

CHAPTER IV

TOWARDS THE NEW VISION

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In this Chapter, I would like to examine the alternative value structure Jai Nimbkar proposes through the portrayal of Ann's relations with other men and women around her. It shows how Ann's feminist ideology helps her to become a support to other men and women around her.

ANN'S RELATIONS WITH HER SISTER-IN-LAW, MOHINI

In Ann, we have a truly mature heroine. She easily forgets Mohini's ill-treatment of her and in spite of opposition, she takes initiative in Mohini's uniting with Prem. Ann does not totally reject family. It is not she who breaks the family. On the contrary, she tries to keep and develop human relations within the family members. Individual freedom, sense of responsibility towards others, love and companionship are the qualities Ann embodies here. Ann wants to live as a family member. As she has married Ravi and as one of the members of the family, she has the right

to relate with the matter that concerns the family. When her interference with Mohini's marriage was criticized and thought inexcusable by her father-in-law, she answers, "You can tell your father that a wife is a human being, not a thing to be controlled and ordered about. And I shall damn well poke my nose into Mohini's affair, with her permission (p.105). Ann takes this stand because she has the urge to struggle against injustice and violence in the family.

Mohini is a shy girl, has not thought about her future when she meets Ann for the first time. Marriage is the big question in her life, like other girls in Indian society. We can see that Ann welcomes Mohini, though Mohini has not treated her well. The change in Mohini from a shy girl to a woman in just a short period is effected by Ann's influence on her. Numbkar has shown that her face has become more open, more receptive, a woman's face.

Ann asserts Mohini's right to take her own decision. It seems to Ann that a girl herself should have the choice to do what she wants to do, if she takes the responsibility for her own life. She would not then blame anyone else. According to Ann, what is important is the ability to take responsibility for her own life. This is her attitude towards Mohini. She argues with Ravi to assert Mohini's right. She tells him, "You've got to treat her like an adult, trust her judgment" (p.99). This is her answer to the typical male approach of treating a woman as a child.

Mohini is a typical Indian girl initially. There is an impact of old customs and beliefs on her. It is revealed through her conversation with Ann. She says, "If a girl

is seen around with a man and then does not marry him. her reputation is ruined forever" (p.100). We find Mohini's thoughts are conditioned by the patriarchal perceptions.

Jai Nimbkar has succeeded in showing the influence of patriarchy on women through her portrayal of these women. We find Gogte family is too rigid and traditional. Mohini has to cut herself away from her family. No one in her family attends her marriage, except Ann, because she has married against their wishes. We find that Jai Nimbkar has depicted the typical joint family in Indian society. Though Mohini's in-laws give consent to their marriage. Mohini has to suffer. She is living in her husband's family, which is a joint family and she finds that she has no privacy there. The guests treat her like a child, not like an adult who is able to decide what is good for her. They shower her with praise and gifts as long as she remains obedient (p.124). It shows that it is taken for granted that a wife should be obedient. Once a girl is labelled as a daughter-in-law, she is supposed to behave like one irrespective of her status, her education and her feelings. The novelist shows how the typical woman in a patriarchal set up changes towards self-realization when she is given a support. Here, Ann with her new ideas represents that support. Mohini struggles against the traditions of her in-laws' family. Because of the family's insistence on conforming to silly customs, she moves out of the family and starts living in a separate place.

Everytime Ann tries to improve the relations between Mohini and her family inspite of every's opposition in her in-laws family. Ann's position in the family has

been made worse because of the role she has played in Mohini's marriage.

ANN'S RELATIONS WITH USHA

Another important woman Ann supports is Usha. Usha is a widow. She lives with her in-laws. She thinks that her in-laws are making her life difficult. Usha is the one who helps Ann in making the adjustment in her own house. She has given guidance to Ann about shopping and everything.

Ravi has a pre-marital affair with Usha. Ann knows about it. But this does not affect her relations with Usha. Ann accepts his pre-marital affair. Here Ann's attitude is totally different from the established norms in the Indian society. She is free of jealousy and possession. She looks at this relation with a mature and yet human detachment.

Gradually Usha becomes a frequent visitor to Ann's house. Ann and Usha fall into a relationship of easy friendliness. She helps Ann to get a job in a school. Her company gives Ann a feeling of security and pleasure. Nimbkar seems to suggest here that there can exist a bond of true affection among women, probably because of the suffering they undergo in families and the society outside. Ravi objects over Ann's relation with Usha. But Ann, in spite of knowing Ravi's short love affair with Usha even after marriage, tries to maintain good relations with Usha. She goes to the extent of arranging a party for Usha and Arun's marriage. When Usha comes to Ann to apologise, Ann says, "I am not one of those who enjoy breaking up other people's marriages" (p.245). This shows Ann's broad

mindedness and her mature acceptance of Ravi's behaviour in order to have a stable family life. Ann is not a "marriage-breaker", though propaganda against feminists makes them out to be so. Through Ann, Nimbkar offers a very positive and constructive image of a feminist heroine. Ann's relations with other men also provide us with a testing ground for such a role model.

ANN'S RELATIONS WITH MR.PATHAK

Mr.Pathak is an excellent farmer and is trying new crops and new techniques. Ann establishes a friendship with Mr.Pathak. Mr.Pathak has chosen to live in village and do farming. This impresses Ann. Ravi feels annoyed because he is jealous that Ann has been attracted by his charm. Mr.Pathak is an educated man but he has preferred to live in a village and to be content with what he has in contrast with Ravi. Ravi thinks that Mr.Pathak might find it difficult to live in the cities, because of the tough competition. So he lives in a village. Ann is bewildered by Ravi's attitude. She thinks, "Is he jealous because she has given unthinking praise to a stranger" (p.113).

According to Mr.Pathak, there are many opportunities in India for a man to do something independently. Ann finds that Ravi is not satisfied with his job in India. There are differences in attitudes of both the men. Mr.Pathak looks at life around him in more human, responsible way. He is not an escapist like Ravi, who is concerned only with his career, money, status and prestige. In a sense, Mr.Pathak is more like Ann and they have several things in common, including the attitude towards babies. Ravi never plays with Rahul. He also minds it when Rahul touches

him with grubby hands or tries to climb all over him, while dusty or dirty from playing in the garden. This expresses Ravi's attitude to the child. But Mr. Pathak says, "It's such a nice feeling, holding a small baby" (p.214). Perhaps these differences attract Ann to Mr. Pathak.

Mr. Pathak is not like a traditional man. He is sensitive enough to understand Ann's feelings. He seems to be full of contradictions to Ravi. Ann always holds discussion on different topics with Mr. Pathak, like farming, culture, music, etc. But all these things irritate Ravi. Ann's going out with Mr. Pathak makes him angry because it is against the patriarchal norms and customs. Ann invites Mr. Pathak for dinner without Ravi's consent. It outrages Ravi. This incident highlights the subordinate status of wife where the wife has to seek permission for everything.

Ann is hungry for intellectual conversation and Ravi is not interested in it. So when Shri and Mr. Pathak come into the picture, she becomes friendly with them. In her discussion with Mr. Pathak on marriage institution, she observes that Mr. Pathak hates weddings. He thinks people make an unnecessary amount of fuss about it. According to him, marriage ought to be a simple and routine business (p.208). He does not want to marry because he does not want to end up with a wife who would be content with filling the traditional role. Like Ravi, he does not believe in the conventional ideas of marriage. But he seems to be a very honest man in contrast with Ravi, who is a selfish hypocrite. Jai Nimbkar creates the character of Mr. Pathak as a contrast to Ravi. Mr. Pathak also represents an alternative consciousness. And the interesting question is, should Ann marry him?

Nimbkar does not accept the easy romantic way out by allowing Ann to marry Mr.Pathak, and rejects the possibility of a "and they lived happily ever-after" ending. Ann's decision not to marry him is structurally quite important for this reason.

Ann learns about Ravi's decision to settle in America from Mr.Pathak. Mr.Pathak asks Ann about her decision. On this, Ann tells that she has got used to living in India. She feels that she has made a certain investment in her life in India. She has never thought in terms of going back (p.258). He is trying to convey his feelings indirectly at first.

It is important to examine Ann's answer to Mr.Pathak's proposal. Ann thinks that it is not necessary that every friendship must turn into a marriage. So she maintains her friendly relations with Mr.Pathak, though she wonders about what kind of a husband he would be like and what would be his reaction over the things. She thinks that she would feel quite comfortable with a man like him.

Finally, when Mr.Pathak thinks that Ann would be left alone after Ravi's going to America, he expresses his wish, "I have felt for a long time that you are the sort of woman with whom I can have the kind of relationship I expect in marriage. I have never expressed my feelings, not because I was a coward or didn't want to commit myself but because I felt it would have been unfair to Ravi" (pp.259-60). According to him, all marriages have their storms and manage to weather.

Ann likes Mr.Pathak. She admires many of his qualities, she also feels a

certain amount of attraction for him. Perhaps their relationship would have matured into something significant. Yet, Nimbkar does not provide Ann with the solution of marriage. This is what happens with Shri as well.

ANN'S RELATIONS WITH SHRI

Shri is another important man in Ann's life. Ann had made friendship with Shri. He is a teacher and is a traditional man. Ann and Shri have spent many companionable hours together and she has become quite fond of him. She wants to enjoy his company, nothing more than that. But Ravi suspects that Shri has love for Ann and he always sees them with suspicious nature.

We find Ann's liberal nature while talking with Shri. Shri feels embarrassed when he comes to see Rahul for the first time. He feels it would be strange for a single man to visit a woman who has just given a birth to a baby. But Ann does not feel it strange.

Ann observes that though Shri is educated, he is not interested in his sister's education, because it is assumed that there are no jobs for an educated girl in a village. An educated girl would be frowned upon by prospective bridegrooms (p.90). This shows indifference of the Indian people towards women's education. Ann develops friendly relations with Shri. He takes her for sightseeing. But it is a friendship with Shri, not a betrayal of trust like Ravi. She is against the traditional views of seeing a man-woman's friendship. Her comment reveals it, "I don't consider myself a foreigner, but I still claim the right to behave according to the

dictates of my conscience even when that behaviour may not be socially sanctioned" (p.216). Ann seems to be rebelliously offering an alternative here.

Ann does not like Ravi's attitude towards her friendship with Shri and Mr.Pathak and his shallow thinking and lack of trust showed towards her. Thus, Jai Nimbkar presents different aspects of man-woman relationship by portraying Ann's relations with these two characters.

Ann likes Shri's company. But unlike Mr.Pathak, Shri indirectly suggests his interest in Ann. He is very shy compared to Mr.Pathak. Ann Ann talks more freely with him. Shri once asks Ann "Don't she mind his coming when Ravi is not home?" On this Ann says, "Of course not, why should I?" (p.89).

It is important to analyse the structural and thematic significance of Mr.Pathak and Shri. Nimbkar presents the two men as alterantives of Ravi. They are different from him. They could be "Mr.Right" for Ann. According to traditional literary conventions, Ann could be shown to choose the right man at the end and live happily ever after, but Nimbkar does not make use of such a device. Marriage is not the final destiny for Ann. This ending is quite different from the usual endings of traditional novels about women.

Ann's decision to walk out of the marriage and live indepednently without getting married again is not really unexpected. The alternative of remaining unmarried or to break the marriage is not acceptable in traditional society as it

might provoke negative sanction. But she rejects the traditional norms and decides to stay with her son, Rahul, alone. It is significant that she does not reject motherhood, though she is wary of being a wife again.

Thus, Jai Nimbkar presents a new brand of heroine who has the ability to take decisions in her life rationally. She has self-respect and ability to react maturely in difficult situations. Ann's opinions while dealing with various situations shows her ability as a mature heroine of Jai Nimbkar. She goes through the severe mental conflicts created by her familial status and roles she has to play. She has to struggle for her own identity. The title *Come Rain* seems to be apt because 'Rain' means regeneration and there is regeneration of a new kind of image of woman in the novel.

This ending which symbolises the opening up of a new kind of life for Ann has evoked several interesting reactions. One critic comments, "Through such an ending, the writer probably intends to suggest that in future, men and women might transcend national boundaries and create a 'place' suited to their individual development".¹ Though such an ending, Nimbkar is trying to create a vision of society based on individualism, self-respect, considerations for others in which human beings, both men and women are related to each other, through truly human love and understanding.

REFERENCES

1. Book Review: "The Women Novelists in Indo-Anglian Novel", in:
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