That which I saw
that which I heard
that I had experienced
all that is yours!
everything!
is for you
recorded in the pages of history.
Then what did I see?
What did I experience?
What should I document....?

- Saraswathi Du
"What should I Document ?"

*Henedare Jedanante*

This chapter discusses the very act of writing by women and the canonisation of contemporary women's poetry. It looks into how poetry by women emerged in a major way, not just as part of literature but also as a voice of resistance from one of the marginalized groups in society. The chapter examines
how forewords written by men for the poetry collections of women contribute to restrict women's poetry within the frames of femininity and womanhood, qualities prescribed to them by the patriarchal society. It probes into the meaning that women's writing has for these men and how these forewords result in the canonising of women's literature in general and women's poetry in particular. Resistance to such canonisations is identified in the forewords written by women and in the prefaces written by the women poets included in their poetry collections.

Except for writers in the early centuries, most of the women in the twentieth century chose to write prose. As said earlier, they incorporated problems faced by women as individuals. When women realised that their problems sprung from the operations of patriarchies they wrote to bring to light the operators of these patriarchies. Along with this, voices questioning men and the male dominance started surfacing in women's literature. Till the seventies women made their presence felt as novelists and short story writers by and large in both Kannada and Hindi. Later they gradually joined mainstream poetry floating their joys, miseries, agonies and splendour and spreading as they flowed with the current. Women's writing has emerged as a visible and significant literary movement in the nineties of the twentieth century.

Though the practice of writing poems was not new, "Women's Poetry" in real sense began to emerge in Kannada and Hindi only in the seventies. Literary Modernism in its heydays, during the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, marginalized questions addressing the social issues raised by women
writers within the framework of its ideology. Now for the first time women cleared space for themselves where, as individuals, they could express their experiences associated with their body and sexuality in their writings. In her essay "Feminist, Female. Feminine", Toril Moi opines that.

Since patriarchy has always tried to silence and repress women and women's experience, rendering them visibly, is clearly an important anti-patriarchal strategy.²

In poetry, like in all other writings, women poets attempt to re-establish their identity as women. They worked towards a better representation of their self in literature/poetry.

By the early eighties women began to write extensively and a new kind of women's writing began to emerge. Karnataka Lekhakiyara Sangha* (Women Writers' Association of Karnataka) was started on the 6, January 1979, for many writers felt that a forum to voice women's writing and bring women writers together under one roof was essential. 'Kavana Saurabha' was the first representative anthology of Kannada women poets, published by Lekhakiyara Sangha in the year 1984. It is an anthology consisting of forty-seven poets. Some poems in this collection are composed using traditional meters with conventional themes. 'Jai Bharata'** a poem by Tirumale Rajamma follows a perfect Chandassu, the Kannada metrical composition to express patriotic feeling towards Mother India. Kamala Ham Pa Na uses the 12th century vachana form of poetry⁶ to put across the crisis faced by a contemporary woman in her interaction with other people and her day-to-day life in general. Those poems that reread the
mythological women characters from a contemporary perspective\textsuperscript{7} are interesting. There are poems on poverty and dreams and aspirations of women. The poems in this anthology ranging from patriotism go to question injustice, oppression and other social evils. Apart from this, there are poems that express feelings towards a healthy man-woman relationship. This was the period when women's writing was taking shape as an independent and a special genre. The anthology 'Kavana Saurabha' is an attempt in the process, to bring together women writing in Kannada. On the other hand, Kannada literary criticism was trying to understand and analyse writing by women in its own manner. Most of the critics in Kannada were mainly men. A tendency to relate poetry by women with experiences of women or 'specifically women experiences' was popular. Poetry by women was understood within the already subscribed notions of femininity. Therefore Kannada literary criticism was looking for an essentially feminine womanhood in the poems penned by women poets.

The very act of writing by women signifies that they pronounce their ideas in the public space. Writing also signifies their attempt to move beyond the spaces allotted to them. Women who are supposed to belong to the inward spaces of the society, make their presence felt in the spaces which had been restricted to them. In the process they document details of their experiences through their perspectives. The dos and don'ts subscribed to them in their day-to-day life extend to their writing as well. Therefore, when women write their writing is associated with their life. Whether their writing is factual or fictional, it is read as autobiographical. When a woman writes, a tendency to read it as 'autobiographical' is quite common in the context of Kannada and Hindi
literatures. Here, certain issues addressed in her writings always get priority and this attitude towards women's expressions act as a kind of a social censorship imposed on women writers. This kind of an attitude in turn defines women's writing in general. Even then, women dared to write violating the censorships imposed on them at every step both as a person and as a creative writer. Though women through their writings, succeeded in bringing the "private" into the "public", to a greater extent they also succeeded writing without disturbing their private life. To some extent, poetry as a form helped them to do this. The visual patterns, rhythm, sounds, metaphors and the images that constitute poetry gave them an opportunity to move away from the reality whenever they wanted to. They could camouflage the real issues. The hard reality of their lives could appear in their poetry taking different forms. As an act of breaking such censorships, some women poets deliberately wrote on a very personal note, for e.g., Hema Pattanashetty, Champavathi and Pratibha in Kannada. Pratibha, a Kannada poet writes about her conversation with a male writer. Commenting on women's poetry he says:

women should not use words like breasts, intercourse, etc., in a very casual manner. If they did so, these words would loose their simulative qualities.

Reacting to this, Pratibha answered that she deliberately uses such terms in order to break the traditional role models and give new dimensions to expression.8

By the end of seventies, with the advent of feminism in India in general and in the Kannada context in particular, several questions regarding women's
rights and their position in society came to the forefront. Debates regarding gender issues were becoming more specific and central. The woman's self was reassessed by both, who identified their writing with the new trend of feminism and those who did not want to identify with it. Women writers had to negotiate between the roles they played within a defined patriarchal framework and the new awareness brought by the feminism. The activism of women's movements emerged in the late seventies and gained visibility, it is also responsible in changing the themes of women's expressions in literature. Therefore, in the post eighties an assertion of woman's self and a strong resistance to the prevailing patriarchies surface and become visible in women's writing.

**The Forewords and After**

It was only in the post eighties that the literary historians began to take note of women's writing in Kannada and in Hindi. On their part, women too wrote on women's writing in many Indian languages. Till then, literary histories barely recognized writing by women. History and literary history perceived from an upper caste, middle class male perspective represented an image of the ideal Indian woman. While arguing the case for women's writing, Dale Spender criticizes Ian Watt, the author of *The Rise of the Novel* and comments that the only reason why writings by women do not count in the histories of literatures is because it is written by women. She points out that.

The worth of women writers is not being based on any consideration of their writing, the only conclusion which can be drawn is their worth is being determined by their sex.
The situation in India was no different from this. Though writing by women were recognized in a few places, men were always represented as more significant and better writers in literary histories. In a way, these literary histories segregated writing by women and were responsible for the rise of "women's writing", as against the main stream writing that constituted writing by men. Hence, many of the women writers who wished to join 'mainstream literature" usually went to an established male writer for an "introduction". They entered the literary field sponsored by well-known writers and literary critics as is evident in the very structuring of the poetry collections brought out by women in recent years, especially in Kannada language.

There is something very interesting in the pattern in which poetry collections of women are structured. They usually have a foreword, and then a note by the poet on her poetry followed by the poems. The poet's note speaks about the poet herself and the poems. In her note, most of the times the poet talks about herself in relation to her creativity and her creativity in relation to the society she lives in - the context in which she writes. Sometimes, the note comprises ideas that would later be extended in the poems.

Forewords are usually written by well-known writers/critics and carry their opinion about the collection of poems. A foreword often introduces the collection of poems, evaluates them and locates the collection in the specific context of a given literature and literary tradition. Usually the foreword writer advises the young poet on ways of improving his/her style of writing. It also identifies the uniqueness of the writer in question and explains how her poetry is different from
the other contemporaries. In a way, these forewords give us a glimpse of what the
writer of the foreword thinks about the poet and her poetry. It is a meta-text on
poetry in general and poems in the collection in particular. Moreover, the
foreword is usually considered as important for it not only introduces the poet but
also evaluates her work. In the instance of poetry by women, the opinion
projected in the foreword gains much more importance, because, most of the
times the foreword writer is a man. This is the case both in Kannada and Hindi.
The forewords also put forth the ideas about women and womanhood. For
example, some believe in "essential womanhood", which considers that women
have very specific experiences by virtue of their birth as women. Some consider
that because women are citizens of this country they have the right to express
their opinion and therefore women's writing is essential. Some also believe that
because women are oppressed, their writing need to be given a voice. All these
assumptions determine the forewords and indirectly contribute not only to the
construction of the notion of "women's writing", but also towards the
construction of essential womanhood. Therefore I shall choose a few forewords
by the reputed writers or scholars in the Kannada and Hindi literatures, who, to
some extent, are responsible for canonizing literature. If we go through these
forewords and interpret them, we will have a picture of what the mainstream
thinks of women's poetry. This helps to gather ideas about their notion of poetry
in general, poetry by women and women as poets in particular. We get to know
what these writers would prescribe for women and what kind of poetry they
expect from them. To begin with, I would first look at some of the forewords in
Kannada. Then pick a few forewords from Hindi and support my argument.
Gopalakrishna Adiga the pioneer of the Modernist poetry in Kannada has specific views about how a poem should be written. According to him, along with creativity, skill and craftsmanship are essential qualities for a poem. Adiga expressed his reservations about the new breed of Kannada poets. He was of the opinion that younger poets do not care for craftsmanship. Instead, they arrange bits and pieces of bad prosaic lines one below the other and call them as poems. He believed:

- Meter is as important to poetry as grammar is to the language.
- Verses framed in chaste Kannada, with a flawless rhythm are the life of a poem.

Adiga apart from being a major Modernist poet was one of the important critics of the Navya period. The Modernists critics insisted on a close reading of the text. The text, one that is printed on a page, was an object in itself with its own quality and should be explored in its own terms. Adiga stressed on the "quality" and "creativity", whether the poet is a man or a woman did not matter to him.

If this is the stance of Adiga and a number of others who followed his path, there are scholars and writers for whom while writing forewords the poet's gender did matter. They differentiated the poetry by women from poetry in general. Poetry by women was viewed in the context of essential womanhood and femininity. Some such forewords from both Kannada and Hindi are looked at in the dissertation.
In the foreword to the collection of poems *Virahotsava*, by Hema Pattanashetty, Shanker Mokashi Punekar says that one need not give any kind of concession to this poetry collection only because it is by a woman writer. He says:

Her poetry rightfully wins our appreciation by its effortless, flawless considerations to femininely non-sensitive reading and criticism…….. It is true that women's literature in Kannada has begun to grow. But in this flourishing genre quality of feminity is very less. It is true that women writers penned several poems, novels, and plays. But the quality of their feminineness is not evident in these works. It is not as if our writers do not have these qualities. They have not utilized it in their writings in a proper way. The reason for this may be in the view that, 'men's way is the right way of expressing'.

Further he goes on to define the qualities of 'feminineness', by mentioning the movement of the foetus in the womb as an example Hema's poems manage to bring out women's feelings about puberty, pregnancy, their desire far clothes and jewellery, etc. According to Punekar, good poetry by women should express the experiences men will never be able to access. He feels that many women writers fail to express their "unique experiences" in their writings. By this he meant that, women writers for whom womanhood (being a female) was natural did not take advantage of their uniqueness of being women. Such an understanding is devoid of any distinction made between 'the female' and 'the feminine' aspects of womanhood. While the 'female' is a matter of nature, the 'feminine' is an effect of cultural construction. The feminine qualities that are generally attributed to
women are primarily historical and cultural and then are naturalized through the discourses of patriarchies. Femininity or the qualities that subscribe to the feminine subjection is imposed and not natural or gained by birth. The biologically acquired and socially attributed associations of womanhood are indeed juxtaposed. Bui women's writing is generally viewed through the tinted glass of the established notions of the female and the femininity. Women's poetry is expected to represent the "docile' qualities of women for they are projected as 'the qualities that make a woman'. When the "feminine" overlaps or gets merged with the "female", the "Feminine" represents nurture and 'Female” nature. As Toril Moi rightly points out.

Patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards of "femininity" are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural.

**Streethva** or 'the womanliness' in women is given utmost importance and remained as the core of discussion for quite sometime in Kannada and Hindi literary contexts. In a certain sense, the notion of streethva has redefined the 'modern woman'. However modern the woman is, she is expected to function within the limits of streetva. An elaborate list of dos and don'ts specially prescribed for women poets is a case in point. Different scholars and writers who analysed poetry by women promoted a range of ideas in different ways.
In a foreword to 'Eetanaka', (Untill Now) the collection of poems by Pratibha, V.K.Gokak says,

These are a few instances in the context of Kannada Literature where feminity has blossomed naturally. The poet has been successful in voicing such natural feminity and has succeeded in the difficult job of implanting it in her work. She has not turned into a feminist. She has proved that one can remain a feminine and still achieve all that a feminist would achieve. It is evident from such expressions that, a woman's personality is different from that of a man, but commands the same level of respect.¹³

Gokak's distinction between the feminist and the feminine allows him to construct a 'natural feminine' subject. According to him a woman is gifted with certain natural "womanly qualities" or natural woman-ness. He seems to believe that certain aspects of femininity are natural for women. Resistance to such, the so-called 'naturalness' is unacceptable. Gokak appreciates Pratibha's poems on these grounds. More stress is laid on the naturalness of certain feminine qualities of women. Therefore being feminist is seen as against being feminine. 'Feminine' is acceptable while the 'feminist' remains undesirable.

Expressions like 'woman's heart' (a tender heart), 'Woman's natural expression', 'naturalness in her expression', 'purely feminine consciousness', etc., were produced abundantly to characterise poems by women poets. If one sees carefully, these tools used for the analyses of women's poetry, instead of seeing it...
as an independent and a vibrant new expression, tried to restrain it within the traditional framework and impose patriarchal readings to it.

G.S. Shivarudhrappa, the well-known poet and a Kannada scholar, in his foreword to Sa.Usha's collection of poems, 'Ee Nelada Haadu (Song of This Earth), opines that Sanchi Honnamma and Mahadevi Akka are the two role models for women's poetry in Kannada. The 12th century Veerashaiva poet Akka Mahadevi and Sanchi Honnamma of the 17th century are two women icons of Kannada poetry. Akka Mahadevi's poems get a prominent place in the Kannada literary history. More than her poems, she is celebrated for leading a bold life that went against the traditional notions of womanhood; she is remembered for discarding her clothes and walking nude, for expressing the desire for another man/god, etc. Sanchi Honnamma of the 17th century receives recognition for celebrating womanhood in the traditional sense and arguing that women also are essential members of the society. Referring to Akka and Honnamma, Shivarudrappa says,

'Why lament over girl, oh! blind boors' was the bold accusing ever memorable voice of Honnamma's 'Hadibadeya Dharma' (loyalty of a virtuous wife); basically this work propounds the grihasta dharma (the conjugal duties) without wishing for any kind of change in the framework of the Indian social and domestic set-up.

…….Akka's life which has brought dignity, respect and rare self consciousness to a women's personality of boundless love, is the most appropriate model (objective correlative) to a lot of poets.
G.S.S further points out that though there are exceptions, most of the Kannada women novelists during the *Navodaya* period followed Sanchi Honnamma's path by writing within the traditional frame work of the family and the man-woman relationship, whereas, women writing during the modernist period, especially the poets, seem to follow Mahadevi Akka's path.

Ramachandra Sharma, one of the leading names among the *Navya* poets, in his foreword to *Atlu Bide Gelathi* (Let Out Your Sorrow Friend), an anthology of poems by Sudha Sharma Chavatti, Savitha and Bhagavathi, writes:

The specialty of this anthology is that most of the poems here clearly show that they have been written by women and not by men. The manner in which these poems are written, the kinds of images and metaphors used, etc., naturally belongs to the women's world and are impossible for men to write. Feminity distinct to women is evident in the images conceptualised and reconstructed in the lines penned by Sudha Sharma and Savitha. Bhagavathi deliberately hides the aspects of feminity in her writings.\(^\text{15}\)

To discuss the femininity or womanliness prevailing in women's writing seems to be the sole concern of some of these foreword writers.

The construction of the 'self' in women's writing is also dependant on the idea of the male self. H.S.Sivaparakash in his foreword to Pushpa's poetry collection, *Amruthamathi SM\textsuperscript{agatha}* writes,
The notion of 'self constructed in the elite poetry till date is the
gendered self. It is not beyond gender and it is usually a masculine

Feminist critics have always argued that it is important to "embark upon a
revisionist re-reading of our entire literary inheritance. Criticisms on women's
poetry have always complained that women poets did not write like women and
no 'woman experiences" surfaced in their poems. Mogalli Ganesh, while
reviewing the collection of poems. 'Kaada Navilina Hejjje' by Mamta.G Sagar
comments.

We cannot expect much from the writings of most women who
live like women and write like men. These poets despite their
familiarity with the life in the villages refuse to use anything at all
about subjects like grinding stone, pounding rod, 'hasc' the seats
made with rangoli designs by women during special occasions,
brooms, pipes used to blow and kindle fire in the traditional
chulahs, or 'oLale' the traditional spoon used to feed milk for the
babies, their bangles, toe rings, the flowers the men bring for them,
etc. The contemporary women writers brought up in the villages
and live in the cities neither write about their village experience
nor about the contradictions they face in a city drawing room.
They don't even compose critical poetries on the ironies in well-
furnished drawing rooms. If they continue this practice, women
writing in Kannada will die an early death like the Bandaya poetry.
The present day writers haven't even learnt to write with a fraction
of the sensitivity that the twelfth century *vachana* writers had. That is why we have no great women poets among us till date, after Akkamahadevi.\textsuperscript{18}

For Mogalli, womanhood is associated with traditional domesticity - the kitchen, family, motherhood, the role of a wife and the images highlighting all these become very important. As a critic, he expects that a good woman poet should rely on her own experiences and use images and metaphors related to her domesticity.

Women poets not only wrote about concrete realities that surrounded their day-to-day life, but also wrote about abstract feelings that emerged as a result of their conflict with practical situations in literature and life. Therefore women's choice of themes and the rendering of their poems along the lines of their male colleagues need to be understood not as their inability to express their individual views as women, but as a positive element that readily absorbs the influences available in a literature and culture, and as a response to the given situation.

Critics have also reviewed the mode of women's poetry. In his foreword to U. Maheshwari's poetry collection, *Mugila Hakki*, H.S.Raghavendra Rao points out,

Although these poems are personal on the basis of details, on the basis of objectives; they document the inevitable loneliness of all women. They express not only anxiety but also show impatience to overcome it.\textsuperscript{9}
Let us consider Modernist poetry. Loneliness, anxiety, impatience, etc., were the celebrated themes of mainstream poetry both in Kannada and Hindi. So, what we see in Maheshwari is an attempt to be at par with the mainstream poetry in practicing the genre, handling its themes, moods and contents while expressing herself.

By the end of the eighties, with the influence of the Modernist poets, loud dialogues in women's poetry were replaced by lengthy monologue sort of poems. Referring to the monologue mode of poetry by women, Shivaprakash opines that most of the women poets are not trained enough to successfully use the monologue mode of writing poetry. Their poems look as though they are conversations and long lectures.

Among the women poets, some write to please masculinity by teasing men, or they compose kiddish poems on the moon and stars as if they are not born as men or women. Or they deliver sermons in a fake male voice. Women's poetry is devoid of deep contemplation. Hence, the loud conversational mode. The poetry of today clearly shows that women have no preparation and they lack introspection.²⁰

When the 'self in the self-introspection itself is not clear, and that 'self in women's poetry is still a male self all these attempts have to be understood as challenges to stay at par with the mainstream.
The 'self or the T element that appears in women's writing reviewed the 'woman' that emerged from the mainstream literature/poetry. H.L.Pushpa says, Myself and the words within me have become a kind of mysterious world. As the words emerge, as they become poetry, I am gradually lost, often having had to search myself. The truth within my poem many a times is the truth within me; still unsuccessful to dissociate from the poem. Amruthamathi. Madhavi. Akkamahadevi still compel me to think. I keep stumbling on appropriate dimensions to think of them. This is the time where one should read positively the manifestation of woman's mind.

Women poets moved towards this 'woman' with whose self they identified their own. The realization of this, gave a valid breakthrough. This tendency gave a turn to their writing where their idiom headed towards self-oriented and highly individualistic expressions. That in turn strengthened women's poetry as a genre, which thrived at par with the mainstream domain of male poets.

Poetry by women in eighties and the nineties is an interesting phase, as women resist their portrayal in the mainstream literature. The poems of this phase are self-critical and criticize male gaze in constructing women in life and literature. *Bhandaru* a poem by Sarvamangala is as following:

I'm not scared of
the stray cows and bulls
who recoil their tails when
hushed or stared at;
I'm scared of those *linga bhakta*
Brothers who say -
A woman's intelligence
doesn't lie below her knees,
so come forward like Akka.
I'm scared of these lords
Who glance over the
rise and fall
as they talk, and think
how about moving hands,
and experience pleasure from within. ...22

In contemporary Kannada poetry, the central objective of women's poetry is to resist. Resisting the phallocentric view is predominantly present in the poems. Their tone is sharp and direct. They criticise and condemn the patriarchal system. Resistance is shown to the set standards within which women's poetry is expected to operate.

I like to consider my pen a friend rather than a weapon. I have no inhibition or hesitance to speak to her. She is clever enough to open up my insides for me. When we talk among ourselves, we feel as if someone is stealthily listening to us and laughing. Only because someone is listening to us, do we need to hide the truth and start speaking the way that would please them?'

- asks U. Maheshwari. Writing gives her the strength to speak without any inhibition.
Vague gestures of women's poetry pointing to each and everything gradually started gaining focus in the late eighties and the early nineties towards specific gender issues. Till then women did not even have the freedom to speak about their opinion of men and masculinity. This was a period when they talked abundantly about their own sexuality. The body and its desires became central themes for many poets. They strongly questioned the objectification of women's body in literature, in common understanding and in the representation of women writers in the literary histories.

While talking about the contemporary situation in Kannada poetry and the reaction of criticism in literature towards women's poetry in particular, Pratibha says:

If there is anything new happening in Kannada Poetry, it is only in women's poetry.... They are bringing out those unseen layers of the heart and laying them out string by string. Men are not even reacting to our feminist sisters, wives and mothers. Their heroines are still the same old role models. If the poems are little bold, they are labelled as feminist poems. If they are a bit romantic then they are called feminine. Women's poetry in Kannada means, poems by the 12th century Akka Mahadevi to begin with, then it will be Sanchi Honnamma of the 17th century and then place us, the 21st century poets along with them. Kannada Poetry in general does not even include Allama Prabhu of 12th century. Instead, it begins right away with Adiga.
G.S. Amur in one of his articles says the actual criticism for women's poetry in Kannada came out in the form of forewords, which I think is very true. He says,

Established male poets who wrote the forewords not only guided the young women poets about writing poetry but also imposed their expectations of what kind of poetry they expected from women. Usually all foreword writers take special interest in recognizing the feminine qualities in poems by women poets.\textsuperscript{25}

This attitude of the male writers sometimes has been harmful for women poetry. Amur establishes this by saying.

Since it is necessary to provide a natural expression of feminity, for any poet to be authentic, there is not much importance from the point of view of experience. But there is always a danger of women verbalizing and exhibiting their feminity as a result of male expectations. Bad poems are produced when they get into such danger.\textsuperscript{26}

When men reviewed women's poetry images associated with women's daily life emerged was branded as 'kitchen literature'. No space was given to poetry by women because they felt that the women poets only talked of experiences limited to a small group and not of the 'universal reality'. If women wrote about the so-called 'universal reality', it was criticised that they never wrote 'like women'. On one hand, women were expected to respond to the happenings around them and on the other, their right to speak about experiences in general
were restricted and it was taken for granted that they would not react to anything else except the domestic experiences which are exclusively theirs.

Nineties seem to be an interesting phase for women's poetry in Hindi as well. In the foreword to the collection of poems, 'Lauta Hai Vijayla', by Archana Varma, it is said that.

...The so-called women’s world is not available as a concrete realization. The constantly evolving, growing and extending nature is called the women’s world. It is like the tenacity to fit in her huge family into the tiny courtyard and the determination to widen her tiny courtyard in that huge family. Such an effort reflects both resistance and acceptance.\(^27\)

Perhaps the above-mentioned words are applicable to most of the women's poetry of the nineties.

Dr. Hardayal, a Hindi critic, finds the poems in Sunita Jain's collection of poems, 'Sutradhar Sothe HaV interesting because the poet does not follow the popular mode of women's poetry, she does not shout slogans nor her poems are mere play of words. Her poems have the inherent sensitivity of a human mind.* So, according to him, poetry by women will lose all its 'sensitivity' if it demands a space for women or represents women's voices. Poetry by women should qualify as 'poetry' and move beyond being 'just a play of words'. But on the other hand it should also know its limitations and not cross the barriers within which it has been set. In saying this, it is obvious that Dr. Hardayal is suggestive of
feminism. Shouting slogans, voicing one's demands, disagreeing or raising voices against something in one's writing is associated with feminism, which is hardly ever accepted by the main stream. Such remarks are made when Feminism is understood as something that distorts the idealness of Indian women. It is seen as a threat to the essential womanhood, which is full of "feminine" qualities.

In the foreword written for 'Anushtup', a collection of poems in Hindi, by Anamika, Kedarnath Singh says that the language in which this poet expresses herself stands differently from commonly existing language used by women writers, especially the feminists. He feels that she is distinct in this difference in articulation which stresses on the acceptance of a normative element. Vidhi and Nishedh (natural and the imposed), and the contradiction between the two, flow in her poems.29 He seems to be critical about the 'common language of feminist writing' and appreciative of the normative elements in the anthology. He fails to understand that it is the force of the feminist perspective which gives strength to the compassion hidden in these poems.

Suresh Salil in his foreword to 'Saat Bhaiyon Ke Beech Champa, a collection of poems in Hindi says.

The sociology, the void between dreams and reality, the ability and helplessness and the irrepressible aspirations of women's rights from time of Rigveda and Manusmrithi, till date are all expressed in Katyayini's poems.30
He adds that the poet's liberal views about the most delicate stages of love, motherhood, life and nature are also expressed in her poems.

An interesting anthology of contemporary women’s poetry in Hindi, ‘Karunaa Aaye Magar Is Tarh Nahi’ was brought out during the Seventh National Women Studies Conference held at Jaipur in 1995. Editor of this anthology, Ajju Dadda Mishra in her preface states.

It is true that women write less and those writing poetry are fewer. Those who want to write are not able to write. Those who write are not publishing. Those published are not discussed…..

…..the desire to achieve world view bearing feminist dreams, the struggle for it, the exertion, suffocation, anxiety, loss, gain and the joy are all hidden in the women's literature of this day.\textsuperscript{31}

Ajantha Dev in her foreword for the same anthology finds that women's poetry has diverged into two different streams -

If the first stream was of poets writing about love and romance, sadness and separation and everything pretty; the second stream is of poets very openly writing in a fiercely attacking style. But neither stream has presented an optimistic picture. Even though the second stream is more prevalent, these poems have failed to reach the superior class due to lack of compassion. Because these poets refuse to recognize that the enemy before them is human too. There is no fundamental difference between a woman's and a man's world. Nevertheless there is more violence, more
exploitation and more obstacles in the woman's world. Hence it is necessary to look for the roots of this infliction in the economy and politics. For the entire humanity is rendered helpless in these two tenets. Women's writing explicates that this struggle is against injustice and not against humans.\(^{32}\)

If a tree stands in the middle of the path, how long can one go on staring at it. asks Ajantha Dev. With this simple example she proposes the direction for women's poetry of today. She advocates that hatred, anger or tears are obstacles for building a better world and it is high time that women's poetry dissociates itself from such expressions.

Moving beyond phallocentric world of men and appreciating the differences that exist among women has bestowed a lot of strength to the contemporary women's poetry. This aspect has emerged as an identity for women's writing today. Moving away from patriarchies, the desire to derive strength from a mother's living tradition is fiercely evident in women's poetry of the late nineties. B.N.Sumithra Bai, a well-known feminist critic from Kannada observes that Kannada Women's poetry of the nineties sound more introvert, turning towards a state of meditation and is filled with a sense of disillusionment and deep regret."

To sum up, women are understood to have special sensibilities and these special sensibilities are looked for in their writings. Male critics dictated terms of women's poetry. Writing to please masculinity or to 'deliver sermons in a male voice’ is understood as inappropriate for women's poetry. *Streethva* or
'womanliness' in women have gained utmost importance and remain to be the core of discussion. New expressions and concepts evolve abundantly as tools to define and analyse women's writing.

No distinction is made between the feminine and femininity aspects of womanhood. The biologically acquired and socially attributed associations to womanhood overlap when it is insisted that women poets should write more and more about those experiences that are unique to them. Both in Kannada and Hindi, most of the male scholars/writers have clearly shown their aversion towards feminism. Feminism is seen as a threat to the essential womanhood. They can tolerate a woman who is a poet but not a poet who is a woman and also a feminist. The general concept of feminism is that it is slogan oriented and does not comprise of a universal humanitarian attitude. The notion of being a feminist is seen against the notion of being feminine. There are critics who aptly analyse women's poetry. They have said that women's poetry documents the inevitable loneliness and the anxiety and impatience to overcome that loneliness.

Poetry of the seventies questioned the traditional constraints and the already existing norms. In the eighties, re-establishing identities as women became the main agenda. Then poetry by women diverted towards a monologue mode of expression. Its location was centred on debates like femininity, domesticity and sexuality. Positioning of women in the society added to as an important concern in the nineties.
Analysis of women's poetry by women writers and scholars seem to be more rational. They identify with the desire to achieve a worldview, which include feminist dreams and the struggle for it, the exertion, suffocation, anxiety, loss and the joy hidden in women's literature of today. While men tend to perceive women's writing in relation to various aspects of womanhood, women tend to understand women's writing in a larger context - in relation to writing by men, analyses of women's writing by men and also in relation to women and their writing that goes beyond the male gaze. Looking beyond phallocentricism is very essential for women's expression. Moving away from the patriarchies and towards a desire to derive strength from their mother's traditions is fiercely evident in women's poetry of the late nineties.
This association has published series of books under the programme. 'Lekha Loka' in which contemporary women writers are interviewed and questions regarding their writings and the challenges faced by them as individuals are documented.


ibid. p. I

6 ibid. p. 6-7

'Draupadi' by Maatangi. p. 32. 'Gandhari' by Lalitha Ghorpade, p. 36. and 'Seethe' by L.G.Sumitra, p. 49. in Geetha Desai. 1984


18 This was published in the book review column of Lankesh Patrike, 9 December 1992. The notion that there were no women poets after Mahadevi Akka of the 12th century was made so popular that, any kind of poetry by women, be it a love poem or about the contemporary issues, was all read in comparison with the poetry of the 12th century. Time and space in terms of social and cultural difference were simply erased.

"H.L. Pushpa. 1992, p. 3

21 "Nannolagina Maathu", ibid. pp. 4-5


"Myself and my writing", in U. Maheshwari. 1996. p. ix


" ibid.


