INTRODUCTION

Prelude:

When I was a little girl Amma always insisted that I do well in my studies. Amidst all kinds of restrictions, she had struggled hard to acquire education and become an independent woman. Amma used to tell me how difficult it was for her to go to Medical school wearing her nine-yard saree in a traditional way. She did not have a petticoat. She used to make one by putting her father's dhoti on a jute thread. Amma would go to her friend's house, redo her saree in the way that was common among young people in those days and then attend classes.

I remember my days in Bangalore as a girl coming from a small town trying to cope with peer pressure. As well as making an effort to adjust to different situations outside the house. I had to face lot of opposition and restrictions within the family especially when I wanted to switch over to modern outfits and from studying sciences to non-conventional arts subjects. Like modern dresses, subjects such as Journalism and Literature were also associated with something that would malign 'goodness' in girls.

Situations have changed, the opposition, the embarrassment and the humiliation women face when they make attempts to move towards 'modernity', have also changed. Whenever women attempt to deviate slightly from the prescribed ways of behaviour, they are criticized and seen as "unwomanly". It is true that situations have changed along with the advent of 'modernity'. Old
barriers are either broken or changed but new markers of femininity are put in its place to regulate the social behaviour of women in our society. But women are not passive subjects. They have always tried to contest the dictates of patriarchies. While the restrictions aim at confining women within the walls of domesticity, time and again women have resisted against such confinements.

I

The Beginning

Plenty of work has been done comparing literatures of Indian languages with the literatures in English or comparing works of one Indian author with another author from the English language. There are works in Kannada and Hindi comparing two or more literary works or writings by two or more authors from the same language area. Though there arc umpteen numbers of studies that have come up in the area of Comparative Literature and in contemporary poetry independently, not much work has been done on contemporary women's poetry. Comparative Literature is expanding and developing in many parts of the world where it is explicitly linked to questions of national culture and identity. With this backdrop, this work in Comparative Literature on Contemporary Women's Poetry, discussing questions related to gender, patriarchy and resistance gains significance.

Contemporary women's poetry opens up debates related to literature and women's point of view in a patriarchal society. Therefore women's writing is not
only a part of literature but also an area that captures the nuances of the experiences of a specific community in a distinct society.

The period selected for research is the post eighties, i.e., 1980 to 2000. This study has two important dimensions. Firstly, this work on contemporary women's poetry draws attention to women's voices by considering women's writing not just as any literature but as a tool resisting oppressions put forth by the patriarchal society. Secondly, it is an attempt to incorporate this area of study under the larger umbrella of Comparative Literature. The work becomes significant for these reasons.

This dissertation intends to analyse poetry by women from two languages, i.e., Kannada and Hindi. The Kannada women poets are located in Kannada language vicinity whereas the Hindi women poets are located in the Hindi belt, i.e., in case of Hindi, poets are from a range of Hindi speaking areas. Women's poetry in Hindi is identified from those cultural centres where women's writing can be appropriated, tolerated, and/or from an environment that would allow women to write. Though Kannada and Hindi represent two different geographical spaces, in our opinion it is possible to compare poetry of one State/language with the poetry from another language moving beyond the boundaries of the State, because an approach like this will help in understanding the various reactions of women from different parts of the country. We believe that this kind of a comparison also helps in knowing whether the problems addressed in the writings by women in relation to questions of gender, patriarchies and resistance were
similar. The differences that arise, while surveying the poems from Kannada and the Hindi, are region and culture specific. But the similarities that emerge obviously pronounce that similar reactions might have come up from other Indian languages as well.

This research contributes to the field of women's writing by reopening debates through contemporary women's poetry. It also contributes to the field of Comparative Literature by adding in new methodological possibilities in this area for research. The methodology is proposed by bringing in essential tools from feminist studies, post-colonial studies and cultural studies under Comparative Literature. This accommodates to understand women's poetry as an academic project and also a particular social formation.

II

Tracing Trajectories in Comparative Literature

This section introduces the methodology adopted in this dissertation. It begins by tracing the trajectories of Comparative Literature and outlines the changes that came about in the approach of the discipline. Then it introduces Comparative Literature emerging as a discipline in the Indian context. This chapter also locates the area of study, i.e., the contemporary poetry by women under the Comparative Literature discipline, where a methodology is drawn by
bringing in feminist studies, post colonial studies and cultural studies, the three strands of thought under the larger umbrella of Comparative Literature.

Comparative Literature as a discipline provides us a framework to discuss various literatures across cultures and languages. Over a period of time the approaches and perspectives of this discipline have changed. Ever since its inception, scholars have come up with different definitions of Comparative Literature from different perspectives. Let us first look at a few definitions of Comparative Literature. According to Franciose Tost,

Comparative Literature represents a philosophy of letters, a new humanism. Its fundamental principle consists of the belief in the wholeness of the literary phenomenon, in the negation of national autarkies in cultural economics, and, as a consequence, in the necessity of a new axiology.

.....Comparative Literature represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary Weltanschauung, a vision of the cultural universe.'

However, there are writers who understood Comparative Literature as some kind of world religion. The underlying suggestion is that all cultural differences disappear when readers take up good works. Art is seen as an instrument of universal harmony and the comparatist as one who facilitates the
spread of that harmony. According to William Posnett initial concern of Comparative Literature is:

...to compare one author with another, one literature with another, the literature of one period with that of another, one literary genre with another, literature itself with the other arts."

It is understood mostly as binary studies, i.e., study of two authors, two books, two languages, literatures of two nations, etc.

In the essay, 'General, Comparative and National Literature", Rene Wellek and Austin Warren note that the classical definition of Comparative Literature lies in the study of oral literature. Comparative Literature is also identified with the study of literature in its totality, with "World Literature", with "General" or Universal Literature. For example, Paul van Tieghem notes that, movements and fashions of literatures that transcend national lines are studied by "General" literature, while Comparative Literature studies the inter-relationships between two or more literatures.

Comparative Literature is defined as the examination and analysis of the relationships and similarities of the literatures of different peoples and nations. The comparative study of literature is compared with the comparative study of religions. We see little evidence of it before the 19th century. "Weltliteratur", the term coined by Goethe means approximately, literature that is of all nations and peoples, and which by a reciprocal exchange of ideas, mediates between nations and helps to enrich the spirit of man. This spoke of 'world literature'.

Comparative Literature is also seen as a discipline that can transcend the
frontiers of single languages and national literatures. For a comparatist, any
literature is basically a literature that has to be studied with reference to other
literatures, generally on a bi- or monolingual or national basis. 6

All these definitions indicate that Comparative Literature was initially
understood as something that had evolved towards the attempting of a kind of
universal literature. In other words, it was an ideal practice where literature was
understood as something that transcended all values and barriers. For example, as
Henry Remak points.

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the
confines of one particular country and the study of relationships
between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and
beliefs such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture,
music), philosophy, history, social sciences, religion, etc., on the
other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or
others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of
human expression. 7

Initially European and Euro American literature were considered as
'World Literature". However, later the expression, 'World Literature" represented
broader views. A major change in the perception of the discipline can be seen
when Rene Etiemble in his article, 'The Crisis in Comparative Literature', made a
plea for the expansion of Comparative Literature beyond its original European and
Euro American contexts, and against all provincialism and chauvinism. He argued that the current theoretical effort is to cope with this need to "de-Westernize" the framing concepts of literary life, which an expansion beyond the European and Euro American cultural systems entails.\(^8\) Jean-Marie Carre' maintained that Comparative Literature is a branch of literary history. Paul Van Tieghem had declared that.

A clear and distinct idea of Comparative Literature supposes first of all a clear and a distinct idea of literary history of which it is a branch.'

In this way the concept of Comparative literature confined within certain meanings as the literature of nations, literature bound to languages, literature limited to its author, etc., saw a significant shift.

**Fokkema** Douwe deserves a special mention here. He brings in a new paradigm of cultural relativism to Comparative Literature. Cultural relativism as he says "refers to a moral stance which may influence the scholar in his selection of research methods and theoretical positions."\(^{10}\) Cultural relativism proposes that all truths are relative to the individual and his/her environment. All ethical, religious, political and aesthetic beliefs are truths that are relative to the cultural identity of the individual. He observes that Comparative Literature focuses on the historicity of the literary text, that is to say, the specific circumstances under which it is produced and received. In studying texts in different languages and from various cultures, it makes use of the outcomes of linguistics, semiotics, aesthetics, sociology and psychology."
The concept of the universality of literature or the belief that there exists a single world literature prevents one from considering the differences that cannot overcome the cross-cultural barriers. Though Cultural Relativism stresses on the contrasts in different cultures its unqualified application to epistemology stops us from analysing the otherness of a foreign culture and closes the most important space where such otherness provides condition for meaningful communication.

Yet another shift in Comparative literature was brought in by the introduction of systems analysis. The Russian Formalist Yury Tynjanov considered to be the initiator of the systems approach made it clear that "literature" is both autonomous and heleronomous, i.e., that it is both self-regulated and conditioned by other systems.

Polysystem analysis was introduced to the discipline by Andre Lefevere, one of the important theorists of Comparative Literature. According to him, the concept of system allows us to describe power in its various ramifications. If a society can be described as a system, it will consist of different subsystems, such as literature, medicine, law, each with its own discourse. The literary system inside a society is controlled on the basis of a poetics by those we shall call "rewriters", i.e., translators, the critics, historiographers and anthologizers of literature. A poetic then is a code with which a literary system operates, which sets the parameters for the writing of literature and to a certain extent also the discourse on literature, in a certain society at a certain time. 


These systems are put into force by force. Vast, diffuse and nearly anonymous "deciding groups", establishments of power, in so elaborating the perimeters and structures of a language, define our ways of thinking and behaving and our norms of value: the individual has no say and neither does that sentimental construction called "the people".

Even-Zohar used the term 'polysystem' to define the aggregate of literary systems, which include both "high" and "low" forms of literature in a given culture. By this he meant the 'canonised' forms of literature such as poetry and the "non-canonised" forms of literature such as children's literature and popular fiction in a given culture. He says that various heterogeneous systems are hierarchised within the polysystem. The hypothesis of Even-Zohar's theory is the dynamic stratification within the polysystem. The (dynamic) synchronic strata of the system constitute the struggle between various strata and the victory of one stratum over another constitutes a change on the diachronic axis. Due to these movements, phenomena are driven from the centre to the periphery and phenomena may push their way into the center and occupy it. Therefore, there is no one center and one periphery in the polysystem. In polysystem, several things operate simultaneously. Certain things may be transferred from the periphery of one system to the periphery of an adjacent system within the same poly system, and it may or may not move to the center of that system.

Reference to the cultural analysis made in the context of analysis of literature, gave altogether a different dimension to the "literary analyses". Edward Said is one of the important scholars of Comparative Literature who has worked
in the area of cultural analysis. In the process of evaluating what "Orientalism" is, Said discusses the relationships between literary culture and other areas in a society, which is an important aspect of comparative literature. He talks about how certain notions are built around certain disciplines to segregate them from their varied possibilities. He says, too often literature and culture are treated as if they are politically, even historically innocent. He says,

no one has ever devised a method of detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere act of being a member of a society.  

Therefore, society and literary culture has to be understood and studied together. Changes in the comparative literary study approach came along with the changes that emerged in literary studies in general.

**The Development of Comparative Literature in India**

Comparative Literature in the Indian context is made interesting due to the shared values and cultures as well as the differences that exist in the multi-cultural and multi-lingual Indian societies. Emergence of Comparative Literature as a discipline in India encompassing these multi-cultural and multi-lingual characteristics is directly related to the formation of the Modern Indian Languages in 1954 and the post-colonial period. Ganesh Devy suggests that Comparative Literature in India is directly linked to the rise of modern Indian nationalism.
noting that comparative literature has been 'used to assert the national cultural identity'.\textsuperscript{18} Swapan Majumdar one of the important comparatist opines.

In India, the emotional upsurge corresponding to the nationalist movement drove us beyond the narrow confines of one’s regional literature and taught us to appreciate the beauty of our neighbouring literatures.\textsuperscript{19}

The first full-fledged department of Comparative Literature was brought into existence in 1956 at the Jadavpur University. This also is the first of its kind in the whole of Asia.\textsuperscript{20} Amiya Dev in his article "Towards Comparative Indian Literature' notes that,

Comparative Literature is the only method for working out pedagogy of Indian Literature. There is no Indian Literature as such. There are only Indian Literatures and Comparative Literature is the methodology to approach them with.\textsuperscript{21}

In India too in the initial stages of Comparative literature it was a framework to study literatures and was mostly binary in its approach. Indian scholars did a great deal of research in comparing two texts, two authors, one element with the other, etc. Though text and context plays a major role in such analysis, text as a part of literature is fore grounded before all other aspects and therefore the context is de-focused. Comparing an Indian text with English or a European text itself can be understood as an attempt to elevate the position of "Indian Literature" in the global context.
Therefore, when Comparative Literature consolidated itself in India as a discipline, research projects like comparing works of 'regional' writers of a particular language with the works of western writers became a popular practice. Showing commonalities between the two was an attempt towards the seeking of a universal position. Translations played a major role in giving comparative literature the required interdisciplinary dimension. Research in the area of Comparative literature in India is also intended towards binding literatures of various Indian languages, which the scholars thought to be useful to invoke the category of Indian Literature. Thus the Comparative study of literary texts from two or three different Indian languages also gained popularity. This again was an attempt towards strengthening the concept of 'Indian' literature, which worked towards a belief that literatures in India from all Indian languages shared a common political and cultural history.

In India, Comparative Literature was seen more as a tool that could protect the very purpose of literature. Sisir Kumar Das one of the renowned scholars of Comparative Literature noted that -

...it is more important to visualize Comparative Literature's relationship with other literature departments. The most important issue before us is not the study of Comparative Literature for its own sake, but the study of literature itself, which has become stereotyped and subservient to vested interest of academic critics obscuring its main purpose.\textsuperscript{22}

Thus, while arguing for Comparative Literature, Sisir Kumar Das says,
I shall try to argue the case for a new orientation in the teaching of literature which is relevant to the immediate social needs of the people as well as a reflection of our increasing awareness of the power and value of literatures of other cultures.\textsuperscript{23}

When Comparative Literature started as a discipline in India the "power and value of literatures of other cultures" referred mainly to English literature and other European literatures accessible through English language and Western culture. Comparative Literature worked towards protecting the identity of Indian literature, which was being threatened by English literature. Therefore, Comparative Literature was understood as a shield to resist the threat of the dominance of 'other cultures' on 'our culture' or to fight the power of English. The concept of 'Indian Literature' itself emerged along the lines of formation of the Indian identity. The 'Indian self had to be released from the colonial identity. Be it the case of literature or any other area, always attempts were made to forge an Indian identity.

Aijaz Ahmad in his article \textit{Indian Literature}, while putting forward the colonial hangovers attached to the study of 'English Literature' in India looks into the complications associated with the category of 'Indian Literature'. He says.

The difficulty in thinking of an 'Indian' literature lies in the very premises that have often governed the narrativization of that history, which has (1) privileged High Textuality of a Brahminical kind to posit the unification of this literary history; or (2) assembled the history of the main texts of particular languages (in
a very uneven way) to obtain this unity through the aggregative principle; or (3) attempt to reconstruct the cross-fertilization of genres and themes in several languages, but with highly idealistic emphases and with the canonizing procedures of the 'great books" variety, with scant attempt to locate literary history within other sorts of histories in any consistent fashion.  

Ahmad proposes Literary Study, which would be a sub discipline of a much broader and more integrated Historical and Cultural Studies. He stresses on the importance of our bi- and monolingualities and highlights the relation of literature with other areas of studies like Philosophy, Anthropology, Religion, Economics, History, etc.

In a way seeking for a universal position is to overlook or erase the prevailing differences. Whereas now recognition of differences within cultures gains importance. National identity is brought into question. New colonial identities are projected. Differences are recognized through comparative analysis in the course of particular cultural histories pertaining to women's life and writings.

Like many other disciplines. Comparative Literature also witnessed methodological changes and paradigm shifts in the last century. This can be clearly viewed in the sessions at various International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) Conferences. Sixth Congress at Bordeaux (1970) offered programmes on European Asian and European African literary relations. The
Seventh Congress of ICLA at Montreal and Ottawa (1973) among other things offered segments that dealt with issues of literary periodization, literary movements, and zones with methods of analysis that included the anthropological, sociological and formal. For example, structuralist, semiotic, stylistic and intermedia like film and radio were incorporated with values and valuations and with pedagogy. A generous numbers of sessions were allotted to intercultural relations that included the American Literatures at large (Latin American, Canada, US), intra American aspects, for example the Black, Native American and the Chicana. The sessions also focused on the European American aspects. The Twelfth Congress at Munich (1988) was important for tightening the focus on theoretical questions associated with the spaces and the boundaries of literature representations in literature, and on the pragmatic and institutional realities of criticism and teaching.

In due course, with the emergence of new schools of thought such as Post-Structural and Post-Colonial Studies, Cultural Studies and the advent of Feminist Studies, one can see a general shift in the focus of research in the field of literature. Along the lines of these shifts in the field of literature one can see the approach to and understanding of Comparative Literature also developed progressively. As a result, today we have a varied picture of comparative literary studies that changes according to where it is taking place. Sussan Bassnett defines Comparative Literature as a discipline that involves the study of texts across cultures; it is interdisciplinary and is concerned with patterns of connections in literature across both time and space. In the advent of post-colonial studies, Bassnett observes new interests emerging in the areas of Comparative Literary
Studies. She sees the post-colonial studies as 'Comparative Literature under yet another name'.

There is a clear change as far as literary studies are concerned today. In place of textual analysis of the earlier kind that fore grounded the formal aspects of the text such as their characterisation, style, form, language, etc., literary criticism today is more concerned with the contexts of meaning. As Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly points out,

Everyone knows that all narratives are to be read in the context of a specific time and place but we must remember that while the narratives emerge out of a culture, they also contribute towards the construction and definition of this culture. Stories and communities are thus bound together in a symbolic relationship.

Therefore, literature emerging within a culture is moulded by the components of that culture and in turn it contributes to the development and understanding of that culture.

Translation is yet another important component of Comparative Literature. The give and take relation between Kannada and Hindi is a vast area open for research. Whatever gets translated either ways have been mainly writings by male authors and mostly in prose. Poetry by women in the vicinity needs to be explored.
Experiences that are common among women or any other group will essentially bring them together. But differences continue in their cultural practices, social status and thereby in their expressions. Their perception of the world is formed principally on the basis of these differences. We need to take note of these differences that occur due to time and historical practices. Therefore, the analysis of texts by women writers in the Indian context demands one’s attention towards various local factors and the social milieu in which these writings are rooted. The socio-political developments have always been in favour of patriarchies. Patriarchies are social organizations characterized by the supremacy of the father in the family. They lead to legal subordination of wives and children and tracing of descent through the male line. While answering to 'Some Questions on Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia', Kamala Bhasin defines patriarchy by saying that.

The word 'Patriarchy', itself means the rule of the father or the patriarch. It refers to a social system where the father controls all members of the family, all property and economic resources, and makes all major decisions. Linked to this social system is the belief or the ideology that man is superior to woman that women are and should be controlled by men, and are part of a man's property. This thinking forms the basis of many of our religious laws and practices, and explains all those social practices, which confine women to the home, and control their lives. Our double standards of morality and our laws, which give more rights to men than to
women, are also based on patriarchy. Now when one uses the word patriarchy, it refers to the system that oppresses and subordinates women in both the private and the public sphere.\textsuperscript{30}

At every given point of time patriarchies derive modes of control to sustain supremacy. Catherine Belsey notes that, "the degree and the effectiveness of patriarchal control seem to have varied from one historical moment to another'.\textsuperscript{31} Women's resistance to the executions of the patriarchal practices also vary with changing situations. Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha's analysis of Muddupalani’s \textit{Radhika Saanthwanam}, " provides us insight not only into the reconstitution/reconfiguration of patriarchies in history but also provide a framework for the study of women's writing in India.

While discussing Nagaratnamma's efforts to reprint Muddupalani's \textit{Radhika Sanftvanam}, and the ferocity it has created. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita examine the whole enterprise of women's writing in India, which raises a number of questions that frame literary production and consumption today.

These include questions about the \textit{contexts}, structured and restructured by changing ideologies of class, caste, gender, empire and nation, in which women wrote, and the conditions in which they were read; questions about the \textit{cultural politics} that determined the reception and impact of their work; questions about literary taste and the literary curriculum; questions about resistances and subversions, the strategic appropriations, in brief.
the *engagement* that characterizes the subtlest and the most radical of women's writing.\(^{33}\)

What is important and what is unimportant in a culture depends on those who define what that culture is. For generations" together, certain texts are acclaimed as representative texts from particular literatures. With reference to such canonization, Jane Thompkins says that, generations of professors and critics who make their living by them (the texts) are responsible to sustain their popularity. She says that these people are the mirrors of culture as culture is interpreted by those who control the literary establishment.\(^{34}\)

As said earlier, the nature and practices of patriarchies and their ways of control change in time. This research identifies forms of patriarchies through the resistances represented in contemporary poetry by women in Kannada and Hindi.

Along with feminist studies and post-colonial studies, the theoretical space opened by cultural studies allows me to understand contemporary poetry/writings by women in Kannada and Hindi not just as part of contemporary literature, but also as products of a specific community in a distinct society. In a lecture, 'The Future of Cultural Studies' given in 1986, Raymond Williams stated that.

...you cannot understand an intellectual or artistic project without also understanding its formation: that the relation between a project and a formation is always decisive; and ... the emphasis of Cultural Studies is precisely that it engages with both.\(^{35}\)
While working on such a research project, if the methods of cultural studies are integrated, the realm of analysis broadens. Cultural Studies allows understanding literature, both as an academic project as well as a particular social formation. Incorporating the cultural studies position allows studying literature beyond various conceptual boundaries. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan in an introduction to their book, 'A Cultural Studies Reader', specify cultural studies as a re-examination, a re-negotiation, and a re-interpretation of major enlightenment and humanist ideals, especially with a contemporary temperament of sustained critique.36

Cultural Studies also allows questions of cultural identity vis-a-vis the roles played by citizens in these societies. These roles are influenced by gender, class and caste factors. Therefore, the issues that arise in any given social context are interrelated; none of these issues can be singled out or compartmentalized, or read in discreet units. Cultural critique provides a spectrum of approaches to questions that are raised in today's global, multi classed, multi caste and multi cultural societies.

According to Simon During:

The new mode of cultural studies no longer concentrated on reading culture as primarily directed against the State. Mainly under the impact of new feminist work at first, it began to affirm 'other' ways of life on their own terms. Emphasis shifted from communities positioned against larger power blocs and bound together as classes or subcultures to ethnic and women's groups
committed to maintaining and elaborating autonomous values, identities, and ethics.\textsuperscript{37}

More recently, the role of the citizen, specifically, gender, class and race (or caste) of the citizen have come into play in the methodological analysis of culture. This in turn has resulted in re-examination of a largely male Eurocentric worldview.\textsuperscript{38}

Cultural Studies is coming up with a growing body of texts concerned with previously marginalized areas, such as the works of women and ethnic minorities and 'unacademic" subjects such as Television, advertisements, pop music, as well as the once taboo field of diverse sexuality. Henry Giroux has rightly said that.

Cultural Studies has given a new twist to the political and personal, (since) the conservative backlash has attempted to reverse many of the gains made by women, gays and lesbians, ethnic and racial minorities, and other subordinated groups who have organized (themselves) around a political identity.\textsuperscript{39}

Thus, while studying poetry by women from Kannada and Hindi I have attempted to draw upon some of these recent developments in the field of Comparative Literature. I shall historicize and contextualise contemporary women's poetry in Kannada and Hindi and attempt to foreground the "social meaning' of poetry. This will facilitate the questions of gender, patriarchies and resistance that emerge in contemporary women's writing. I feel that comparison
contributes to the analysis of literature as cultural production and contributes towards the understanding of poetry not as mere language but as discourse. Antony Easthope, while discussing the conventional positions of poetry criticism, in his book demonstrates how poetry is a discourse. He specifies that.

The meaning of the text is always produced in the process of reading. It is in order to bring a necessary stability to this process conventional criticism of poetry treats the poem in relation to the supposed intensions and personality of the author. By this it is reading poetry not simply as language but with the implicit assumption that it is a certain kind of discourse.40

While looking at the writings by women writers, I have tried to perceive gender as an important factor over many other aspects of literature. As gender is a social construction, it allows me to look at the writings by women not just as part of literature but also as products of a male dominant society. This facilitates the raising of questions regarding changing patriarchies and identifying the mode of resistance shown by women towards it.

The scope of this study is also limited by its period, genre and methodology. This study intends to discuss women's poetry written after the eighties of the last century in Kannada and in Hindi, because, the question of 'cultural identities'- linguistic, gender, religious, regional, caste have emerged as an important agenda both in Indian politics and academics since the 1980s. This Indian context sparked off interesting debates on the idea of nation, development, modernization, class/caste, gender, etc. We see a great deal of writing from
various communities surfacing in the post eighties. This development is also represented in literature, especially in *Dalit* and women's literatures.

The post eighties or the contemporary period is a period where crucial changes can be seen in women's writing/poetry in Kannada as well as in Hindi. Placed in a post-colonial situation, women's poetry has undergone colonization, both from outside and within the Indian literary context. Kirsten Hoist Petersen and Anna Rutherford have rightly said that there is a parallel in the relationships between man-woman, the empire-colony or colonizer-colonized. This has often been cited in postcolonial theory as the "double colonization" of women in colonial situations. In a colonised situation women are already under such kind of "double colonisation". Along with other colonised citizens, they not only undergo oppressions executed by the colonisers but also are targeted by the local patriarchal power structures who are fighting against the colonisers but execute their powers on women within the given situation. Women suffer under both colonial and local power structures simultaneously, I feel, they undergo "multiple colonisation". Women's writing in India may be seen as resisting such kind of "multiple colonisation" within a larger literary context which is highly patriarchal.

The anthologies I choose to discuss have been published between 1980 and 2000. Though issues addressed in these anthologies are interrelated, certain aspects are identified as dominant strands. Accordingly, I would like to identify certain concerns as some of the major themes of contemporary women's poetry in Kannada and Hindi. They are as follows:

- The question of domesticity.
- The question of female sexuality.
- The question of women’s positioning in society.

The above-mentioned compartmentalization allows me to discuss specific issues
of contemporary women’s poetry in Kannada and Hindi and is resorted to in order
to project clearer frames because domesticity and sexuality lead to the positioning
of women within the family and the society.

Through a detailed reading of poetry texts of contemporary women writers
in Kannada and Hindi, I shall forward the hypothesis that, similar situations might
have emerged raising similar responses in other Indian language literatures as
well; in the context of women’s poetry - in relation to gender, patriarchies and
resistance because, women writing represents resistance to the patriarchal
structures and hierarchies embedded in the cultures that define them as individuals
and their roles in specific societies.

In this dissertation while looking into the questions raised by the
contemporary women poets in Kannada and Hindi, I shall also pay equal attention
to a close analysis of the texts. I shall discuss not only the major themes but also
the way in which these themes are articulated in contemporary women's poetry in
Kannada and Hindi in their social contexts.

The translations of poems and quotations from Kannada and Hindi into
English are mine, unless otherwise mentioned. I have made use of already
available translations by others as well. References of such translations are given
in the endnotes. I am grateful to all the translators whose works were of immense
help in the making of this dissertation. I have used accepted transliterations whenever they were available and transliterated on my own, when required. Collecting material for the period preceding the contemporary women's poetry was not an easy task. This holds good for the contemporary period as well.

The vast area of research on women's writing and an urge to document women's expressions and experiences, are to be understood as a conscious effort by women to create spaces for themselves from which they would be able to view the world with their own perspective. This research on the contemporary poetry by women is a humble attempt on these lines.

III

The thesis is organised into six chapters, including conclusion. The first chapter, Introduction, has three parts. The first part briefly introduces the thesis, its contents and the intention of the work. The second part traces the trajectories in Comparative Literature discipline. It reviews the development of Comparative Literature in India and then proposes the methodology for Contemporary Women's Poetry. The last part delineates the chapterisation of the thesis.

The second chapter titled as 'Women Writing: Creating a Space for Themselves', reviews the relationship between women's writing and the literary histories and establishes how the mainstream literary histories have successfully marginalized women's writing.
The third chapter, "The Literary - Cultural Background of Contemporary Women's Poetry", offers a different way of periodization of the history of literature which can accommodate women's voices and views. Women's poetry from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary period is discussed under this periodization. This chapter broadly deals with the literary and cultural background for contemporary women's poetry in Kannada and Hindi.

The fourth chapter, "Reading through Prefaces", draws attention towards the structure and composition of the poetry anthologies. It notes how the 'forewords' by male writers and critics written in the collection of poems by women read women's experiences within the frames of femininity and work towards constructing literary canon for women's poetry.

The fifth chapter entitled 'Major Themes' has three subchapters namely Domesticity, Sexuality and Women's positioning in society. Under these three recurring themes, contemporary women's poetry from Kannada and Hindi are discussed. Sixth and the final chapter offers conclusion of the thesis and further indicates potential areas of research in the field of Contemporary women's poetry.


ibid.


Andre Lefever. 'Systems Thinking and Cultural Relativism". Essay's in Comparative Literature. Calcutta: Papyrus. 1988. (A poetics consists of two components: one is an inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs, symbols, prototypical characters and situations: the other is a concept of what the role of literature is, or should be in a society. This concept plays an important part in the selection of themes which must be relevant to society fora work of literature to be noticed, p. 47

Frank Lentricchia as quoted in ibid. p. 44


Synchronic and Diachronic are the terms derived from linguistics. Synchronic linguistics views a particular state of a language at some given point in time, whereas the Diachronic linguistics views the historical development of a language. Thus, on the Diachronic axis we can go back and forth in time, watching the language with all its features change. When Even-Zohar uses these concepts in the polysystem theory, applied in the analyses of cultures, he brings in certain modifications by saying that, synchrony cannot and should not be equated with static, since at any given moment, more than one diachronic set is operating on the synchronic axis. Therefore, on the one hand a system consists of both synchrony and diachrony; on the other, each of these separately is obviously also a system.


ibids.


ibid.


ibid. pp. 281 - 282

ibid. p. 281
27 ibid. Bassnett quotes from the opening statements of The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures where the term 'post-colonial' is defined as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. She concludes, "What is this but comparative literature under another name." pp. 9-10


"ibid. p. 215


35 ibid.


8 ibid. p. 4

