

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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In this Chapter, I seek to present the conclusions of my study *Come Rain* in the light of my hypothesis stated at the beginning of this study. My aim was to study the feminist consciousness of Jai Nimbkar as reflected in this novel and to examine the protagonist as a role model of the alternative. Since this study is in the tradition of a feminist critical enquiry in literary texts, I have tried to first place Nimbkar in the tradition of Indian English writers and then review the currents in feminist literary criticism with a view to making my assumptions explicit. Thus, in the first Chapter, I have taken a brief review of Indian English novelists. This review reveals that her works show development in the portrayal of women's lives. She is concerned with questioning the various roles that men and women have to play in their lives as a result of the oppressive patriarchal social systems.

In Chapter-II, I reviewed feminist literary criticism. This clarifies the concept

of feminist consciousness by which is meant the awareness of the systems of women's oppression in the society, the values, beliefs and ideologies generated by the system for the perpetuation of the subordination of women and the visions offered as alternatives to the existing values.

In Chapters-III and IV, I have presented my analysis of patriarchal family and Ann's feminist consciousness. The study reveals that the feminist consciousness is reflected in the critical examination of patriarchal practices reflected in the typical Indian middle-class family into which the protagonist Ann enters after her marriage. I briefly summarise my findings below and then go on to state the limitations of my study and suggest directions for further research.

The story of the novel presents a critique of patriarchal values, ideology and practice as reflected in the Indian family. Ann is a structural device Jai Nimbkar uses to present this analysis. It is interesting to note that Ann, this observer, is an American, not an Indian. The question inevitably raises itself - why does Nimbkar select an American woman, a foreigner, for her protagonist? If she were an Indian, wouldn't her rebellion be convincing. Muktali also has commented on this, "Jai Nimbkar who belongs to an Indian patriarchy perhaps could not think of a girl staying unwed and a separation (as freedom) of a married woman is conceivable, and therefore possible, only in the case of an American (non-Indian) woman like Ann".¹

Let us very briefly examine this device in the light of Nimbkar's novel. It is

true that Ann is an American who gets married to an Indian and observes the traditional norms and values set up for women in the Indian family. This family indeed is patriarchal as is amply demonstrated in my analysis of the novel presented in Chapters-III and IV. Ravi is a typical Indian husband who wants his wife to be economically dependent upon him so that he can be her "Lord and Master". He wants her not as an equal partner in his life but as a docile, obedient helper in the house, who would meekly bow before his wishes, accept the way of life of his family and serve the people in the house. He wants her to be a willing sexual partner, but he also wants her to accept his sexual escapades with his girlfriend without raising a protest. While he wants to enjoy the privileges of being the master of his house, he is not willing to contribute to the household work. He thinks that housework and childcare are sole responsibilities of women in the house. His attitude to the child also is typical. He is not interested in the baby as Ann is. He looks upon the child as his possession. He is selfish, self-centred, has a tremendous ego and is systematically pampered by his mother and other people in the house. His attitude towards the maid servant also is quite feudal. For all his progressive proclamations, he is in his heart, a staunch believer in the supremacy of the male who needs a wife only for procreation and to provide him with a mirror to present him with a larger than life image of his self. He is not willing to allow his wife to work because he is scared that that would make her economically independent. Concepts of sexual purity of the wife are deeply embedded in his mind, that is why he is always jealous of Ann's relations with other men. He lacks sincerity and honesty and is too self-centred to understand the needs of his wife. It is this self-centredness which makes him discard his country as well. In a sense,

he represents the vulgar career-mindedness of men in the feudal-capitalist modern society in India today.

If Ravi is a representative of the patriarchal male, his mother is a typical woman who believes in patriarchal values of the supremacy of man over woman. She has ingrained patriarchal values as much as Ravi has, as has been shown in my analysis of this woman, as a typical mother-in-law. She represents the typical concerns of a mother-in-law and the power that she wants to exert over Ann has been ingrained in her by the patriarchal system. Patriarchal family allows a woman to have power only when she becomes a mother-in-law and, therefore, it presents a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law as natural enemies. All that she can control is her son and her daughter-in-law and, if possible, her grandchildren. The existence of woman becomes too restricted as is seen in Nimbkar's portrayal of both the mother and mother-in-law of Ann. And even Mohini is at first going to live similar kind of fate.

Thus, Nimbkar through the portrayal of Ravi and Ravi's mother convincingly delineates the politics of domesticity which patriarchal value system plays.

Ann, against this background, presents the conflicts, alienation, isolation and suffering experienced by women living in the traditional set up. But she does not succumb to the pressures of the domestic conflicts. She rejects the traditional norms and values and rebels against the processes of women's subordination in the society. In this, she is unlike the traditional heroines who sacrifice their lives in

order to keep the marriage institution intact. Through Ann, Nimbkar seems to propose a role model, who through her behaviour, seems to represent the qualities that a woman should have as a human being, as a 'subject', not as the 'other' of man. Generally, such women 'feminists' are called 'house-breakers', 'evil', who are interested in breaking marriages. Such processes of distortion of women who appear to challenge patriarchy are always seem to be operative in the society. Nimbkar, through Ann, seems to create a very positive image of a woman who dares to challenge patriarchy and offers an alternative system of life. Ann is, as a critic comments, "liberated, loving, incredibly considerate and full of confidence, a strong woman who does not feel helpless after Ravi's leaving".²

This strength of her character is born out of the values of equality and humanness that she believes in. She is a woman who refuses to live the life of a meek housewife. She does not even break the marriage herself. It is Ravi who does it. She gives him a chance to the last. But he cannot bear the pressure and escapes. This represents the inevitable collapse of the patriarchal value system. Ann's decision to live alone, but not friendless, without getting married, marks the distinctive vision of a new woman as envisaged by Nimbkar. Ann, in this sense, is a role model. She is a good human being. Individualism, respect for others, a sense of commitment to other human beings in and out of the family, a sense of social responsibility, understanding, sympathy are the qualities she embodies. In this, she is indeed quite different from traditional women. She is not a 'super-woman'. She is a woman of flesh and blood. She also has her weak moments, moments of doubt, nervousness, helplessness and depression but she does not

remain a perpetual victim to these. She gets over her depression and manages to think in a rational, self-respecting way. She does not escape from marriage. She sticks to her own ground and refuses to make insulting compromises. Her decision to stay alone symbolises her deep awareness of the marriage system in patriarchy. She extends the same warmth and understanding to others, especially other women in her family, and also to her husband's mistress. It is interesting to note the advice given by Sage Kanva to Shakuntala, as stated at the beginning of this Dissertation. Shakuntala was told to tolerate the co-wives or the sexual escapades of the husband, which is exactly what Ravi expects Ann to do. But she refuses to humiliate herself for her husband. Yet, she is very friendly with Ravi's mistress Usha. She feels affection for her and sympathises with her as an oppressed, exploited human-being. This is very unusual from the traditional perspective.

For all these reasons, Ann appears to be a role model of the new woman.

Thus, the study tries to present an analysis of *Come Rain* as a critique of patriarchy and as a presentation of a feminist role model.

It is also necessary to comment on Nimbkar's narrative technique in the novel. The characters in the novel are types who represent:

- i. traditional patriarchal values,
- ii. alternative ideologies,
- iii. people caught in the transition from old to new systems.

Ravi, his mother, father, Ravi's friends represent the first type. Ann,

Mr. Pathak represent the second type. Mohini, Usha, Shri represent the third type.

The novel has a very well organized structure, which presents the linear view of development in Ann's life. Nimbkar seems to propose that the traditional family set up, based on acquisition of wealth, ownership, possession, domination and subordination, inequality between sexes, and exploitation will not exist in future. It will disintegrate but what alternative structure will take its place is not proposed by Nimbkar and that is why she does not have a 'fairy tale' solution. Yet, there is an unmistakable optimism in the novel.

Her language is simple, yet intense and graphically charts the vicissitudes in Ann's life.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I am only too keenly aware that the study suffers from several limitations. I have not been able to analyse all the aspects of the novel with equal emphasis, for example, I have not been able to study in depth all the narrative techniques Nimbkar uses to analyse patriarchy. Similarly, more emphasis on the language used by Nimbkar as a woman writer might have yielded significant insights. Thirdly, it would have been interesting to compare the female protagonists in Jai Nimbkar's other novels. I also have not been able to examine in details how critics have reacted to Nimbkar's other works. I am aware of these, yet because of the limitations of time and space, I have not been able to deal with all these aspects.

Because of short time at my disposal, I have not been able to compare Nimbkar's views revealed through the personal interview I have had with her, with my analysis of *Come Rain*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My study has also made me aware of the following areas for further research. It would be interesting to study the following areas:

- i. Comparative study of Jai Nimbkar's novels from a feminist perspective;
- ii. Comparative study of Indian English women writers to obtain insights about the type of consciousness reflected in their works;
- iii. Comparative study of perception of the process of gender construction in the novels of men and women writers;
- iv. Changing nature of feminist consciousness in Indian women writers.

REFERENCES

1. Muktali. Laxmi, quoted in: Dhavan, R.K. and Veena Noble Das, *Fiction of the 90's*, Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1994, p.39.
2. Book Review: "The Women Novelists in Indo-Anglian Novel", in: *The Indian P.E.N.*, Oct-Dec., 1995.