

FEMALE EXISTENTIAL PREDICAMENT IN JAI NIMBKAR'S NOVEL COME RAIN

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Received 07 July 2025
Accepted 08 August 2025
Published 01 October 2025

DOI
[10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i9.2025.6372](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i9.2025.6372)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The female existential predicament symbolizes and has reference to the unique challenges and struggles women face in defining their existence and purposes within patriarchal societies. These challenges have their roots in societal expectations, bias discrimination of gender and struggle to establish self. The galaxy of women writers has been dealing with feminine issues which were not given attention to in the male dominated society. The woman was considered not as a human being but a slave to do the household things and a child producing machine. Her individuality, necessities, likings attitudes were not given any importance, she was treated as if she did not exist. The female self was obliterated and her identity reconstructed to fit and support masculine fantasy framework.

Keywords: Equanimity, Existentialism, Feminist, Predicament Resilience, Self-Perpetuation

1. INTRODUCTION

Jai Nimbkar is a well-known writer who mainly writes in two languages Marathi and English. The tendency to revolt against the established values was in her blood and this tendency is seen in her works which includes, *Come Rain* (1993), *Temporary Answers* (2004), *A Joint Venture* (1998), *The Lotus Leaves* and other *Stories* and *The Phantom Bird* and other *Stories* (1993).

From the beginning woman has been struggling for her existence, this assertion has a long historical reality that woman faces significantly. The nature of oppressions and predicament may not necessarily be the same degree everywhere. Stereotyping based on a person's sex or gender, violence against woman inside and outside the threshold, depriving of decision-making power, minimum access to healthcare and education and less economical opportunities have greatly affected on women's lives across the globe. The resilience of women against these forces is complex and has personal political and societal dimensions. The sexism and the

agony of being deprived everywhere are the few reasons for overwhelming depression of women.

All above factors leading to the lagging behind of woman have been discussed thoroughly by French writer, Simone de Beauvoir, a well-known existentialist, philosopher, writer, social theorist and feminist activist. She has greatly influenced feminist existentialism and feminist theory. Her book *The Second Sex* is a study of women's social situation and historical predicaments.

Simone de Beauvoir said,

"...her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly." (*The Second Sex*, p.597)

The detriments, constraints and stumbling blocks purposefully placed in her way, inflicted oppressions to impede her way leading to progress.

Simone de Beauvoir adds,

"One is not born woman, but rather becomes a woman" (*The Second Sex*, p.283)

This asserts that the qualities and roles society attributes with womanhood are not inherent biological traits but are developed through social and cultural conditions. Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* illustrates the pain and sorrow inflicted by puritan society on Hester Prynne for being conceived out of wedlock. She was ordered to wear dress having "A" capital written on it. It symbolized that Hester Prynne committed adultery and was being punished for her sin. They were painted as evil and often tainted as 'misfit' in the male dominated society.

Jai Nimbkar has also described the predicament of her women protagonist in her novel *Come Rain*. In the novel, we come across various characters who are meek, humble, impaired and ready to suffer deferentially but Ann, even though belonged to different nation tries to overcome the negation upheld by Ravi's family members. In the beginning all the family members tried their level best to ignore her, for them she did not exist at all. They communicated with her only when absolutely necessary and in the minimum possible words. She thought it strange that they had so little curiosity about her life before marriage, her country, her family life. But she accepted it with equanimity. She tried to talk to Mohini, Ravi's sister but she talked with no interest. Jai Nimbkar has pointed out that outwardly smooth relationships apparently existed in a delicate balance which could be upset by the wrong word or gesture. Ravi wanted to marry Usha who was his college mate but his parents were against their marriage, Ravi being practical, knew that his parents would throw him out of the house, broke up his relationship with Usha.

Ann told her:

"I must say you accept life with equanimity; I would never have forgiven him." (ibid p.55)

The narrative of Usha shows her predicament sorrow suffering of being jilted by someone whom she loved from the bottom of her heart. She was very bitter at the time. She made scenes, hurled accusations at Ravi. She suffered a lot but after some time realized that in the given circumstances he had no alternative. She looked at this event from a positive point of view, shows that she did not want to be shadowed by other individual but faced the challenges underwent tribulations felt loneliness and alienation and proved her existence to others. She also pointed out that even if he had been heroic enough to marry her, they would probably have struggled along and fought with each other and had miserable life. She also felt very happy to see Ravi got married to right girl.

“I think you are right for Ravi. He needs a strong wife.” (ibid p.55)

Mrs. Palmer also struggled for her existence, she was very protective parent and her world include her husband and her children, she never thought of changing the world, she was happy with her little world. During the period of bringing up the children, Mrs. Palmer hardly realized that they were drifting apart. But as time passed the children grew up and left the house this created loneliness emptiness in her life, affected on her health. She began to have hot flushes and sudden breathlessness and irregular periods. Childless and husbandless, she felt that all her functions as a woman had come to end. She alternated between deep depression and drank excessively. As Ann grew up Mrs. Palmer became more demanding. she kept herself awake nights thinking of Ann lying dead in some foreign land, with nobody to identify her or give her a burial. This fear is the outcome of her love for Ann. Another woman who struggled for her survival is Usha Kanetkar. She married to an army officer named Arvind who died in an air crash while dropping supplies in a part of Assam which had been cut off by the floods. After the death of Arvind life became a challenge, it was intensified with the birth of daughter Rasika. Usha was pursuing her Ph.D. for obtaining better prospects. Once she got job her situation would change, her in-laws were selfish, after the death of Arvind, took all insured amount which was supposed to be given to the spouse. Usha Kanetkar had to suffer a lot; her in-laws always kept a watch on her. She tolerated everything till she achieved her goal.

The protagonists of Jai Nimbkar are modern women who know their individual and intellectual value. ‘Women are inferior to men’ is a bias narrative of patriarchal society reflecting explicit preconceived opinion of so called orthodox and conservative mindsets who adheres trailblazers who uphold gender equality.

The narrative of Vineeta, the protagonist of Temporary Answers shows the appropriacy of the above statement.

Vineeta said,

“I would have laughed if someone had made a barefaced statement that women are inferior to men.” (Temporary Answers, p.26)

Thus, the novel is about the predicaments and self-perpetuation of female characters who trod on the path of strife to retain their existence in patriarchal society. They endeavor for their rightful social inclusion in the patriarchal world where men are traditionally viewed as the breadwinners and women are seen as a homemaker. The novel is an expedition of womanhood for emancipation, encompassing their empowerment and to be accepted. It is a journey between the expectation and reality and hope of coming rain, in the life of characters who are barren in their relationships. Rain is referred to as a blessing after a draught, symbol of good fortune after a drought, bringing good luck and purging troubles. It is also considered as a life-giving force, symbol of fertility and abundance which is an eminent driving force in personal relationships.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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