mother goddess  
Upon our first blood though we were beasts  
Our bodies dens of foul darkness

They pampered us with dainty gifts  
"Girls are truly our pride and joy"  
And hacked us into pieces if  
Against their wish married a boy

I think they did this to you too  
O goddess, of this I am assured  
For your stone idol never weeps  
When your daughters scream every word

## For me

You parted through crowds, for a glimpse of me  
And scaled the wall steep, for a word with me  
And braved the gardener, for a rose for me  
And wrote love poems, for a smile from me  
And starved willingly, for a grape for me  
And travelled all Persia, for perfume for me  
When it was time to face your love for me,  
Cast aside the wrath of the world for me,  
To trust in our future, yourself, and me-  
Like the obedient sons of times old and new  
You bowed to them, without a thought for me,  
And married the girl from the same caste.  
In your own palms, you crushed your love for me

### **Ila Railkar**

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Ila is an Indian poet, based in Mumbai. She often writes on themes of feminism, human rights, and history. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Blue River Review, Thimble Magazine, Indian Review, and elsewhere.

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