From the beginning up to the present days, woman has always been regarded as being subordinate to man. Of course, now, the structures of the society and the ways of women’s subordination have changed due to different political and social ideologies. Yet, atrocities currently committed against women have shaken the world and have made the society to ponder and reflect on the reasons for this and on the remedy. The society has also begun to consider more seriously about the status and security of women inside as well as outside the home. This social concern has, ultimately, increased the area of research for the scholars. Women since ages have been scorned and humiliated by the self-centered patriarchal society. Women now want to come out of their so-called protective walls and stand firm to get their rightful position in the society. And some of them have turned rebellious, in their fight, against male atrocity. As our country India is independent and democratic, women, as equal citizens, deserve equal rights. Unfortunately, our country has, of late, has got a bad name as it is, according to some authentic survey, the fourth most dangerous country for women in the world. So, it is the duty of every Indian to think about the topic of ‘women’s quest for self identity’ and to try to find a solution to this problem so that woman who is mother (Janani) of humanity, should be protected and respected. Hence this thesis is an attempt to focus on ‘woman’s quest for self identity’ with reference to Jai Nimbkar’s trilogy of novels.

Now there is a realization in our society that this marginalization of women, besides being a great injustice, cuts at the every roots of democratic life itself. So, the protest of women against this injustice has resulted in the formation of various women’s liberation movements and now there is also a well articulated ideology for this liberation which takes the name of ‘feminism’. Different scholars give different ideas about the meaning and definition of ‘feminism’. In fact this concept has come into existence as a result of the realization, by women themselves, about their power and status and it has made the society to revise the norms which, so far, have considered women as only the ‘second sex’. Literature in its different forms has always tried its best to show the reality of the contemporary society. After the emergence of the English language in India, Indian English writers have begun to articulate women’s aspirations for equality as well as respect in the society. Women novelists have achieved greater success than man, by bringing a greater urgency to this problem of women’s emancipation by their imaginative recreation of it in their fiction which has now received world wide recognition. Among them, Jai Nimbkar (b.1932) is a prominent feminist writer, who through her three novels has tried to depict almost every aspect of the social problem. Through her novels, i.e. ‘Temporary Answers’ (1947), ‘A Joint Venture’ (1988) and ‘Come Rain’ (1993),
she has succeeded to depict her deep social concern over the gender-bias shown by the patriarchy. Her women protagonists are victims of patriarchy but they are intelligent enough to analyse their problems critically and brave enough to fight against all evils, asserting their individuality and identity, without, however, denying the other identity of man. Marriage, they decide at last, is merely a temporary answer for their loneliness, if there is no love among the two partners. Woman is a person and, as a woman, she always needs a man as her companion for life but, as a person, she deserves her freedom and individuality.

In Indian mythology woman is designated as ‘bamanga’, means the left side of the ‘Atmatatwa’. If we go deep into the historical stories, then we can realize that women were honoured in ancient India. But later when self centered men took control of religion and they have misinterpreted religious myths to suit their convenience and have turned religious norms and traditions against women. But social reformers, with genuine concern in their hearts for women’s walefare, tried to reform society and improve the position of woman. In this way, through their efforts society tried to get rid of many social evils that harmed women greatly. However, it is difficult to root out entirely the entrenched social traditions. The Government can’t interfere in the religious and personal laws; so this is the main draw-back to give total freedom to Indian women. Yet, society should not forget that woman is the creator of life as well as destroyer of life too. As the saying is: “If the first woman ever made was strong enough to turn the world upright down all alone, women together ought to be able turn it right side up again”. So, if all women unite, they can solve this great problem too.

The gradual impact of social reformation, of Gandhian ideology and of the spread of English education, has hastened the change in the set patterns of traditions in India. Women writers like Kamala Das, Sarojini Naidu, Anita Dasai, Shashi Deshpande, Jai Nimbkar, Kamala Markanday, Githa Harihara, Nayantra Sahgal, Bharti Mukherjee, Shobha De, Arundhati roy, Anita Manjoshi, Rama Mehta etc. have portrayed their women characters with courage to fight for their emancipation and empowerment. Almost every scholar and writer has accepted the feminist theory against the oppression of women and have used it as a given and as a reference point in their application to literature. Without any hesitation we can say that Indian English feminist writers have created a new dimension for Indian English fiction. They have broken a new path to reconstruct the ‘new woman, who is liberated, intelligent and strong enough to perform all that man can do.

This thesis is the result of research and inter-textual study of all three novels of Jai Nimbkar, on the theme “quest for self identity of woman”. Not only the theme but also the author’s style of portraying Indian women in these novels is also important. She has also very successfully depicted social traditions that irritate the peace and happiness of the newly married bride when she comes to her husband’s house. Some of the women characters in the
novels are widows, who have to suffer different kinds of social inhibitions against them and become afraid to remarry. Some times they dare to break all the social taboos. In her novel ‘Temporary Answers’ the protagonist Vineeta is a widow in the beginning of the story. She cannot avoid the socio-cultural milieu and she tries to react against it. Nimbkar has thematically proved the title of the novel to be appropriate as here Vineeta feels that marriage is only a temporary answer for her loneliness. She has the option of two male partners to marry again. But she goes on analysing her own previous married relationship and also other married relationships that she sees around her and ultimately concludes that marriage is merely a temporary answer, if there is no love and respect between the two partners. Jai Nimbkar neatly depicts the vicissitudes in the relationships in Vineeta’s personal, domestic and professional hurdles of life. She finds a new identity for herself in the society as well as in her husband’s life. In a different way Jai Nimbkar portrays her woman protagonist Jyoti in her second novel ‘A Joint Venture’, who comes face to face with stress and strain in her married life as her husband is the dominating partner. As a result she first decides to leave her husband to live an independent life. But ultimately she finds her real feminine identity as mother protector of her weak and vulnerable husband and decides to continue her life with her husband. After suffering for a long period of Thirty years of her life, she realizes that the life she has been living still now was not actually her own way of life but her husband’s. She feels alienated in her own home becoming a victim of loneliness and psychological emptiness. She feels her marriage is a joint venture where her husband is the active, decisive partner and she herself is a recessive, silent partner. But at the end of the novel, finding her husband in a vulnerable situation, she suddenly changes herself from a submissive wife into a protective wife who supports her husband in all

Nimbkar, in her third novel, ‘Come Rain’, works out a striking way to portray her woman protagonist Ann, an American lady who comes to India after her marriage with an Indian student. Here she comes face to face with an intense cultural conflict, i.e. an experience of American diasphora, unlike the experience of Indian diasphora such as in Anita Desai’s novels. But here Ann’s quest is to get her indentity not as an outsider but as a typical Indian woman. At first she faces her dominating mother-in-law who is hostile to her. Then she tolerates the rendezvous of her husband with one of his college friends, yet she tries to maintain her personality and her married life but her husband’s stupid decision to go back to U.S.A. breaks all her faith in him but, at last she stays back in India with her son for company. Her husband’s departure removes all the hurdles in her free and independent life and henceforth she decides to tour around India, enjoying all its delights. Women have always been victims of patriarchy and have suffered; but, Jai Nimbkar’s women protagonists, inspite of their long suffering, never allow themselves to be victims of depression or of negativity. On the contrary they always remain positive about life and try to pattern their life as they wish it to be, not under the constraints of male patriarchy or rigid social traditions.
In the Indian tradition, marriage is a sacred union between the male and the female, which unites them spiritually as well as emotionally. Biological dicotomization is there in all forms of life and it is a natural law for male and female elements to unite for the propagation of life. In lower forms of life, this union is temporary and casual. But as the human beings belong to higher organism, so they follow certain rules and regulations which become social traditions and norms. This includes woman as the weaker sex and man as the stronger sex. Hence the concept of marriage in the Indian context is full of paradoxes. Here, the aim of this research is to highlight Indian traditions of marriage and its rigid norms which make a new bride to suffer. Jai Nimbkar also very carefully depicts traditions and customs of Indian marriage system which often become weapons to attack women’s liberation itself. So marriage often stands for the subversion and social obliteration of women. The author here also highlights the question of widow remarriage, which creates an ambivalent attitude in the protagonist Vineeta in ‘Temporary Answers’. She feels that by marrying again her female identity may be in a stake. Jyoti, in ‘A Joint Venture’, is a married woman, who is denied her identity by her husband, in the beginning, but later realizes her identity. For thirty long years she worked as a sleeping partner in her husband’s seed business which he managed by himself and in the game she never had any chance to enjoy the natural pleasure of even motherhood. Her children got themselves far from parents, as her husband was a dominating person who never cared for her feelings or decisions and now she is alone. So marriage now seems to be a frustrating venture for her. But at last she returns to her husband to support him in his bad conditions. The Indian woman is long suffering but she can never tolerate to her husband’s lack of respect. So this saga of a ‘marriage’ is very carefully crafted by Mrs. Nimbkar who, in fact, uses different words for marriage such as ‘temporary answer’, ‘joint venture’, ‘tricky game’ and ‘weapon against women’s liberation’ etc. Anyway, the author is not directly against the system of marriage but she wants to depict that there should be love and mutual respect in between the couple, and then only it will fulfill all meanings of marriage.

India’s ful-fledged age old traditions are rooted in the ‘sastras’ and the ‘Puranas’. They affirm that man and woman originated from the body of Lord Prajapati or Brahma. Indian mythology attributed divinity to all the heroes and women of great strength of character and compassion for humanity. Sita, Parvati, Draupadi, Ahalya and Sakuntala are all symbols of feminist assertion for modern writers. But, in a wide literal sense, we can say that through these role models, knowledge is imparted into the soul of the citizens, purifying their hearts. Anyway, without any hesitation we can say Indian writers have broken away from the traditional presentation of these Goddesses as women who unquestioningly obeyed their husbands. The main intention of the feminist writers is that women should be heard. So, they are trying to give voice to their suffering. Feminist novelists, being also active social reformists, uphold the cause of womanhood in their writings. Indian English literature is on a long journey to achieve its glory and grandeur. In this journey some writers like Sri Aurovindo, Kirtibas Ojha,
and Rabindranath Tagore portrayed women in a mythological and spiritual way. Some writers portrayed women no more as Goddess or as automaton. Some depict their women characters as anti-patriarchal and some writers even oppose the three ‘M’s i.e. marriage, motherhood and monotony.

Kamala Das’s women lord over the men, they also show the world where man is manipulating, commanding as well as exploiting woman. So she shows her bitterness for the male society through her poems. ‘The Sunshine Cat’ is one such poem where she expresses the betrayal of love and physical exploitation experienced by the woman. Ravindonath Tagore occupies a frontal position in the galaxy of humanistic writers. He lived during a crucial period of social and political transformation, so reflecting images of different literary movements can be seen in his literary works. ‘Mayar Khela’ is one of his plays, which expresses much feeling and insight into feminine assertion. Early Indian fiction, both pre and post independent era, was characterized by social realism. It is mostly the contribution of the ‘Big Three’ i.e. Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan and Mulkraj Anand. They have depicted contemporary Indian social conditions, and the social ethos which is deeply rooted in traditions and conventions. Kamala Markandaya has made her mark, not only through her feminine sensibility but also through her polished literary style.

Conforming to the broad parameters of Indo-Anglian tradition of different psychological novels, Anita Desai is a well known novelist who portrays the theme of ‘quest for self identity’ by women characters. Maya in her novel, ‘Cry The Peacock’ has irresistible thirst for self assertion. But Shashi Deshpande sustains her achievement by clearly portraying middle-class, educated, modern women who suffer from male chauvinism. Her novel ‘Dark Holds No Terror’ uncovers the hollowness in the life of modern educated women. Manju Kapoor’s heroine, Virmati, in the novel ‘Difficult Daughter’, seeks for her identity in human relationship. Githa Harharan succeeds in rewriting the feminist perspective of myths. But some modern women writers like Nayantra Sahgal, Shobha De, and Arundhati Roy portray rebellious women who can break all the age old traditions. They can do every thing for their personal fulfillment as human beings. While Saroj, in Nayantra Sahgal’s novel, ‘Storm in Chandigarh’, feces the brutal behavior of her husband; then she gets back her self identity by leaving her husband. Karuna, in shabha De’s novel, ‘Socialite Evening’, craves for the extravagant life of the rich, elite society. Mrs. De is often criticized by the readers as a vulgar writer as she very openly sketches the untold secrets of man-women relationship. Her women protagonists never believe in the traditional submissive role; in fact she portrays the unseen reality of the modern high-class society. So, with the passing of ages, the status of women and their way of thinking has changed them into ‘new women’. And true fiction is always a reflection of social realities and its influence on human life. Hence, the new generation writers portray their women characters in different ways as per the social conditions.
So our research is a humble attempt to portray women’s assertion of identity in Jai Nimbkar’s novels. For that purpose we have made an intense study of the three novels and have tried to expose and delineate how in different ways the women protagonists assert their identity. They are all modern young women, conscious of their worth as individuals, intelligent to analyse all life’s situations in their full context and really brave to face all hurdles in their path of self assertion. We have also made a study of the marriage relations in these three novels which is always the background or the context in which feminine assertion takes place. In general the attitude of all the protagonists of these novels is that marriage is not a final end in itself. If it goes well, fine; otherwise you live your own independent lives without associating with the males. In this thesis we have also made a study of the feminist movement and the feminist philosophy which drives it; we see these novels as well as those novels of other feminist writers as having been written under the inspiration of this philosophy.