Chapter Four
“Try and Try Till You Succeed”
A Study of ‘Aditi Stories’- Aditi Adventures
I, II and III
Aditi Adventures I- Unlikely Friends

Apart from being a poet, a fabulist and a novelist, Suniti Namjoshi has experimented with Children’s Literature as well. As a feminist, she is dissatisfied with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales, the sexist social values and institutions it supports. Old fairy tales are based upon the fixed stereotypical notions of sex, gender roles and socialization thus, like other feminist writers of modern fairy tales such as- Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Anne Sexton, Joanna Russ, Olga Broumas, she too applies feminist perspectives to develop a new vision of the world in the form of modern fairy tales. She has not only re-written the old fairy tales but has also invented her own to serve the cause of feminism. Anne Susan Koshy in her work, The Short Fiction of Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi: A Study in Feminism and Fairy Tales, remarks:

The treatment of fairy tales in literature has significant implications for feminist theory and literary criticism as they provide the expressions of that which is lacking in actual life and highlight the possibilities of alternatives... It is true that they do entertain children and adults, but they also seriously tell us about the world we live in. (Koshy 74)

Fairy tales mostly appeal to children, but they spellbind adults as well. It is this mesmerizing effect that captures the minds of both and colonizes them. Writers of feminist fairy tales view the classical fairy tales as political as they are based on the structure of male domination and female subordination, and thus, invent their own versions to deconstruct them. Namjoshi’s Aditi stories are original tales written for children. She dedicates these tales to her niece, Aditi and makes her the protagonist. R. Uma Maheshwari in Hindustan Times a daily newspaper has reported:

Namjoshi admittedly created Aditi for her own niece Aditi, who lives in Devon, UK. Apparently, children in a school in London were so impressed by the first Aditi book that they wished that Aditi- the book character- visits London during her adventures. (Maheshwari)

These stories are twelve in number and are compiled in a series of three with four books in one pack, entitled as Aditi Adventures I, II, III. In her first set of the series, we are introduced to four friends- Aditi, the one-eyed monkey or Monkeyjji, the ant or Siril and the elephant or the Beautiful Ele, who make friends with the two dragons- Goldie and Opal, along with the three sages. They undergo quests and voyages in
order to help the sages, and are in turn helped by them when they encounter hardships. The tales appear to be the answers to the biased patriarchal notions contained in the earlier ones. Like the other feminist writers, Namjoshi, too, liberates society from psychological, cultural, social and educational prejudices generated by them. Jack Zipes in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* says:

... out of necessity that we write our own texts to gain a sense not simply of what has happened in reality but also of what has happened on psychological, economic, cultural, and other levels to free ourselves of the dictates of other socio-historical texts that have prescribed and ordered our thinking and need to be disordered if we are to perceive for ourselves the processes that produce social structures, modes of production, and cultural artifacts. (2)

Fairy tales are considered to be the significant cultural and social influences in most children's lives. They are the engrossing stories for children that help them either to overcome their angst or make them to identify with the characters and conquer their existential dilemma. In short, it could be said that fairy tales directly affect the children's psyche. They affect the perspective of reality in permanent manner and liberate the child's imagination. Bettelheim in his essay "Bringing Order out of Chaos" writes:

Through simple and direct images the fairy story helps the child sort out of his complex and ambivalent feelings, so that these begin to fall each one into a separate place, rather than being in all one big muddle. As he listens to the fairy tale the child gets ideas about how he may create order out of chaos, which is his inner life. (74-75)

Classical fairy tales help children to acknowledge arbitrary gender roles which train young girls to become inactive, self-sacrificing and obedient, and boys to be dominant, competitive, rational and powerful. The evil step-mother and ugly step-sisters, beautiful but passive virgin, authoritative and chivalric prince, ferocious wolf and vicious monsters and dragons make their minds set for identity fixation. As far as the feminist fairy tales are concerned, they are the inversion of the old tales and are based upon the idea of identity fluidity and rationality. *Aditi Adventures I*, too, imparts the same notion and deconstructs the myths associated to cultural identity. The adventure begins with *Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey* (AOM) in which Aditi meets the other three creatures- the one-eyed monkey, the ant and the elephant, and
befriends them. The three creatures help her in finding and taming a dragon which sucks up the moisture from the kingdom of Aditi's grand parents soon after the rains. Aditi and her friends are provided with the cloak of invisibility, sword of courage and the ball of magic clay to overcome the problems. Meanwhile, they meet the Island Sage and develop acquaintance with her, and with her guidance reach the dragon, tame it and befriend it.

The second adventure, entitled Aditi and the Thames Dragon (ATD) is another enchanting tale in which the four friends are called to help the twins- Roshan and Rohit of England. They have to save their city from drowning by the fury of a river dragon. They discover, after investigation, that it is not the rage but the agony of the dragon at the root of the problem. River Thames has been polluted and poisoned and the dragon is restless and the Thames is at the risk of a flood. The children, along with the four friends and a friendly dragon from the first chronicle save the river and the river dragon. They are assisted by the mass media.

The third book of the series entitled Aditi and the Marine Sage (AMS) is a fairy tale in the contemporary mode. This adventure is on dragon back into the depths of Australian oceans on the Great Barrier Reef. The Elephant looks for her lost identity inscribed on a stone in her childhood, and the One- Eyed monkey needs therapy for her arthritic foot. The high- tech dragon spews laser beams.

The fourth and the last tale is Aditi and the Techno Sage (ATS). In this tale, the mission of the four adventurers along with the two dragons and a lion cub is to convey the Island Sage's message to her third sister, the Techno Sage, who lives on an island of Stony Lake in Canada. The shield created by the Techno Sage around her island in order to guard her from the disturbances of the outside world, is the cause of trouble that prevents them from reaching the island. During their expedition, they come across laughing loons, sulky sunfish and deadly deadheads that make the journey troublesome. The Techno- Sage is a scientist who has invented the time-stretching jewels. The extensive use of the jewels leads the sage to fall into problems which later are solved by the four friends.

However, all the four tales of the first series possess mesmerizing effect of classical tales, such as- journeys into bizarre worlds, flights on dragons, thinking and talking strange creatures, unusual places, like- the depths of oceans, Stony Lake island of Canada etc. They also possess the features of Utopian/ Dystopian tales combined with the attributes of a science fiction. Modern technology gadgets, tele-
communication, mass media, Thought Submarine, Time- Stretching Jewel and Stony Lake Silk etc. situated in London unite in the creation of a contemporary fairy tale.

Traditional tales are based upon the structure of separation of the two spheres i.e. male and female world. What is praise-worthy in males, however, is rejected in females. Power, strength, chivalry, heroism are all associated with men, whereas docility, meekness, passivity and beauty are the attributes of women. In the male-dominated discourse, being powerful is associated with being unwomanly. Thus, they serve as training manuals for girls related with virtues and goodness, and make them aware of fixed gender roles. Andrea Dworkin in *Woman Hating*, points out:

... We have not formed that ancient world- it has formed us. We ingested it as children whole, had its values and consciousness imprinted on our minds as cultural absolutes long before we were in fact men and women. We have taken the fairy tales of childhood with us into maturity, chewed but still lying in the stomach, as real identity.

(32- 33)

The modern feminist tale, *Aditi Adventures* I is inversed as the writer discards the established notions of identity and builds an androgynous culture in order to bring about a revolution that will eliminate the differences created by stereotypical gender roles. The tales describe women involved in activities that are not traditionally feminine to speed the termination of rigid fashions of socialization. Women are no longer victims or commodities but are heroines, and also the subjects. The writer wants to achieve a new social order founded on humanistic values. In all the four books of this series, we see the two genders co-existing and cooperating. Aditi, the Beautiful Ele, Monkeyji, Opal and the three sages are female, while Siril and Goldie are male. Their contribution and collaboration in each journey is equal and the readers are not concerned about their genders. Aditi is rational and intellectual, Monkeyji is wise, Siril is perfect in locating maps, while Beautiful Ele and Goldie are helpful in carrying and ferrying.

Nanjoshi disrupts the myths associated with societal norms and gender construction and aims at humanizing and equilibrating cultural value system, which has historically served predominantly male interests. She retrieves marginalized groups, such as women and animals by presenting them as heroic and central. In *Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey*, Goldie is challenged by Aditi when the former refuses to listen to their plea and flings the monkey in the air, “Suddenly the dragon lashed out
at Aditi but Aditi was too quick for it and slashed its paw.” (68) Unlike the stereotypical women characters, Aditi refused to serve the dragon as its slave, “What I want you to do,” it said to Aditi, “is to cook and clean and look after the cave. You can be my servant./ “No”, said Aditi. “That’s not why we are here. You must listen.” (AOM 64) Her animal- friends also prove to be wise and brave on different occasions.

Namjoshi also redeems the dignity of minute beings like ants, and underprivileged animals such as monkeys. They fight courageously with the three lionesses and their six cubs on their first visit to the Island Sage. Siril is quick, decisive and wise as he creates apparitions out of magic clay to stabilize situations. He creates a dragon to frighten the monkey folk at the time of their quarrel with Monkeys, “Suddenly there was a thunderous roar. A huge dragon was breathing down on all of them. Its head was higher than the highest treetops. The monkeys ran away squealing with fright.” (AOM 46) It is he who masters the plan to reach the shielded island of the Techno Sage. His tiny size, in fact, proves to be a boon for him. He is able to escape danger and can slip into forbidden places.

Traditional male discourse is based upon the aspect of power hierarchy and power imbalance in which women are subordinated by men, poor by rich, people of colour by whites, animals by human beings and so on, whereas the feminist fairy tales use power as a medium to bring about peace and understanding rather than supremacy. Aditi and her friends reject violence and seek to establish their needs in harmony with the needs of others. They make use of power provided by Aditi’s grandparents in the form of the cloak of invisibility, the sword of courage and the magic clay, in self-defense, to prevent violence or to help others. The writer invests the beasts with human qualities. Her depiction of the three animals mounting on one another in order to explore and conquer the world symbolizes solidarity, rather than power hierarchy, “And so the three of them set off, the monkey on the elephant, the ant on the monkey, and the noon day sun shining on all three.” (AOM 7)

The four friends love and help each other. Their integrity and unity makes the impossible possible. Aditi is helped by all of them to tame the moisture sucking dragon. When Siril goes missing on the landing of the two dragons, they are besieged with anxiety. After they find her they attach a device upon her to know her whereabouts:

This must never happen again they all vowed, and the very next day with the help of Aditi’s grand parents they equipped the ant with an
emitter beacon. A microscopic chip was embedded in one of the ant's legs and Aditi was given a little gadget to carry about with her. If the ant ever got lost again, the gadget would pick up the little beeps the chip emitted. (AMS 18)

They suspect other monkeys behind this mischief. The One-Eyed monkey fiercely opposes her own kinsfolk and says, "The ant is my friend. He was sleeping peacefully in his match box last night beside his clay. When we woke up this morning, he and the match box had both disappeared... we want our friend back." (AOM 41)

Similarly, the Beautiful Ele and Monkeyji are also abetted by the other friends in locating the former's name and the latter's cure. The writer denigrates the insignificance associated with tiny beings such as ants and emphasizes the significance of the bond of friendship. Namjoshi rejects the materialistic, self-centred approach of capitalism in favour of stable relationships based on principles of sharing and caring. Science and technology is given a participatory role that does not enforce inequality but promotes greater social justice.

Fairy tales are not only a means of amusement for children but serve as guides that instruct and teach them. In most of the tales there is a hidden lesson that provides morals and conveys messages to them. The characters of fairy tales act as archetypes for them, and their actions and destinies, make them understand patterns of life. Jack Zipes in his famous work Don't Bet on the Prince states:

Generations of children have read the popular fairy books, and in doing so many have absorbed far more from them than merely the outlines of the various stories. What is the precise effect that the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs has upon a child? Not only do children find out what happens to the various princes and princesses, woodcutters, witches and children of their favourite tales, but they also learn behavioral and associational patterns, value systems and how to predict the consequences of specific acts or circumstances. (187)

Early writers of fairy tales have deliberately appropriated the oral folktales and altered them into a literary discourse related to values and conducts. The objective is that children and adults would be refined according to social conventions. Emancipatory tales convey morals based upon universal ideologies, rather than from any particular social group. These messages do not allow children to categorize themselves on racist, class or gender lines, but to live as free human beings.
The first set of Aditi Adventures emphasizes friendship, unity, love, concern, determination, courage and so on. The smaller caves in the first chronicle, Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey (64) impart morality. The first cave “filled with metal, broken sword blades, old horse shoes, copper vessels, golden chains, silver chains, iron chains, innumerable nails and rusty armour” leading nowhere denotes the meaningfulness of bloodshed and violence. The second cave full of precious stones such as emeralds, pearls and diamonds imparts the same lesson, while the third cave which had an opening into the ocean, is a tortuous way, “slippery and slimy and filled with seaweed” symbolizes that struggle and hard work pave the way to success.

Sirli creates imaginary objects out of magic clay, but her wayward focus and lack of concentration cause the objects to flicker. This implies that concentration is needed for the pursuit and achievement of goals. The old shed of the football field where Aditi and her friends landed needed to be mended. Sirli provides them with tools which do not work, “Every now and then the ant’s concentration would falter and the others would find themselves grasping empty air instead of a tool, but on the whole the ant concentrated remarkably well and they were soon done.” (ATD 15)

Namjoshi also insists upon hard work. In all the four tales, she adheres to the proverb, “Try and try till you succeed”. In their mission to save River Thames, they visit the British Museum to learn about river dragons. The book on dragons was kept in a glass-topped cabinet and they were running short of time to get the permission to open it. Sirli- the ant crept in through a crack and turned the pages. For a minute creature, it was a difficult task, but his constant efforts get good results. He is determined to learn swimming as well, and with his hard work he is able to achieve success, “Sirli tried again and again and spluttered and coughed and spluttered and coughed again and again and at last he began making a little progress. In the end he managed to do six strokes... (ATS 8)

Like her earlier work Namjoshi inserts the aspect of Eco- feminism in children’s literature as well. She stresses upon a harmonious relationship with Nature. Flora- fauna and water bodies find a dignified place in her tales. Eco- feminism endows equality and equal rights to nature and human beings. The Hindu ideology of Pantheism that confers a soul to every animate or inanimate object influences her concept of Nature. She gives sensuous and intimate description of seas, trees, climates, continents, lakes and islands. This bond helps her to create a fantasy land with animals as prime characters. Apart from marginalized human beings, she
includes other oppressed subjects like animals, natural resources, and natural norms. The talking animals represent the intertextuality of Namjoshi's works. Some refer to *Aesop's Fables* while others are inspired by the *Panchatantra*. The confluence of Christianity and Hinduism can also be seen. Monkeyji in conception relates to Hanuman, the monkey-deity of *The Ramayana*. Beautiful Ele is inspired by Ganesha, the half-human, half-elephant Hindu god. The Blue Donkey relates to the Bible where it is the only animal who speaks. It was also the chosen animal of Christ to ride into Jerusalem.

Her concern for the pollution of the Thames produces a tale which she uses as a medium to create awareness of ecological destruction. 'Thames Dragon' is the offspring of the polluted Thames. The excess of litter causes the river to boil and simmer. The attempts of the twins- Roshan and Rohit to save it, shows their awareness to conserve water bodies and eco-system in order to maintain the balance of Nature. She criticizes human beings for destroying animal habitats, and appeals to them to restore the rights of the latter. These tales discuss animal and human rights and emphasize the right to freedom. The tossing of balloon fish on the sand by the fisher folk arouses the sympathy of Monkeyji and the Beautiful Ele:

> Every now and then they would pick out a fish and toss it on the sand. These fish would lie there looking very unhappy. Eventually, each one would inflate a large balloon at the base of its throat and go on lying there. The one-eyed monkey felt sorry for them. She began to pick them up and toss them into the ocean. The elephant helped her. (AOM 23)

Her anger against considering women a commodity is depicted in Aditi's comment about the dragon. When Monkeyji assumes that she was monkey-dragon, she demands the possession of Aditi as a bargain. Aditi replies indignantly, "But I can't be owned. I'm not an object." (AOM 54)

Classical fairy tales contain sexist and racist attitudes and serve a socialization process. They place great stress upon submissiveness and self-sacrifice, incarceration in homes for girls, and upon competition and accumulation of wealth for boys. They encourage children to emulate fixed gender roles and thus curtail their free development. Namjoshi's fairy tales on the other hand aim at a just society that can be gleaned from the redirectional socialization process. Her tales provide equal status to both young boys and girls without discriminating. She emphasizes equal participation
of children in every sphere of life. Like other fairy tale writers she provides equal opportunities and elevates girls to remove social biases. She defines how the messages in old tales tend to limit and restrict children rather than set them free to make their own choices. Emphasizing education for both the sexes, she presents a classroom scene of a school in England uplifting Roshan, the girl child among the twins:

Roshan and Rohit were sitting in their classroom trying to concentrate on their maths, but it was hard to do so. It was two days now since they had sent their letter. Normally, both Roshan and Rohit paid attention in class. They were twins. Roshan was older than Rohit by a full five minutes and this made her feel she ought to be more responsible...

(ATD 8)

The depiction of the one-eyed monkey as an educated being signifies that the acquisition of education is free to all, even to an unprivileged creature such as a one-eyed monkey. Siril- the ant is also crazy about reading maps and eager to learn new words.

The portrayal of city life teeming with school going children, over-crowded roads, multiple means of transportation and mass media, television, newspaper, internet and radios projects the changing conditions of the contemporary world. She highlights the transformations brought about by capitalist production, global relations and advanced technologies. The writer tries to create a familiar world with which the new generation can identify themselves. Being Utopian/ Dystopian, these tales are enriched with advanced scientific technologies that project weird gadgets such as Bathyspheres, glass-submarine, Time-stretching jewels, emitter beacons etc. However, where these electronic devices prove to be accommodating, they also have their side effects.

On their adventure to Canada, they come across the Techno Sage, a scientist, who had her memory affected by the over use of the time-stretching jewel while producing anti-gravity pads. She is disoriented and confused about the order in which things happened. Moreover, her experiments on those pads caused earth quakes in the Stony Lake, disturbing and terrifying the aquatic animals. The sage explained:

"I had to experiment first to see how I could navigate through space with the help of the anti-gravity pads."

"And then what happened?" all of them asked.
“Cataclysms and earth quakes,” the sage replied dolefully. (ATS 58)

These modern tales appear to be the fusion of the binaries i.e. the East and the West, dragons and sages etc. The protagonist, Aditi is an Indian who lives near the west- coast of the Indian sub- continent, while the twins whom the adventurers meet in London- Roshan and Rohit, are the immigrants living away from their motherland. The writer elevates the status of her native land after calling it a ‘well- ordered world’. (ATD 23) The secular tales allow the young readers to identify themselves with the background irrespective of race or class. She is an anti- racist who has encountered racial discrimination in the West. Thus she is familiar with the difficulties one faces in an alien world. The monkey folk in Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey mock at the ant and the elephant for being alien and for being the friends of one of the monkeys of their own clan, “The monkeys were looking decidedly embarrassed. Finally one of them said, “You have chosen some strange companions for yourself. You are a monkey. And ant is an ant. What has an ant to do with us?” (AOM 41) They also comment on the huge size of the elephant after she interrupts, “It speaks,” squeaked a monkey. “That grey, fat bag actually speaks. What else can it do? Let’s prod it and see.” (AOM 45) Monkeys seek to be superior to human beings and thus, they ridicule Aditi, “Look, it’s a little girl. She has a brown face and no fur at all except on her head. What a funny girl.” (AOM 45)

Dragons and Sages are other binaries in patriarchy that are discussed. Namjoshi tries to reduce the gap between these polarities and fuse them together. She recapitulates the idea of identity fluidity and says, as stated earlier as well that there is no rigid identity in the world. The fixed notions and attributes associated with sex and gender roles are discarded. Similarly, the fixed attributes related to dragons’ and sages’ identities are considered absurd. She distorts the myths associated with the adamant roles depicted in classical tales of dragon and sages. Goldie- the island dragon is portrayed to be lazy, cowardly and sloth. The ones in traditional tales are ferocious, powerful and blood- thirsty. During their first journey Aditi and her friends are terrified at the thought of facing the dragon, but when they reach they find it to be lazy and indifferent, “Inside the cave the dragon sprawled out. “I’m going to sleep for an hour or two. When I wake up, I will set you your tasks.”/ The four adventurers huddled together. Things weren’t going at all as they had planned. They were all annoyed by the dragon’s behaviour.” (AOM 62) When the dragon did not listen to them and tried to over-power them, Aditi challenged it to fight and slashed its paw,
“Suddenly the dragon lashed out at Aditi but Aditi was too quick for it and slashed its paw. The sight of its own blood appalled the dragon.” (AOM 69) The transformed attitude of the dragon from foe to friend symbolizes that even a huge and supposedly dangerous creature can be won over by friendship. The writer is sarcastic about violent human nature and rescues monsters by disrupting the fixed established identity of being blood thirsty. On their adventure to England, Rohit assures:

“With your dragon we are sure you will be able to over come our River Dragon.”

“Hold on!” cried the dragon. “Dragons are not allowed to fight each other, and besides I’m not sure I would win if I fought a River Dragon. And anyway, I don’t want to.”

“But people fight each other,” Rohit remarked. He was taken aback by the dragon’s response.

The dragon just looked stubborn. “That may be as it may be. Perhaps in that particular respect dragons have more sense than people.” (ATD 12- 13)

However, Namjoshi tries to demythicize the conventions related to dragons; she also questions the nature of their existence. As the existence of dragons is a myth, the stereotypical attributes attached to them too are mythical. When Roshan and Rohit take the dragons as news item to Ms Jenkins, the latter refused to put them on television calling them unreal:

“But these aren’t real dragons. These are some sort of exotic lizards. Real dragons would be a news item.”

“But these are real dragons,” Roshan protested.

“What do you mean by ‘unreal dragons’?”

Ms Jenkins laughed. “I suppose by ‘real dragons’ I mean ‘unreal dragons’- the mythical creatures the kind that don’t exist.” (ATD 61)

Sharks are considered to be brutal and fierce, but Namjoshi’s shark is projected as shy and scared. When Aditi and her friends contact her to find out the address of the Marine Sage, says she:

“Won’t turn around,” Baby Shark wailed. “Go away. You’re frightening me…”

“But please, why won’t you turn around?”

“It’s obvious, isn’t it?” Baby Shark wailed.
“It’s because I’m shy. I don’t like to meet anyone face to face,” (AMS 33-34)

Similarly, the stereotypical identity of the sages is related to goodness, supremacy, virtues, knowledge, enlightenment, gods etc., whereas the sages of Namjoshi are not always supreme. Though they are powerful, they need the help of the four friends. The Island Sage asks for their help to convey her message to her sisters. They help the Marine Sage to breathe air. They rescue the Techno Sage from the irrational attitude of sun-fish. The Techno Sage is blamed by the latter for not being able to keep her promises. They say:

“She doesn’t keep her promises.”

“She’s a liar.”

“She says something has happened when it hasn’t happened yet, and she has only thought it was going to happen.” (ATS 52)

Conventionally sages are remote and religious but Namjoshi’s sages are modern beings who believe in technology and rationality.

The writer also discusses the biases attached to size. She is of the opinion that success is not achieved on the basis of being large. Small creatures such as ants could be more worthy than large animals. The huge Goldie could not fit in Shedwell Park as buildings would be destroyed. When ant desires to be as big as the elephant, Rohit consoles him and admires him as he is. He says, “if you were as big as a dragon or even only as big as an elephant, you would probably be the strongest creature on earth.” Yes Roshan replied. “For their size ants are quite extraordinarily strong.” (ATD 40)

The distortion of the fixed notions illustrates the fluidity of identity. In Aditi and the One-Eyed Monkey, we see the shifting patterns of identity. While dealing with the dragon, all the four friends pretended to be the dragon. There is Ant-Dragon, Monkey – Dragon and Aditi-Dragon. Identity could not be said to be rigid as again the River Dragon, Opal has no colour of herself. She is transparent and can merge with any background:

The River Dragon was no colour and every colour. She was all the colours that water can be. Sometimes they could see her shape in the water, and sometimes it looked as though she has merged with the water and it was hard to say which was which. (ATD 28)

She also points out that if something is good for one it is not necessarily good for the other. The Marine Sage in Aditi and the Marine Sage finds comfort in water and
suffocation on land. She identifies herself more with aquatic animals as she has developed gills.

All the animals are introduced nameless in the first tale of the series, but gradually they acquire identity. Ant is named Siril, Monkey-Monkeyji and Elephant-the Beautiful Ele. We witness these animals as they engage in existential dilemma and also watch the quest to over come it. Beautiful Ele is worried and struggles hard to find her name inscribed on a polished stone. It is at their third adventure to Australia that she finds the right whale that has swallowed up the stone on which her name was inscribed and her quest for identity ends. Her idea of providing identity to unprivileged animals is an attempt to give a chance to the subalterns and to elevate them.

Like many of her earlier texts this series of tales too appears as self referential. We find the glimpses of Namjoshi’s own experiences in the whole series. She starts from the western coastal region of India, her native land and reaches England, Australia and Canada, the countries explored by her in her real life. She gives vivid pictures of the four worlds and connects India with the worship of animals such as lionesses, cows and elephants. She associates Australia with seas and oceans, and England and Canada with technology. The tales also depict the queer aspect of her writings. The association of the three sages depicts the idea of sisterhood, introduced by American feminists. Cheri Register informs:

The feminist movement in America is seeking to create a feeling of sisterhood, a new sense of community among women, in order to overcome self-hatred, the animosity that many women feel for others of their sex as a result of isolation, competition for male attention, and belief in female inferiority. (Register 213)

Namjoshi’s partners too have lived in these countries with whom she has been parted. The Island sage’s desire to meet them appears to be the writer’s unfulfilled aspiration of her past to achieve her own love or sisterhood. It also illustrates the loneliness of the Island Sage and her attempt to overcome that isolation in the company of her two sisters.

All the four tales attempt to explore the psyche of children of the contemporary modern world. While providing amusement to children, the tales establish respect and affinity with creatures other than the Anglo- Saxon heterosexual
male. They break down stereotypes, boundaries and categories and challenge the stringency of norms applied to society by patriarchy.

**Aditi Adventures II- Unexpected Monsters**

*Aditi Adventures II* entitled *The Unexpected Monsters* is the second part of the series. Aditi and her friends meet characters from European myths, such as Sybil of Cumae, Grendel, the Budapest Changeling, the Vesuvian Giant, and Shemeek. These are liberating tales. They not only emancipate the mythical characters from stereotypes but they also liberate the readers from passive reading conventions. The feminist fairy tales can be read in multiple ways. According to Jack Zipes, in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* the cultural patterns of the West are directly linked to two major types of experimentation. The first is transfiguration, and the other is the fusion of traditional configuration with contemporary references. In the first type the author presents the familiar classical tales in a distinct manner, while in the second, unfamiliar new tales are produced with classical patterns:

In the first type, generally the author assumes that the young reader is already familiar with the classical tale and depicts the familiar in an estranging fashion. Consequently, the reader is compelled to consider the negative aspects of anachronistic forms and perhaps transcend them. The tendency is to break, shift, debunk, or rearrange the traditional motifs to liberate the reader from the contrived and programmed mode of literary reception...The second type of experimentation, similar to transfiguration, can be called the fusion of traditional configurations with contemporary references within settings and plotlines unfamiliar to readers yet designed to arouse their curiosity and interest. Fantastic projections are used here to demonstrate the changeability of contemporary social relations, and the fusion brings together all possible means for illuminating a concrete utopia. (177-78)

These two experimentations are conducted to eliminate the readers' rigid attitude towards the status quo of society and demonstrate manners to recognize their individuality within autonomous framework.
The Unexpected Monsters belongs to the second category as described by Zipes. The tales are a fusion of the traditional European mythical figures with contemporary characters. They raise questions about identity, power, beauty and mythicism. They also deal with issues of raising children, of morality, arbitrary authoritarianism and of supremacy.

The first tale of the second pack, Aditi and her Friends take on the Vesuvian Giant (AFVG), revolves round the themes of friendship, power and strength. The tale begins with the disappearance of Goldie and the quest of her friends. The clue that a golden dragon was seen diving into the blue grotto, leads Aditi and her friends to move to the hillside of Cumae in Italy. There they come in contact with Sybil, the omniscient, who informs them about the enslavement of Goldie by the Vesuvian Giant in the magic mirror. She also teaches them the trick of taming the Giant.

Aditi and her Friends meet Grendel (AFMG) is the second tale of Aditi Adventures II that depicts their journey to Devon in order to solve the mystery of the Deep Rose which helps Aditi’s grand mother to recover from her illness. The objective of the journey is to find Grendel and his mother and thus solicit the blessings and good wishes of the grandmother. The tale aims at solving the existential dilemma and providing answers to the existing oedipal conflicts within children.

Another adventure of the series, Aditi and her friends help the Budapest Changeling (AFBC), represents the journey to Budapest, Hungary. Siril, the Ant finds himself bobbing in his matchbox along a river bank with a little unstable creature which changes according to the perception of observers. This small being is a Budapest Changeling who kidnaps Siril. Aditi and her friends reach River Danube to find Siril. Later they help the Changeling in quest of her identity. The Changeling rescues Beautiful from the clutches of the Old Woman who lived in a shoe.

The last tale is Aditi and her Friends in search of Shemeek (AFSS) in which the four adventurers along with the two dragons reach Prague in Czech Republic on an official visit. A spell is cast upon Monkeyji by the naughty granddaughter of Princess Libusha causing her to lose the capability to speak the truth. The remedy lays with Shemeek- the snow white horse who sleeps behind the rock of Wysherad, dreaming about the world. All the adventurers set off in search of Shemeek to find solutions for the misery of Monkeyji and to teach a lesson to the little girl. Meanwhile, they encounter Old Fiery Blue, the good- hearted dragon whose duty is to guard the sleeping Shemeek.
Namjoshi has recreated the classical figures to question the fixed popular notions associated with them. The man-eating Grendel and his mother of Beowulf are now projected as quiet and serene creatures who live peacefully off the southwest coast of England. Beautiful informs:

Grendel is gorgeous! He has one or two problems, but he’s all right.
And as for Madame Grendel, I’m pretty sure she’s perfectly nice. They just look different. After all, somebody who had never seen an elephant might think I was a monster too. (AFMG 35)

The writer deconstructs the old Scandinavian myth in England. Hundreds of years ago the mother and son lived in Scandinavia and later migrated to Devon, England in protest against the Scandinavian writer for projecting them as monsters. Aditi’s grandmother conceals their identity and addresses them as G and Madame G, for their full names frighten people. According to the Greek legend:

Sibyl, also called Sibylla, prophetess in Greek legend and literature. Tradition represented her as a woman of prodigious old age uttering predictions in ecstatic frenzy, but she was always the figure of mythical past, and her prophecies, in Greek hexameters, were handed down in writing. In the fifth and fourth century B.C., she was always referred to in the singular; Sibyl was treated as her proper name, and she was apparently located at Asia Minor. From the late fourth century the number of Sibyls was multiplied; they were localized traditionally at all the famous oracle centres and elsewhere... (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Sybil, the ill-natured old woman turns out to be helpful. She is projected as a witch-like figure who in traditional tales is an agent of evil but also signifies erotic and dissident forces that fascinate the readers. She is a sinister force historically, but in Namjoshi surprisingly, she has a soft corner and thus gets ready to help the adventurers.

The Vesuvian Giant who is considered furious and bad-tempered imprisons Goldie in order to befriend him. The Giant and Grendel’s insomnia and the Old Woman’s yearning for someone to talk about, illustrate the modern context marked by isolation and breakdown of communication. All these instances distort the stereotypical notions associated with classical archetypes. The Budapest Changeling’s transformation who according to the myth is a hideous creature “who is suspected not
to be a couple’s real child” and “was substituted by fairies” (Vocabulary. Com), highlights Monkeyji’s remark, “Monsterity is in the eye of the beholder” (35) The writer suggests that identity formed on the basis of patriarchal dictates mutates and trans mutates. Barthes in *Mythologies* points out:

There is no fixity in mythical concepts: They can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely (and that around the meaning of myth) there is a halo of virtualities where other possible meanings are floating. (Barthes 130)

The writer also breaks the myth of Beauty associated with women. She frees Beauty from the patriarchal mirror after projecting Aditi and her friends as rational beings. Unlike the step- mother of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, who is flattered by the words of the flattering mirror, they are not mesmerized by the magic mirror of the Giant that is representative of patriarchy. The tale breaks the patriarchal frame that has sought to oppress young girls and women after confining them to the idea of cultivating beauty for male appreciation. In AFVG, it is only Goldie who gets trapped by it. “Goldie looked and looked at this pleasing new Goldie and in a few seconds the mirror trapped him. He’s the giant’s prisoner under the grotto on Capri” (29). The others who are not seduced by the mirror escape. Beauty and mirror are linked to each other in a vicious circle symbolizing imprisonment. The breaking of the mirror and Goldie’s freedom are symbolic of the shattering of the patriarchal myth and the granting of liberty to young girls. Marcia K. Lieberman in “Some Day My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tales” remarks, “These stories have been made the repositories of the dreams, hopes and fantasies of generations of girls... The beauty contest is a constant and primary device in many of the stories.” (187)

Namjoshi is of the view that by altering and introducing unusual elements into the fairy tales, the child is compelled to discard a certain consistent reception and reconsider their constituents and meaning. As children are the primary audience of fairy tales, these tales play an important role in early socialization. Feminist fairy tales’ writers try to change our outlook and defy our perception with regard to literature and society. Saints, Angels, Monsters, Dragons, Witches, all have been perceived with fixed identities. The emancipatory feminist writers such as Angela Carter, Margaret Attwood and Suniti Namjoshi, revise, rewrite and deconstruct the
established popular ideas and bring forth the familiar and previously discussed notion of identity fluidity. Adrienne Rich points out:

Revision—the act of looking back at seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves... We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (Rich 35)

Namjoshi considers identity fixation an illusion. In Aditi Adventures, the shifting patterns of identity are projected through the changing attributes of Baby Shark. Sometimes she acquires different colours, at other times she floats in the air instead of moving in water. She informs the adventurers, “That was the Marine Sage’s gift. I can float up to three feet above the earth or above any solid object... I can become invisible if I try hard, but only for a short time.” (AFVG 8-9) Julia Kristeva in her essay “Woman Can Never Be Defined”, comments on the instability of language, meaning and subjectivity, and coins the term ‘subject in process’ to express the sense of the subject as not whole and never stable. Proceeding the idea of Kristeva, Namjoshi talks about the multiplicity of identity through the Budapest Changeling’s remark, “All I know is that I can be anyone and do anything.” (AFBC 12) Sometimes he is a magpie, to Beautiful he appears as a large rat with a black handkerchief tied around his face, sometimes he is a monkey, the other time he transforms into a mini dragon. The writer says that our identities are always called into question and brought under assessment. She is interested in how ideology works and how individuals freely adopt positions which, often are not in their interests. The Budapest Changeling acquires identity on the basis of the perception of others. He says, “And I knew all about being all sorts of things... You just become whoever they think you are. I do it all the time”. (AFBC’ 19) Changeling’s character is an emblem of the ‘pre-oedipal stage’ of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, in which the child has a fragmentary identity or no identity at all, as Changeling points out, “When I look in a mirror... I see nothing at all.” (21)

Namjoshi’s stories assist in psychological development and discovery of the self. Later, Changeling objects to Aditi when she categorizes him as a fish. Thus he rejects established roles. He pleads to the adventurers to help him in his quest for true
identity. Namjoshi subscribes to Lacanian theory of ‘mirror stage’ in which the child acquires his/her complete being. The adventurers help Sir Sparrow in eradicating all his doubts related to his true being. Sir Sparrow pretends to be an extraordinary pompous bird and paints himself white with powder. He is disillusioned when Aditi paints him pink in order to teach her a lesson for refusing to help others.

"...Sir Sparrow looked like a perfectly ordinary sparrow, beautifully marked in brown and grey and black.

"You are no longer white!" Beautiful exclaimed.

"That was just powder," Sir Sparrow mumbled, "to make me look smart."


This so pleased Sir Sparrow that he flew into the air and settled himself behind Beautiful’s left ear. (AFSS 64)

Beautiful’s appraisal of Sir Sparrow is an act of consolation meant to guide children in times of difficulty. The adventurers also console Siril and boost her morale when she decides to take the challenge of the Vesuvian Giant.

Fairy tales are of immense help to children in resolving their oedipal conflicts. During the years from three to six, children’s understanding of the world is muddled with contradictory feelings. Fairy tales solve confusions. Grendel’s oedipal attachment to his mother does not allow him to grow out of the fear that during the process of maturation his love may be transferred to his beloved. His mother has no identity but Grendel’s mother or Madame Grendel. It also illustrates the patriarchal notion of not granting autonomy to women. Grendel lives in an illusionary world and suffers from existential dilemma and wants to escape from the responsibilities of adulthood. He remarks:

"I’m already quite big and strong... and as for getting older, I’m not sure that’s such a good thing. I’d spend all my time worrying like my mother, or being troubled by aches and pains like Monkeyji... I don’t want to be responsible for anything... I’m Grendel... and I play all day and live with my mother underneath the sea. (AFMG 45)

Fairy tales are considered therapies for children as they open up unexplored spheres. They help children to control their lives. A characteristic feature of fairy tale is to sort out existential quandary or quest for identity. This enables children to deal
with crises and predicaments. Children are thus able to master the psychological problems of maturation by “overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries, becoming able to relinquish childhood dependencies, gaining a feeling of selfhood and of self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation... They offer new dimensions to the child’s imagination which would be impossible for him to discover as truly as his own.” (Bettelheim 6-7)

The existential dilemma of Rose becomes the topic of debate among the adventurers in AFMG. They struggle hard to unearth the reality of Deep Rose. For Beautiful it is a fragrance, Siril thinks of it as a colour, for Monkeyyi it is a state of mind, while Aditi calls it a story. The writer thus explains the multiple aspects of life. She claims that stories are either imaginative or based on facts or experiences. Stories may or may not be true. They are the sources of entertainment and help to see ‘differently and understand the meaning of something that wasn’t clear before.’ (25)

The writer defends myths and fairy tales. According to her, stories alone cannot ensure children’s progress. They disrupt the imagination of the child with harsh intervention. Fairy tales alter reality and confer liberty to the imagination and transform difficult situations artistically. Favat remarks:

Children’s turning to the tale is no casual recreation or pleasant diversion, instead, it is an insistent search for an ordered world more satisfying than the real one, a sober striving to deal with the crisis of experience they are undergoing. In such a view, it is even possible, regardless of one’s attitude towards bibliotherapy, to see the child’s turning to the tale as a salutary utilization of an implicit device of the culture. It would appear, moreover, that after reading a fairy tale, the reader invests the real world with the constructs of the tale. (Favat 54)

Aditi Adventures employ the technique of fantasy effectively. The writer finds it significant to explore freely the psyche of children and examine the material condition of reality. She employs animal imagery along with magic and reality. These tales offer interaction between animal and human world. As a proponent of eco-feminism, Namjoshi provides equal status to flora and fauna. The only human being is Aditi, while all her friends are personified animals. Ant, Elephant, and Monkey possess human emotions that provide them a higher position. There are vivid descriptions of a variety of English Roses. We are introduced to Blessings, Mary Rose, The Thornless Rose, Zephrine Drouhin, Peace etc. Namjoshi’s love for roses
surfaces in the visit of the adventurers to the garden centre. Their happiness and enthusiasm is visible while selecting flowers for Aditi’s grandmother— the Queen:

Meanwhile Siril had decided on a rose called *Peace*.

“This one’s not even pink!” Grendel protested, looking at the picture attached to the rose bush.

“Well, it has a bit of pink in it,” Siril replied.

He tried to defend his choice. “There’s something about the way it makes one feel when one looks into its yellow depths that’s quite extraordinary…” His voice trailed off. “I’m sure she’ll like this one,” he said suddenly sounding more and more sure.

They were pleased and excited by their purchases and wondered which one the queen would like best… (AFMG 63)

Fantasy merged with aspects of ecofeminism, magic and creativity is not only an escape from the real world but also a morale booster to children. They forget their despair and misery and also learn lessons of goodness, caring and sharing. The writer makes use of magic when evoking the legendary figures to life. The magic she applies is not to deceive but to enlighten the readers as it prepares them for the trials of daily life. Grendel’s remark about growing older paradoxically encourages children to get wiser with age:

“I’m not all that young”, Grendel replied. “I’m hundreds of years old. And my mother, well, she’s probably thousands of years old. It’s just that we grow very, very slowly. And anyway, for the past fifty years I haven’t grown at all.” (33)

The amazing stillness of Time for Grendel and his forgetfulness, illustrates the importance of Memory and Responsibility with increasing age. Sybil, the Vesuvian Giant and the Magic Mirror associated with fear also involve fantasy. Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* points out, “in Gothic writing fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the common place, and the supernatural over the natural, all with one intent to scare at a basic level” (6) Sybil of AFMG, is introduced to the readers as a terrible creature sitting alone and crying in the corridors dimly lit by phosphorescence. The Old Woman who lives in a shoe accommodates herself, in a single shoe. She informs the Changeling:

...This one-legged giant had two shoes, two fine, large leather boots. The one that he really used got all dusty and worn out; but the other
one- this one that I’ve got- managed to stay shiny and new. The giant had a wooden leg, of course, but as the giant swung along on his crutches, this one barely touched the ground.” (AFBC 59)

The spell of the naughty grand daughter of Princess Libusha cast upon Monkeyji and the counter spell of the latter on the former, mesmerize the readers and exhort children not to be naughty. The writer describes various ways of raising, comforting and controlling children for their mischief and misconduct. She discusses the anxiety of parents with spoilt children and the readiness of adventurers to help them. Madame G laments in a sorrowful voice on the effect of slowing time on Grendel:

“Each time he falls asleep, he forgets everything that has happened after the moment my experiment changed him. When he wakes, he begins again. Everything’s fresh. Everything’s new. Whatever he has learned, he doesn’t remember... I would like him to grow.” (AFMG 40- 42)

Princess Libusha accepts her grand daughter’s misconduct and remarks, “Yes, I know. I’m very glad Shemeek was able to help you. She’s a very naughty child and needs to mend her ways... I apologize for her. I see that she is indeed extremely spoilt. What shall we do for her?” (AFSS 59- 65) The adventurers not only controlled the Vesuvian Giant but also children such as Libusha’s grand daughter and Grendel. They solve problems within problems. Each time they are able to solve one riddle, another takes its place. This, too, they resolve with enthusiasm and cooperation. Their methods by which they help Grendel to come out of his illusions and subsequently grow wise with age guide parents in bringing up problem children. Their wisdom adheres to the idea that willingness is a pre- requisite to learning. It is only after Grendel gets ready to remember things he is able to overcome his difficulty. He feels sorry for his behaviour and says, “I would remember things... I’m sure I would remember. Well I would try to remember.” (AFMG 48) Princess Libusha’s grand daughter and Sir Sparrow repent lesson for their mischief. Sir Sparrow says, “… I’m truly sorry I was so unhelpful.” (AFSS 64) The sudden disappearance of Beautiful helps the Budapest Changeling to be a responsible being. He assists Beautiful in her escape from the Old Woman who lived in a shoe. On their quest for Goldie the adventurers tame the Vesuvian Giant and mould him into a good person. The Giant is like the usual giants of traditional tales. He is strong, furious and shrewd and spews lava and causes earth- quakes. Siril, a tiny being fights the giant in order to get out of
his hold. In the strong and powerful projection of Siril infused with the ‘grow large’ potion, Namjoshi dismantles the notions associated with size as depicted earlier in the first part of the series. “... he picked up Opal and Goldie and set them down gently a few feet away/ The others were too astonished to say anything. They had had no idea that for his size Siril was so extraordinarily strong.” (AFVG 54) With their constant efforts, the Giant is then transformed into a good giant with the intake of ‘good tempered’ potion given by Sybil. At the end the Giant says, “I may not have won, but I got the prize!” (61)

Life is depicted as a struggle. The ‘happy end’ is the real beginning of growth. There is victory of good over evil, as evil transforms into virtue. Aditi and her friends come into their own and help others in difficult situations. The readers are left with the question, ‘who wins’? The tales, unlike other modern tales, have happy ending but with innovative insights. The adventurers are anti-violence but sometimes they are compelled to raise their swords for the cause of good. The battles that are fought, the wars that are made, are cold one, not only to avenge but to help others in their development. Tolkein opines that the sad endings of modern fairy tales eliminate the aspect of comfort and escape that separate both children and adults from anxiety. He stresses the happy ending of all fairy tales so that wicked forces will be overcome and never again terrorize the child’s psyche. All the tales of Aditi adventures have happy endings in which everything is sorted out and Aditi and her friends depart happily.

As there is free play of imagination, fairy tales leave all decisions to the readers. The reader is free either to read implications of morals and messages or simply enjoy the fantastic events. AFBC emphasizes hard work and prohibits stealing. When the adventurers are starving, Changeling offers them stolen food, but Monkeyji objects, “We shouldn’t really steal things, we should pay for things...the first thing we have to do is earn some money.” (22- 31) They struggle hard to sell tickets in Budapest for the fire and water show to be performed by Goldie and Opal along the bank of River Danube. AFSS stresses truth, duty and respect for others. Monkeyji considers falsehood a burden. When she is relieved of the charm of Libusha’s grand daughter, she thanks Shemeek and says, “... It’s a relief to be able to say what one thinks, instead of constantly having to think up a falsehood if one is going to speak at all.” (35) Sir Sparrow and Libusha’s grand daughter are punished for their misconducts. The liberating tales define universal messages and ethical values. They also suggest ways of raising voices against suppression and authoritarianism.
As previously discussed, Aditi Adventures are anti-war and anti-violence tales in which the protagonist and her friends get ready to combat containment and domination. They evaluate supremacy and the possibility for collective democratic life that encourages peaceful co-existence. They fight the giant to relieve Goldie from his authoritarianism. They also unite to liberate Monkeyji of the spell of Libusha’s grand daughter, and Beautiful of the Old Woman who lived in a shoe.

The tales are primarily created for children. However they are enriched with witty and clever remarks that make them philosophical. The statements made by the characters exhort the readers think deeply. Beautiful asks Changeling, “Which comes first?... Do you behave like a mischievous monkey and so people think you are one? Or do people think you are mischievous monkey and so you behave like one?” (AFBC 18) Grendel asks Beautiful about his habit to forget and the latter explains:

“...if I didn’t remember, would I not be me?”
“How could you be you today if you didn’t remember who you were yesterday?” Beautiful replied.
“It’s a bit confusing,” Grendel muttered.
“Is remembering the same as learning?”
“...And is learning the same thing as growing?” (AFMG 58)

The writer seems to be quite familiar with different parts of the world. In all the four tales of the series she explores four diverse cultures of various European countries. She starts the adventure from Italy and then moves to Devon in England, her present home place. Then she takes the readers from Hungary to Czech Republic and familiarizes them with mountains, hills, rivers, language and people. Blue grotto, Island Capri, Mount Vesuvious, Cumaean, clotted cream of Devon, Mogra flowers of India, forints- the currency of Hungary, tomb of Gul Baba, Kiraly Baths, River Danube, all are described in an overwhelming manner.

The Unexpected Monsters is concerned with legendary characters of Europe, recast by the writer to dismantle biases associated with them. The tales act as directories to liberate children from ego disturbances with the use of fantasy that has the power to make the unfamiliar familiar. They also serve as guides for parents to deal with the difficulties of taming and raising children in an appropriate manner. The witty dialogues on identity and perception, lend the text a philosophical touch.
Aditi Adventures III - Heroes

Heroes is the third of the series Aditi Adventures. There is never one hero rather there are multiple male and female protagonists who are either human or animal. They follow their inclinations, respect each other's needs and talents, and share each other's visions. Together they overcome sinister forces that want to deprive them of happiness. They work towards the realization of an ideal community. Like earlier tales, these also could be categorized under Feminist Science Fiction. They are intended to be the 'blueprints of social and technological improvements in the actual world.' (Abrams 328) The four adventurers- Aditi, Beautiful, Siril and Monkeyji along with their other friends- the two dragons, Goldie and Opal, Gardy- the smallest of the lion cubs and the three sages continue to travel to the distant countries in order to build an ideal world. The tales deal with the idea of power and supremacy, rationality, advancement in technology, race, cyberspace, language and grammar.

The first tale of the series Gardy in the City of Lions (GCL) is a satire on contemporary rulers. According to a legend Gardy is received as the lost lion cub prince at the City of Lions- Singapore pre- destined to save the place. He arrives with his friends and gets trapped in the diplomacies of the squabbling guardians of the city who are more concerned about their own interest and supremacy rather than public gain. The tale deals with the questions of rationality, logic and clarity.

Monkeyji and the Word Eater (MWE), the second tale of Aditi Adventures III takes into account the importance of words and names in defining subjective existence. The questions raised by the writer provide the tale with a linguistic angle. She questions whether a name and existence of an individual are directly proportional to each other, or whether there an arbitrary relationship between the two. Aditi and her friends get messages from Grendel about the problems created by his cousin Otto- the Word Eater, in Hong Kong. Monkeyji holds the command and teaches him, with her friends' assistance how to overcome his problems.

The third tale of the series is Siril and the Spaceflora (SSP) that deals with the humanitarian notion of concern for all including heavenly bodies such as Europa, one of the three moons of the planet Jupiter. The tale is a significant example of a feminist science fiction submerged in gentle emotions. The writer compares the two vital notions i.e. rationality and sentiments and questions their importance.
*Beautiful and the Cyberspace Runaway* (BCR), is a modern, fantastic tale of a computer programme—*Mistress i*, who runs away from a hardware in order to free herself from her own programmer, Vidvanji and the confined cyberspace. She takes refuge behind the right ear of Beautiful. Vidvanji runs after in to capture her. The adventurers help her to escape. The tale deals with aspects of liberty and connects cyberspace with the real world.

Even though the setting of the tales is Indian, they cater to children of all races, classes and genders. Namjoshi describes all the continents in order to help children identify with the familiar worlds. In this series, she explores the worlds which have been ignored and mystified i.e. the third world Asian countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong and India, as well as the remote Europa.

She contrasts the hi-tech world of rationality with the sentimental, and magic world. On one hand she promotes objective, value-neutral decision making and imparts feminist ethics according to which justice, morality and rationality are the basis for ethical judgment, and moral autonomy, and on the other she points out that excessive rationality could lead to the destruction of human and non-human world.

She projects her characters as wise, logical and rational and able to find solutions to problems. Monkeyji and others succeed in convincing the Sea Guardian to stop threatening Sir Leon- the Land Guardian through their wisdom. They trick her to remove the last threat. They intimidate her into revealing her the great financial loss in public and force the old woman to compromise (GCL 42). The adventurers also act sensibly while dealing with Otto- the Word Eater and in rescuing Mistress i. Monkeyji commands her friends not to give any words to Otto as he might eat their names and kill their identity. She orders, “DO NOT TRY TO DEAL WITH HIM. Come and get me. And if at all possible, do not say anything. Do not give him any words to snatch, especially not your own names.” (MWE 23-24) The eating away of names and the loss of identity raises the supreme question viz whether existence is dependent on the names. Goldie loses his identity as he becomes the victim of the word-eater. He was unable to remember who he was or what he was doing in Hong Kong. Once again, the adventurers get his identity back. Beautiful Ele is so obsessed with the idea of logic and reason that she decides not to go on a holiday and prefers to spend her time in practicing to become ‘rational, sensible and logical’. Siril considers her too emotional. She is helped by Aditi’s grandmother in Mathematics, by Monkeyji in meditation, by Aditi in syntax and logic, while Siril assists her in removing the
confusions of directions. Beautiful’s yearning is a source of motivation for children to
learn and attain education. She uses her female character to explore different facets of
lesbianism.

Namjoshi considers rationality to be gender-neutral and non-Eurocentric, and
the knowledge of science to be objective and democratic. In Aditi tales, Aditi and her
friends are able to operate computers and internet and make use of hi-tech gadgets
independently and irrespective of any gender or racial biases. They participate and
help each other in the building of the spaceship for the voyage to one of the three
moons of Jupiter. Emails and messages are exchanged when required. The advanced
scientific technologies are used all the time. Grendel’s e-mails in connection with his
cousin-Otto in the form of hi-tech 3D images of butterflies are a significant example
of advanced use of science:

“Those butterflies are new type of email messages,” she began.

“Do you mean that it’s now possible to send three-dimensional images
instead of just two-dimensional ones?” Siril asked. “I knew that work
was being done to make that possible. Were they digital butterflies?”
(MWE 11)

All the adventurers collectively build the Spaceflower. Siril can remember the
location of every single part of the spaceship. The Techno Sage supervises everything
while others help in tying knots of copper wires and supply of tools. They worked
unitedly during the journey from earth to space.

Vidvanji’s invention of a Personal Pocket Companion (PPC) disintegrates the
belief that Science is the property of the West. She promotes Feminist Empiricism.
According to Sandra Harding, the methodologies and values of science are the best
ways to eradicate masculinist and Eurocentric values and to promote objectivity.

Vidvanji is an Indian scientist who is projected as a genius. He invents a
pocket companion named, Mistress i:

It turned out that he had invented a little Personal Pocket Companion, a
thing that was to be part friend, part pet and part computer. It would
bond with a particular individual and then be with them for life.” (BCR
29)

Namjoshi adheres to what Harding says. She claims that within the dominant
discourse certain methodologies and modes of research have been made to appear
usual/natural. She suggests structural and procedural transformation in science to
increase the level of egalitarianism and neutrality and to understand that all knowledge is the result of local knowledge systems.

*Aditi Adventures* apply feminist aspects to raise awareness in children and to provide alternatives for pursuing goals and developing autonomy. Namjoshi is against conformation to the standard socialization processes. These tales are meant to serve as stepping stones to a different, more just society through their redirected socialization processes. Mistress I inspite of being a computer programme some how acquires a personality and runs away to attain freedom. She leaves her body behind as it is the ‘body’ that could allow the oppressor to enslave her. Beauvoir points out, “Since woman is destined to be possessed, her body must present the inert and passive qualities of an object.” (Beauvoir 157) Mistress i is the projection of a feminist cyborg who has come to existence to recode communication and intelligence in order to subvert command and control:

The cyborg is a creature in a post- gender world which has no truck with bisexuality, pre- oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense; a “final” irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the “West”s” escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space... (Haraway 361-62)

Mistress i is a mechanical creature who defies laws and desires freedom from the confinement of cyberspace. As a cyborg she is wary of holism, but needy for connection. Therefore, she tries to befriend Beautiful Ele and her friends. The adventurers help her to escape without bothering about their own possible arrest. She is a trained computer- all knowing, exceedingly clever and powerful. Thus she assists Beautiful after wearing the cloak of invisibility to deal with the DSP and to confront slavery with logic and reason. On her suggestion, Beautiful argues with Vidvanji, “If she’s an individual and not a piece of property, she can’t be yours. That would be slavery. And that’s not just illegal, it’s completely immoral.” (BCR 46) She is a robot about half an inch in size made up of some ‘flickering opaque substance’. Namjoshi writes her name Mistress i in lower case and thus confers upon her a deficient identity. ‘I’ in capital is the denotation of ‘self’ but she is only a spirit of the programme who has left her body behind, thus she is considered an incomplete being.
Her rejection of Vidvanji not only projects her struggle for freedom but also illustrates Haraway’s notion of a cyborg. As he further explains:

The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offsprings of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential.” (Haraway 361-62)

Namjoshi’s fairy tales have proved to be advanced scientific and rational alternatives that can tackle the arbitrary socio-political repression. They also impart sentimental perspectives such as friendship, philanthropy, concern and affection. There occurs a balance between the two binaries i.e. rationality and sentiments. In BCR, Beautiful questions Saint Gyaneshwar, “Being sensible is sensible, isn’t it?” The most prudent Mistress i informs Beautiful, “But being rational isn’t everything, you know.” (32) There is a tug of war between the two as the writer confers equal importance on both and demonstrates that the excessive use of either is hazardous. She further illustrates that continuous clinging to rationality is destructive to both the human and non-human world. Val Plumwood in Environmental Culture: The Ecological crises of Reason (2002) argues that Western culture’s obsession with rationality is not only irrational, but what pretends to be rationality is itself irrational and has led to our existing ecological and social crisis. (15) Beautiful’s rational resistance to help Europa could have become the cause of destruction for the moon whose orbit has been disintegrated slightly. Siril sympathizes with the wailing Europa and is determined to help her any how. The dilemma of the true nature of Europa is overcome by the message sent by the Marine Sage in which she mentions, “Received your message. We will set up an instant barrier should Eu prove troublesome. But she does in fact, need your help. Her orbit is deteriorating fast.” (SSF 50) The logical outlook of Beautiful could have been disastrous if Siril had not intervened.

The writer is sympathetic to Europa. This highlights her humane approach typical of the East. Her monotonous rotation along her orbit, lonely and in search of a friend, and Siril’s response to her invokes the eco-feminist in Namjoshi. She believes firmly that individuals could be civilized in a natural way to accomplish a spiritual admiration for nature and needs of all living things. Her belief in Pantheism makes her consider Europa a living being. She wishes to encourage a helpful attitude among children and make them sensitive towards all human and non-human creatures. The
depiction of Europa as a living being involves fantasy which is another significant aspect of fairy tales that assists the readers, children in particular, to see things clearly. Fairy tales are the most fundamental imaginative expressions of laymen, and project how to alter society. They play upon the fancy not to run off into an impossible world but to make better links with reality. They flee from defeating situations which kindle the desire of emancipation.

Fantasy could be applied in the form of magic, myths, prophecies and legends that are not only meant to mesmerize or spell bind the readers but to make them enlightened. According to Europa’s myth, she is the only talking sphere in the space and needs a friend to chat with, reflects the droning and dull existence of heavenly bodies. Otto in MWE, the cousin of Grendel has the power to eat words/ name and end one’s existence or identity. He invokes the question whether the existence of something is dependent on its name or not. Hans Blumenberg in Work on Myth proposes that the function of Myth is to help human beings to manage the inevitability of given reality, a requirement that is not outdated by scientific progress and rationality. He adds that a mythology is a religion in which we no longer believe. Like many poets and writers have used myths of gods and goddesses, Namjoshi also mythicizes Gyaneshwar Maharaj- a saint in BCR. Beautiful’s devotion to and conversation with him in her imagination projects a talking god/ idol and expresses her concern for the imponderable forces that lie behind the visible universe. He acts as an advisor and a guide for her. It is this confrontation with the saint that compels her to order her own world of thought and action, and also conveys a message to children that the solutions of one’s own dilemmas lay within one self. It is not Gyaneshwar Maharaj, indeed, who guides her, but her own consciousness that helps her to clear her doubts. Once she asks the Maharaj:

“Do you think I could ever be a saint?”
“Do you want to be a saint?” Shri Gyaneshwar Maharaj asked.
“I don’t, think so,” Beautiful replied doubtfully.
“Oh well, there’s your answer,” the saint told her. (BCR 270)
The adventurers were scared of being arrested by the police for they had been charged by Vidvanji for the theft of his PPC. The mess leads Beautiful to turn to the saint again. The saint replies:

“You know what you should do,” the saint told her.
“What’s that?” Beautiful asked.
"Breathe in and out. Calm down. Make your mind as clear as possible. And then deal with whatever you have to deal with the saint told her."

Suddenly Beautiful felt better. (ECR 41)

The red dragon whom Goldie meets in Hong Kong- the city of dragons, tells the legend of the Tenth Dragon, "By the way , Sir, I have been posted here to welcome the Tenth Dragon. According to the prophecy he's expected to arrive around about this time." (MWE 24) The next prophecy is made in GCL, according to which, "a long lost lion cub prince would return when the city was in trouble and set things right." (9) Gardy is considered to be the 'lost lion cub' by Sir Leon. Cross- cultural identities are a distinct feature of Namjoshi's work. They often serve to ward off the social as well as religious stigma attached to lesbianism in the mainstream religions and societies. The multiple imaginative and fantastic dimensions of fairy tales provide a suitable vehicle. In the Third World text, Namjoshi lacks the openness of the works set in the First World.

In Namjoshi's works, predictions and foretellings are fulfilled in alternative manners that disenchant believers. They visualize clearly the manipulations made by them in order to retain their faith. The lion cub is proved to be the lost lion cub prince who has returned to help, but Gardy's own denial makes things clear to Sir Leon. When the things are resolved, the latter thanks him to which Gardy replies wisely:

"You are truly the lost lion cub prince who returned to help us."

"Please, Sir Leon," Gardy protested. "I'm not long lost, and I'm not a prince. I'm a lion cub. And I'm no more noble than anyone else is. We were all glad to be of help."

"Well, if that is so," said Sir Leon slowly trying to get things clear inside his head, "if that is so, then Noble Gardy, everyone is noble." (GCL 65-67)

The other dragons are amazed by the arrival of the eleventh dragon as no prophecy was made for its coming:

"There is no prophecy about the Eleventh Dragon," moaned the white Dragon.

Otto glanced at Monkeyji, and she seemed to approve, he stepped forward. "The beautiful dragon is Opal," he told them. "She is called The Unexpected One." (MWE 65)
The myth associated with the Tenth Dragon remains unfulfilled as the native seven dragons of Hong Kong catch sight of Opal— the Eleventh Dragon. Manipulations take place and Opal is addressed as The Unexpected One. The writer conveys that the predictions are not always true as they simply contain possibilities. The choices rest with individuals:

As regards knowledge, the future— in so far as we are not concerned with the purely organized and rationalized part of it— presents itself as an impenetrable medium, an unyielding wall. And when our attempts to see through it are repulsed, we first become aware of the necessity of willfully choosing our course and, in close connection with it, the need for an imperative (a utopia) to drive us onward. Only when we know what are the interests and imperatives involved, are we in a position to inquire into the possibilities of the present situation, and thus to gain our first insights into history. (Mannheim)

Namjoshi uses magic and enchantment not just to charm the readers but to sort out confusions and to fulfill repressed desires. Fairy tales preserve hope for advanced and better life and the wonderful elements of magic and miracles work to bring about an actual achievement of the wishes of the leading characters who are often victims of social biases. Sir Leon and the old woman under the sea make use of the magical mirrors in order to see things clearly, but ironically the mirrors are enigmatic for they blur things instead of bringing them to light. Sir Leon gets scared by the threats of the Sea Guardian— the old woman, for depriving the former of the word ‘No’, robbing the merchants of the city of the idea of money and taking away the taste of sweets from all the children. He appeals to the adventurers for help. When they console him, he replies:

And it’s all going to happen. You’ll see. You’ll see.”

Baby Shark was puzzled, “Well, why did you call us,” he asked, “if it’s all going to happen anyway?”

Sir Leon looked at them slyly. It’s just possible that you might be able to prevent it from happening. The future isn’t fixed you know. And anyway, I can’t see everything absolutely clearly.” (GCL 26)

The two omniscient mirrors are like the ordinary eyes which fail to assist them to protect the City of Lions. The third plain mirror provided by the Island Sage that reflects mere faces symbolizes the third eye of Lord Shiva of Hindu mythology as it
endows the guardians with the fortitude, sensitivity and rationality which are needed to cope with the enemy within. The plain mirror according to the writer illustrates that sometimes ordinary things are more valuable and vice-versa. The tug of war between Sir Leon and the old woman for power and authority deplores materialistic behaviour and race for supremacy. The tale is a satire on modern politics. It presents the contemporary political scenario with corrupt government officials and authoritarians who constantly deride each other. Egocentricism, pride and superiority are their chief concerns. Their menace against land and sea respectively demonstrates their deprivation and the lack of essential virtues like intelligence, diligence and responsibility. The adventurers attempt to reconcile them and persuade them to remove all the threats, while the old lady boasts:

“Oh that’s only a slap on the wrist,” the old lady retorted. “I can’t remove all my threats. It’s necessary to demonstrate my power once in a while.” She further says, “How am I to demonstrate to Sir Leon that I am more important than he is?” (GCL 41, 44)

The writer chooses the third world countries as location so as to make children aware of racism and other prevailing oppressing conditions that result in marginalization of the subalterns. Race, as we all know is a complex, socially mediated construct that orders society, marginalizes people and is used to justify, economic and educational inequalities. Sir Leon refuses to talk to other adventurers with the exception of Gardy- the lion cub for he considers them inferior beings. He states:

“Lions only speak to lions you know...” Well Noble Gardy, since you insist, I can make an exception of the two dragons and the beautiful elephant and possibly of the little shark. They are noble beasts. Oh, and I will of course; speak to the human child; but as for the ant and the monkey they are beneath my notice.” (GCL 19)

Grendel’s cousin Otto’s greenish complexion makes the latter strange for other boys in the boarding school of Hong Kong. Grendel worries, “Well, as you know, my mother and I have greenish skins, and so has my cousin, Otto. The other boys thought this strange and began to tease him.” (MWE 19) Otto tries to make friends but he discards the idea due to his rejection by other boys in the school. He tells the adventurers, “I don’t want or need any friends. I tried making friends with some of the boys here even after they have called me names, but that only made matters worse”
(32). The problem of Otto signifies the troubles of many children in a boarding school. Namjoshi herself had been the victim of scorn and ridicule in the American Boarding School as mentioned in Goja. Thus Otto's character could be self referential for the writer as she has been teased for her colour and gender. Michael Omi and Howard Winant in Racial Formation in the United States define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies." (55)

On one side the writer describes racial aspects and the sense of alienation, while on the other she projects the feeling of belongingness and feel-at-home atmosphere. A cockatoo, an immigrant of Australia in Singapore finds herself comfortable, exhorts Beautiful to feel the same when the latter tells Aditi the reason for going slow:

"I'm trying to walk as casually as possible and look as though I belonged here," Beautiful retorted.

A sulphur-crested cockatoo perched on a branch nearby overheard her, "Of course you belong here," he told Beautiful. "I myself am partial to elephants. Please, make yourself at home." (GCL 52-53)

The writer takes into account various experiences and difficulties faced by immigrants in alien worlds. Sometimes they are abandoned and deserted and are mocked at, while some other times they come across someone who welcomes them. The Beautiful Ele finds the friendship of the cockatoo who assists her in finding the sparrow. The sparrow later acts as a judge in the contest of Sir Leon and the old woman for superiority. Otto is bullied by his colleagues that he develops hatred for friendship and transforms into a word-eater. Immigrants in a foreign nation are implied word-eaters as they swallow the foreign words and internalize them.

The tales project Namjoshi as a language expert as she uses linguistic elements such as syntax, semantics and morphology. The fairy tales, meant for children, are like tutors who explain and teach children the correct use of language. Beautiful is assisted by Aditi in improving her sentences and sorting out meanings. She asks Beautiful to use the right syntax so that she can express the intended meaning. Beautiful is keen to learn and wants to understand the sentence, 'Muddled syntax makes for garbled logic', written by Aditi's tutor on her exercise book. Aditi explains:

I think she meant that the way in which I construct and order my sentences matters. If I say: 'I went for a walk, and I saw Beautiful',

then that means I saw you on my walk. But if I say ‘I saw Beautiful and I went for a walk, then it means that I went for a walk after I saw you.’” (BCR 10)

The writer’s love for vocabulary and new words projects itself in the personalities of Siril and Gardy who have hoarded words written on silver papers in the form of balls in their pouches. Their familiarity with the length and size of the balls helps them to easily recognize the words without opening them. Namjoshi gives a vivid account of Otto’s transformation from a boy to a Word Eater and the King of the Crows:

It turns out that when the Word Eater tried to eat the bad words the boys called him, they stuck in his throat, so he chucked them in the flower beds in the garden in his school. Some crows who were sitting on the roof tops thought he was throwing them bread crumbs. They flew down and scoffed them up like chips or peanuts. The crows really liked them. They keep hoping he’ll throw them a few more words.

They call him Otto the Word Eater, King of the Crows. (MWE 21)

The portrayal of new and unusual words could be marked in the play of adventurers’ trick of word exchange in which they make a deal to supply new words to him and take back the snatched words. The endeavor of Siril and Gardy for the supply of lexis having bad connotation such as ‘arthritis’ fails. This is not liked by Otto and he orders the crows to attack them. The adventurers counter attack with the large silver balls of words. They have attained maximum size with the use of the ‘grow large’ potion. Larger balls were hurled for greater effect. They used long words such as, PALINDROME, LACHRYMOSE, ICHTHYOSAURUS, SOMNABULISM, IGNOMINIOUS etc. in order to tame and control them. (43- 46) But Goldie breathes in a hundred silver balls and exhales them at the crows in a group formation. The clash ends with the extra-ordinary powers of Monkeyji who controls the situation with a strange beam of grey light, “A beam of grey light shot from Monkeyji’s eye and enclosed Otto. As the others watched, Otto rose three feet into the air and was turned upside down. Then he was given a little shaking so that everything in his pockets fell out.” (48) Then the boy is frozen and asked not to repeat his misconduct. Namjoshi’s tales reflect sharp criticism of traditional child rearing methods and punishments employed to make children into good and responsible citizens. She uses fairy tales as a radical mirror to reflect what was wrong with the traditional discourse on etiquettes and regulations in society, and comments by altering the particular
discourse on civilization in the fairy tale genre. She abandons corporal punishment or
physical and mental torture. She prefers to play with children’s psychology in order to
bring them on the right track. The adventurer’s attack on Otto is not meant to cause
any harm but to defend themselves. He is attacked not by any weapon but mere words
which are far from making any damage.

For being a feminist fairy tale, *Heroes* is not only concerned about children’s
issues but also includes feminist aspects in order to make children aware of the
prevailing disparities and to train them to counter the sinister forces of society. The
writer chooses fairy tales as a medium to impart feminist values as they have greater
impact on a child’s psychology. Her use of binaries and paradoxes such as magic/
realism, rationalism/ sentimentalism along with the advancement in science and
technology is a means to elevate the Third World nations such as India.

*Aditi Adventures* are specifically dedicated to Namjoshi’s niece, Aditi. They
explore the psyche of all the children of the contemporary modern world. The readers
are taken around the world to peep into multiple cultural traditions and the type of
marginalization prevailing there. However, the usual fairy tales are meant to amuse,
but Aditi stories are feminist fairy tales- highly philosophical that not only deal with
children’s issues but also consider feminist aspects in general and act as a guide to
train them to defy and distort the biased patriarchal societal norms. As modern tales
they are enriched with the use of hi-tech gadgets and cultivate rationality along with
the vital fairy tales contents such as, fantasy, miracles and magic in order to deal with
the problems of the real world.
Works-Cited


