CHAPTER IV
SUNITI NAMJOSHI’S NOVELS

4.1 The Conversations of Cow

*The Conversations of Cow* is a novel, political satire, science fiction, and an extended fable or a fantasy in which the protagonist is an Indian disciple whose teacher appears to her in the form of a cow. The novel explores Namjoshi’s feminist consciousness and a lesbian feminist utopia and establishes her lesbian identity. As an Indian and a lesbian, Namjoshi is concerned with her identity as a migrant to the white heteronormative sexiest-society of the patriarchy in the West. The quest for identity is urgency for her because in the patriarchal society the lesbians are often treated as unnatural and abnormal beings. The same theme is explored in the present novel. She also faced a lot of problems by proclaiming her identity as a lesbian in the Western countries. Maggie Ann Bowers remarks:

*The Conversations of Cow* is a parody of a quest narrative in which the character Suniti embarks on a search for her true identity. The epiphany of the quest generates a deeper understanding of the nature of identity, but one which dismisses the very notion of one fixed identity, and so dispenses with the singleness of the very aim of the quest itself. The prose fiction is also, in effect, a bildungsroman in which Suniti goes through a series of learning experiences, each dispensing or introducing an aspect of identity by a goddess who appears in many forms but who appears
predominantly as a Brahmin cow, called Cow, and through them reaches an epiphany concerning her identity which enables her to find a method of living in relation to others (Bowers 55-56).

Suniti tries to seek her true self. She needs to find out the possibilities for resistance in acknowledging the fact that identity is fully fluid, so that contact between two people can be mutually influencing rather than a war of confrontation and domination. The first learning experience gets to the Western lesbian cow in Canada where the Anglo cows reveal an orientalist attitude. Suniti learns that she does not control her identity. This episode can be read as an indication of orientalism in the Canadian society. The cows rename Suniti with the English name ‘Sue’ and they show the greatest interest in India. The cows form an imaginary picture of India in their own terms.

Suniti herself is the protagonist who offers a biological separation and the Cow Bhadravati staunchly supports her argument. She and the Cow Bhadravati are the lesbians and they are very close to each other. They visit the lesbian community of the cows. The dialogues between Suniti and Bhadravati reveal the trials and tribulations of an immigrant lesbian, feminist and separatist.

*The Conversations of Cow* has the following five sections: I. The Manifestation, II. Bhadravati, III. Interlude, IV. Bud and V. Conjuring Cow. Suniti’s inner quest and her outer journeys are closely interwoven. The novel focuses on her quest for identity and reality of marginalized selves. She also gives the conversations of women which reflect that women are always marginalized in the heterosexist society. Namjoshi reveals how thoughts and emotions of women have always been ‘others’
on the basis of gender as well as racial and sexual discriminations. During this odyssey of self-discovery, Suniti and the cow go on changing the roles of pupil and teacher. The relation between Suniti and the cow is more than the writer and the teacher. They become very intimate friends and lovers.

By introducing a Brahmin cow, Suniti explores her own ways of belonging as well as unbelonging. The cow is both ordinary and intelligent in some ways. She has all the human drawbacks but she challenges all the situations imposed on her by the patriarchy. She is engaged in her struggle against that social structure which pushes her to the margins and makes her invisible, and at the same time; transforms her physical existence into an exotic commodity for white male. The way of her quest for identity is full of hurdles. Her status as a non-white Asian-Indian lesbian is also equally fluid because as a lesbian of non-Anglo ethnic origin in a white society, she is a minority within a minority.

The novel highlights Suniti’s quest for identity and acceptance in society as a lesbian. Her attraction for Bhadravati itself lies in the fact that she too is a lesbian. Thus, her quest for identity goes on till the end. Suniti is finally prepared to accept Bhadravati as she is. The author herself in the introductory article in her collection Because of India aptly remarks:

It’s obvious that for some time now I had been asking the question, what was my place in a world was that often seemed absurd to me. All right, I was a lesbian feminist. But what was a lesbian? What was her relation to other people? And what about the problem of warring egos? (Namjoshi 83)
The dominant themes in this novel are lesbian feminism and the problem of identity. She also deals with the vital themes of radical feminist writers.

A. Gender Discrimination

Namjoshi explores the gender discrimination between male and female in the heterosexual society. The protagonist confesses that she does not like men. She considers them as aliens and the Men from Mars. The Martians are always the invaders. Their mission is ‘The domestication of the species of the planet earth’ (CC 95). As a feminist, she considers women’s identity is sanctioned by the dominant group known as the patriarchy. She ridicules the status of women in the male-dominated society and presents her own theory of patriarchal dominance:

Well, as you know, man himself is right at the centre of the literary universe. Pigs and poodles, bats and babies, women and children, the earth itself, are always “the other”. Now how to explain this inexplicable division, this perverse passion to make “the other” conform to the requirements of man’s desire? It doesn’t make sense, unless, of course, one starts with the postulate that men, in fact, are really Martians. Then all the pieces fit together (CC92).

The painful virtual reality of women’s suppression, exploitation and their subhuman status is revealed through this statement. She suggests that women are classed with “bats and poodles” and are denied fundamental rights to lead the life as natural human beings. Due to the selfishness and possessive instincts of men, they have been alienated themselves from the living conditions of the earth. In their pursuit of power and dominance, men have domesticated and enslaved the species, including women on the
earth. Cow is a coarse female animal that is exploited through its capacity to serve humanity with its milk and male progeny.

Though Suniti is in favour of the cult of lesbianism, she is a successor to the slavery, subjugation, physical, mental and spiritual exploitation of women by male-dominated society. In spite of her lesbianism, she is engulfed by patriarchal heterosexuality. Therefore, when Bhadravati transforms herself into a man, Suniti is terribly disappointed because she hates men as they victimize women. Suniti expresses that men are really Martians who invaded planet Earth. They intend on the domestication of her inhabitants, “deduced from their subsequent behavior” (CC91).

Suniti herself is a lesbian and a rebellious woman as she has failed in lesbian love. Therefore, when Bhadravati asks her “Why do you hate women?” Suniti replies, “Because they hurt” (CC42). Suniti occupies multiple marginalities. As a coloured, non-white immigrant woman in Canada, she is without any fixed identity. The notions of gender, race, sexuality and nationality become free and mobile signifiers during her voyage of self-discovery. Both Suniti and Bhadravati have to come to terms with the reality of their existence in such a world. Bhadravati becomes Suniti’s mentor or guide. Suniti and Baddy’s lesbian companionship creates a hope for authenticity of their experience. It raises curiosity about their predicament as lesbians in the heteronormative sexist patriarchy. So Suniti asks the cows about their potential status in the male-relevant gendered society. She asks, “…..oughtn’t there to be a logical pattern? Now that we are lovers, ought we not to get married for example?” (CC 89) In a normal heterosexist relationship lovers get married and settle in life and have children. However, a lesbian relationship is not endowed with this possibility. So they face a dilemma
about the future of their relationship and also to prove their own identity as a lesbian in heteronormative society. This awkward position of lesbians is explained by Cowslip, one of the lesbian cows as,

The world, as you know, is neatly divided into Class A humans and Class B humans. The rest don’t count. How they look, walk and talk depends on television, but there are some factors which remain constant for several years. For example, Class A people don’t wear lipstick, Class B people do. Class A People spread themselves out. Class B people apologise for so much as occupying space. Class A people stand like blocks. Class B people look unbalanced. Class A people never smile. Class B people smile placatingly twice in a minute and seldom require any provocation. Now it’s quite obvious that cows have all the characteristics of Class A people. Our very size and shape take care of that. Your best bet is to let them assume you are one (CC 24).

The class ‘A’ represents the males and their well-entrenched heterosexist patriarchy and the Class ‘B’ represents females who have secondary position, sub-human social status in the male-dominated society. In order to obtain social sanction either Suniti or Baddy has to play the role of Class ‘A’ or the other will have to play the role of Class ‘B’. There is an unseen bond of understanding between Suniti and Baddy. As per the condition, Baddy; the magical cow is ready to accept either role offered by Suniti. The author shows how women are always ‘othered’ on the basis of gender discrimination in patriarchy.

The Bud plays the role of a white racist man and treats Suniti and other females as inferior. A sports car comes to a screeching halt. The
driver is a woman. She yells something. Baddy yells back, ‘You fucking cunt!’ (CC26). Suniti explores the discrimination in animals. Bhadravati who is a lesbian cow makes the difference, ‘A male cow or a female cow? A lesbian cow or a heterosexual one? Pedigreed or non-pedigreed? Which particular one? (CC 42)

B. Feminist Consciousness

The Conversations of Cow is a novella of feminist agenda. It exposes, subverts and rewrites the patriarchal myth of male superiority. Namjoshi attempts to create new spaces among female identities in her fiction, and gives a privileged position to the lesbian self. She makes the use of lesbian identity to challenge the contradictory terms prescribed by the male-dominance. She tries to create a different world from the patriarchal one, and strives against the existing patriarchal world in a feminist cognitive way and wants to create a new world for women. As a lesbian feminist, she crosses individual relationships and constructs the female communities which accommodate males or can exist without them. In order to overcome the male hegemony and oppressive socio-cultural, economical and political structures, she is in favour of lesbian society. She tries to revolt against the heterosexual society. Suniti represents herself in heterosexual couple modes. She is accepted by the society because she lives as per heterosexual society. But in that appearance she feels very uncomfortable, ‘When I’m with Bud in public, I become an appendage, a secondary person’ (CC 99).

The Brahmin cow Bhadravati undergoes transformations. Bhadravati transforms herself into a woman, but as Suniti has had a frustrating experience of a lesbian love affair, she is reluctant for another experiment with it. Therefore, Bhadravati transforms herself into a man
but Suniti is deadly against masculinity, as she wants to have a feminist vision of reality. If Suniti assumes the male role, the cow will not hesitate to become Bhadravati and perform a female role. Another alternative is that the cow can become a white male bud and make Suniti his beloved ‘Sue’. But Suniti refuses to perform either of these roles because accepting them means to become a ‘B’ grade human being in patriarchy where males eternally occupy subject position and females are pushed to the permanently marginalized ‘object’ position. She treats equally as they all are patriarchal and she does not make any distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ males. Suniti is also against those women who become silent and never challenge to the dominating patriarchy and accept the secondary role prescribed to them by patriarchy. As a feminist, Suniti revolts against the secondary status of a woman. Another prominent aspect of Suniti’s personality is that she does not want to perform the role of a male by becoming a man as it leads to lose ones own identity and sacrificing ‘subject’ position. So, she hates to play a secondary role as a woman. She regards men as outsiders or invaders. She resists all male-dominated power and eager to create a separate feminist utopia where all-women-community would live, free from any male-domination. Adrienne Rich says:

“a range… of woman-identified experience; not simply (the desire for) genital sexual experience with another woman… (but) forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support” (Rich 648).
C. Lesbianism

Lesbian feminism can be dealt with at two levels—the erotic, which emphasizes the sexual aspect of the relationships of two women and the political, which is what Adrienne Rich terms ‘lesbian Continuum’:

Many forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support (Rich 20).

Suniti is a spirited lesbian and rebels for her status in heterosexual society, ‘just because I’m a woman and a foreigner, it does not follow I cannot be a university professor’ ‘And a lesbian, B adds, looking mischievous’ (CC34). Suniti is introduced to a self-sustaining community of lesbian cows, of which Bhadravati is a member. They start their journey and on their way they meet community of lesbian cows-Boudicca, Cowslip, Lou-Ann, Ariadne and Sybilla. Suniti further learns about the lesbian cows, their brevity regarding children in this community that they are fighting for property rights and that they acquired their land from a strong minded lesbian. ‘The lesbian community functions as an alternative society to heterosexual society providing the individual quest hero with validation, pride, joy and self-affirmation’ (Zimmerman 120).

Namjoshi attempts to reveal the hidden recesses of the self of the protagonist. She expresses the collective struggle for the independent status of women and their rights. She reveals that lesbians and women also fight for their rights in heterosexual society. During her quest for identity, she strives to find spaces and discursive gaps and these gaps are her conversations with the Cow. As a lesbian feminist, Namjoshi goes beyond the heterosexual society and constructs the female community to
wipe out the problems faced by women for their identity as a lesbian. As Kalpana observes:

In all the new critical works on images of women, there is a central underlying theme, a search for wholeness. A whole and positive image of women would combine power, discipline and intellectual strength with a capacity for rich and complex emotion. The realization of wholeness has been variously termed, however androgyny is the principal name given to the state of equality between the sexes that would result from greater flexibility and breadth in the personality of individuals. In Suniti Namjoshi’s Conversations of Cow, the writer distinguishes three degrees of identity, first, where male values are paramount, second, where there is relatively greater importance to female values and third, where there is a balance between male and female principles (Kalpana 204-205).

D. Quest for Identity

The novel highlights Suniti’s quest for identity and acceptance in the society as a lesbian. Veena Seshadri aptly remarks in her review, “Suniti travels with Cow serve dual purpose, for Namjoshi uses the metaphor of the journey not only to explore the workings of the external world-relationships, attitudes, life in general- but also to delve into the hidden niches of her own mind” (Seshadri 36). Her attraction for Bhadravati itself lies in the fact that she too is a lesbian. Thus, her quest for identity goes on till the end. Suniti is finally prepared to accept Bhadravati as she is. In ‘Interlude’ Suniti is in search of her true self and she asks Bhadraavati, ‘A pine, a cricket, a moon, a forest, two women … Who am I, B?’ (CC80). B tells the story of Spindleshanks to Suniti
which reflects the new world for Spindleshanks. Bhadravati, the guide of Suniti suggests her that she can find her true identity in a newly created world. The change that occurs in Suniti is ultimately her quest for identity. She has an exciting dream that shows her ego to be entirely composed of fear. ‘It is a shapeless and composed of terror. It can not penetrate the blakeness of terror. It can not make a sound. But it is shrieking with the intensity of its own terror’ (CC120). And through this revelation, Suniti is able to deal with her fear and thereby gives up her fear. Suniti accepts her identity as fluid, while retaining a sense of her uniqueness based on the subject position that she holds at that particular moment. She muses to herself, ‘I’m supposed to be Suniti, that particular person with those preoccupations, well, that’s all right then’ (CC121).

Namjoshi presents feminine characters as doubly or triply ‘otherised’ and each confronts their positions of otherness in the patriarchy. C. Vijayasree aptly remarks:

In her quest for identity Suniti considers various possibilities along a culturally constructed spectrum between masculinity at one end and femininity at the other. Within the dominant culture, masculinity and femininity are defined in a binary opposition to each another, and therefore a move away from one is simultaneously a move towards the other. Suniti refuses to be torn between the binaries, and looks for a free and neutral zone where the tyranny of gender does not operate. She also rejects the lesbian duplication of heterosexual categories such as butch and femme and searches for a position of alterity outside or beyond exclusive categories of woman and man (Vijayasree 105).
The novel investigates the interest of certain Western feminists with goddess or religions. Bhadravati, an Indian lesbian cow; manifests herself to Suniti and takes her on a journey during which she changes into many forms – male, female and animals also. The novel is a feminist fantasy which is a quest for a feminist identity and acceptance in the society as a lesbian. Suniti is in a state of dilemma and confusion. She cannot live on or think about the future until she discovers herself. Through this quest for identity, the author explores the novel towards the direction of self-definition. Suniti desires to be a cow, a snail, a goldfish, a pachyderm, a bear, a poodle and a sheep. She expresses her eagerness to go on a quest or a journey of self-exploration to find out her real identity. She expresses her grief about herself to B, She says, ‘But B, I’m thoroughly muddled about who I am? As for what I want, I really don’t know (CC69). This shows the struggle of a feminist lesbian in the heterosexual society. Suniti wants to be an independent being. She would like to be someone bigger, better, and stronger. Paulina Palmer states:

In *The Conversations of Cow* unexpectedly combining motifs from Hindu mythology with ideas from lesbian feminism, Namjoshi explores a theme of particular interest to women in the process of acquiring a feminist consciousness-transformation of role and identity. The eponymous cow guides the astonished narrator through a series of fantastic transformations ranging from the animal to the supernatural (Palmer 59).

Suniti with her lesbian companion succeeds in achieving her quest for knowledge. She shows that the lesbian community works as an alternative society to the heteronormative sexist patriarchy. She finds it very difficult to determine her real identity, as she is unable to make a
choice between a man and a woman. However, she does not wish to be a man or a woman. She thinks of other options such as a cow, a snail, a poodle, a sheep, a gold fish, and a young damsel in distress. But then she thinks that these options are the components of the patriarchy and turns to the Cow for further guidance. She is in quest for her genuine ‘self’ or ‘identity’. She never wants to affiliate herself with the male or female. She wants her sole identity as a lesbian in the heterosexist society. She strongly demands a free and separate space for women in order to maintain freedom from any kind of intervention by the patriarchy. She reveals the fluidity of Suniti and Bhadravati’s transformation. Through the mutually shared relationship and their unusual experiences, Namjoshi shows and communicates the fluidity of fixed meanings in relation to gender, class and social roles. S 2 is the second self of Suniti. The reincarnation of S 2 is an important stage in her quest for identity. There is a kind affinity in between them, ‘I find I’m as stiff and tired as S 2 herself. ‘This is empathy,’ I think. ‘This is true fellow feeling. At last I am experiencing genuine compassion, but it’s something on the whole I could do without’ (CC115). In her journey towards wholeness with her lesbian companion, and with her own self S 2, Suniti celebrates her new status as an enlightened lesbian. This new identity witnesses a splitting off from her own self, ‘Luckily I wake up. I don’t know who I am. After a while I see S 2 beside me sitting up in bed. Then I remember. I’m supposed to be Suniti, that particular person with those preoccupations. We fall asleep without further trouble’ (CC120-121). Namjoshi expresses the revolt against the quest for lesbian identity. The lesbians have to face the racial and gender discrimination in the heterosexist society. As Suniti aptly remarks:
Later that night my conscience bothers me. ‘B’, I say, ‘what about our identities? Aren’t we being false to our true selves?’…… It’s all right,’ she says, ‘identity is fluid. Haven’t you heard of transmigration? And you call yourself a good Brahmin?’

I don’t, as a matter of fact, but I let that pass.

‘But, B, aren’t you really a lesbian cow?’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ she says (CC 32).

E. Alienation

Along with the quest for identity, Namjoshi explores the theme of alienation. When Suniti starts her search of Baddy, she expresses her strong sense of alienation, ‘A small brown woman in desperate search of a large white cow’ (25). In ‘Interlude’, Suniti explores the loneliness and a sense of alienation through Bhadravati’s story of Spindleshanks, ‘And then there was nothing. Only Spindleshanks. Spindleshanks and Nothing. Nothing and Spindleshanks’ (CC82). Namjoshi reflects alienation as one morning Suniti wakes up from her sleep and makes search of her.

Suniti Namjoshi is an Indian lesbian-feminist author who explores the issues of the quest for identity, lesbianism, gender discrimination, alienation and feminist consciousness in The Conversations of Cow. C. Vijayasree observes:

Fact and fiction, dream and reality, magic, metaphor and myth all mingle with each other providing a properly fluid atmosphere for the protagonist’s experience of perpetually shifting identities (Vijayasree 108).
The novel focuses on the quest for identity of Suniti, the protagonist, a feminist lesbian and her journey for self-discovery with Bhadravati, the Indian lesbian cow. The novel also deals with the transformations of Bhadravati into a woman, a white man and the Hindu goddess. At the end, Suniti starts to write down her actual conversations with the cow and with her many selves.

I smile at her. ‘You know, I’m going to write down all this.’

‘What? “The Conversations of Cow” faithfully recorded by her scribe Suniti?’ (CC 125).

4.2 The Mothers of Maya Diüp

*The Mothers of Maya Diüp* is a description of a feminist utopia in which boys are milked for sperms in their puberty and then are terminated as they are of no use to anymore. The moral position is a very strong belief of the writer as she criticizes the evil called Human Nature. The present novel is a feminist flight of the imagination of a woman who tries to create a society where female is the governing sex. She treats the male sex as the secondary and without any power. On the contrary, the female sex is presented as primary and powerful. Woman has a positive identity and man has to define himself in the light of the woman. In this novel, the man functions as the ‘other’. This ‘other’ is unable to occupy any space in the society of women. This society treats the boys and the men as the pitiable creatures and does not offer any importance to them.

Maya Diüp inhabits at the West coast of India which is a mythical island. Rani Saheb, the Blue donkey and Jyanvi are the protagonists of the novel. Rani Saheb is the queen of Mayan matriarchy having a daughter Saraswati. Rani Saheb is treated as the incarnation of the
supreme mother. The Blue donkey and Jyanvi are without any children and this surprises Saraswati, who asks them that how they would achieve the motherhood. Motherhood is an obsession of every female in Maya Diip. This exaltation of motherhood disturbs Jyanvi seriously. She thinks that Maya Diip is not a suitable place to stay for the women because women’s aspiration and desires are sacrificed on the basis of motherhood. Jyanvi’s views are washed out by the Western immigrant Valerie. She further, argues that the rule of women in Maya Diip is gentle, generous and just. But being a lesbian feminist, Jyanvi is fully disappointed and thinks that Maya Diip has no use at all for women, who do not want to become mothers. Thus, the novel concludes with the thought that Mayan society is really the complex and rigid society and is superior to all the structures of the societies throughout the world.

A. Gender Discrimination

The Mayan society does not only present the utopian society of women but also the power struggle between the Ranisaheb and her daughters. Namjoshi concentrates on the point that only inversion of the male-female binary is not adequate. The male-female discrimination at the every level should be discarded. The matriarchy on the Maya Diip is not a utopian one but it is tainted with misuse of power, class hierarchy and devaluation of gender and sex. Thus, it is a kind of model of suppressive patriarchy. Jasbir Jain rightly comments in this regard:

The multiplicity of the utopian/dystopian strands sets up its own dialoguing and questioning as different possibilities of social structuring are examined in order to find out the best possible environment for human life. The primary concern is not with reproductively or patriarchal power but with the quality human life. And for this compassion is opposed to
aggression, nurturing to control and discipline to power. To a large extent both marriage and family are marginalized and love also has its lesbian tendencies. But you still need children. Children are “wonderful”, yet the legitimacy of life in Maya Diip is based upon the condition of asexuality. The male is seen as irrelevant to all else except for producing semen (Jain 65-66).

The treatment of males in the feminist Maya Diip is revealed in the following quote:

‘It must have been very hard to fit into Mayan society,’ said the blue Donkey understandingly. ‘You’ve done very well. But tell me, how do the mothers conceive their children?’

‘They milk the pretty boys.’

‘What?’ asked Jyanvi and the Blue Donkey simultaneously.

They milk them of semen before the boys die into the sea and turn into foam.’ Valerie elaborated.

‘This “turning into foam” - Jyanvi hesitated. It was a question which had been troubling her for some time now. ‘Is that a euphemism or - ?’(MM 52)

The matriarchal society of Maya Diip treats the boys as subsidiary and secondary. They are only used for their semen. It means that, in this society the woman is at the centre and she forms the very core of the society where the man has no significance. Namjoshi creates this utopian land which thoroughly represents the woman as the most powerful and central to all issues of the society. Daughters are always deified in Mayan society but the boys are abandoned at the “Tree of Death”. According to
the government of Maya Diip, the boys who attain maturity commit suicide or jump into the sea and transform themselves into foam. The person who dares to oppose this practice is exiled or dismissed from Maya Diip.

The close scrutiny of the novel puts forth the gender discrimination and hierarchy in Maya Diip. This discrimination is done on the basis of the social standing of a woman as a guardian, a mother, or a servant of the child. Jyanvi is threatened for her protest against this Mayan practice as she tries to oppose this discrimination as, ‘You have sinned against motherhood- against the core of their identities, their religion, and their family structure. Isn’t that enough?’ (MM 27)

The discrimination in the Mayan society is revealed through the following remark of Kalpana R. J:

Each culture is self righteous about its beliefs and is totally non-receptive to ideas and world views that re conflicting or even a bit different from the ones it prescribes. The most obvious way of invalidating a different way of life is to label it as inferior and impossible. ‘Difference’ thus becomes a way in which to isolate an insulate oneself rather than celebrate the polyphony of existence. The category of the “other” with its negative connotations and implications effectively blanks out a different viewpoint from the supposedly valid scheme of things (Kalpana 139).

The above comment reflects over the division of structure in Mayan society. This society is divided into two clusters that is of mothers and of gallants. The mothers of Maya Diip are treated as the emblems of beauty and love, on the other hand; the gallants are competents of mothers to get
love and favours of the mothers. Those gallants who fail to achieve these favours commit suicide. They have to live and die as suitors. They cannot establish friendly relations even with the other gallants.

In Maya Diip, the motherhood is glorified because all the Mayan women get adult status only when they become mothers. Namjoshi explores the personal and political dimensions of motherhood. Unlike patriarchal discrimination, Mayan government strictly follows the grade system for mothers also. It is the discrimination of women themselves as per their grade. Mothers are classified as Grade ‘A’, Grade ‘B’ and Grade ‘C’ mothers. Grade ‘A’ mothers are few, and they pass all the tests and become the chief of various guilds. Usually they are allowed to have daughters. Grade ‘B’ mothers are the biological mothers and the Grade ‘C’ mothers are those who work for their daughters.

B. Feminist Consciousness

*The Mothers of Maya Diip* presents the perversity of motherhood. The Ranisaheb throws out her daughter for challenging the establishment of traditional matriarchy. The feminists challenge the attitude of the patriarchy towards matriarchy. C. Vijayasree aptly points out regarding the mothering and the motherhood of the woman as:

A number of novels written in the 70’s foreground the oppressive aspects of motherhood and depict how reproductive capacities render women vulnerable to make control, and consider childbirth and rearing painful and burdensome. Novels written in the 80’s, in contrast, celebrate motherhood as a source of pleasure and power. Namjoshi’s *The Mothers of Maya Diip* presents these
contradictory viewpoints and attempts a critical analysis of their practical implications (Vijayasree 109).

Namjoshi comments on the matriarchy in Maya Diip which does not entertain any complaint or protest. Therefore, Jyanvi is imprisoned due to her dislike for children and her attitude is considered as irrational. Children are a play in the hands of the Mayan matriarchy. The feminist power structure in Maya Diip is criticized by C. Vijayasree in these words:

In Maya Diip maternity is glorified and childbearing is considered the most sacred duty of mothers. They believe that “It is duty of the every Mayan to sacrifice herself for the welfare of the children” (MM 146). A well structured myth about the magnificence of motherhood is in circulation in the island. While Grade A mothers have proprietary rights over daughters, Grade C mothers simply do the horse for children. It is through hard work and preserve that a Grade C mother can hope to move up the hierarchy. Jyanvi is appalled by the subtle class distinction that privileges some Mayans over the rest, and begins to question the hypocrisy of the whole system of mothering and childrearing (Vijayasree 110-111).

The introduction of feminist ideology at Maya Diip is cruel and harsh. Young girls are taught to be selfless mothers. Gagri’s desire to go outside and enjoy her life on her own level is not allowed and she is compelled to do some work of babies at Maya Diip. The traditional patriarchal structure is shown as unnatural and unjust in the following words,
I mean that Ashans had all the power. Every Ashan thought of himself as a kind of farmer and of every Mayan as a bit of land or afield which could be his property (MM192).

The residents of Ashagad reveal their support to feminism and distrust to the patriarchal system where the male dominancy is prevalent. Namjoshi criticizes this patriarchy as it satirizes the woman as a wild. The remark of Valery only the Ashans existed, the Mayans did not exist is crystal clear from the above remark.

**C. Lesbianism**

The twentieth century witnesses the lesbian as ‘other than the woman’. Lesbians ate the man haters. However, the lesbian feminist clarifies that there is difference between female sexual pleasure and the functional act of reproduction and heterosexual union. This failure to understand the nuances of female sexuality give rise to the wrong notion that the lesbian women cannot conceive and they never achieve motherhood. For the lesbian feminist authors like Namjoshi, this issue is pivotal which she tries to discuss in the present novel. Namjoshi tries to highlight the matters like lesbian identity, gender, and class. In this context, Kalpana R. J. rightly comments:

Suniti Namjoshi also treats the question of lesbian motherhood and again subverts the patriarchal categories. In her narrative, lesbian motherhood is the norm rather than being the taboo it is in patriarchy. She also includes two other societies in the narrative to emphasize just how arbitrary standards sand social codes can be; and just how ridiculous they can appear to an outsider. It is an inverted comment on the patriarchal society in which we live, where we accept all norms as irreducible and inevitable. The
fantasy shows us that, what patriarchy posits as unalterable absolutes are actually arbitrary categories and are ideologically determined. The contradictions concealed within the smooth veneer of patriarchy itself are exposed. (Kalpana 132)

*The Mothers of Maya Diip* exhibits the lesbianism as a substitute mode of existence. For Namjoshi, lesbian identity is not a revolutionary way of life as it cannot assure complete fulfillment of women’s vision of meaningful existence in the society. She warns women about impending dangers that a lesbian relationship involves. She asserts that lesbianism is not exclusive blissful proposition but it is equally filled in with threats and dangers. It can lead them to marginalization by the men and women.

In short, *The Mothers of May Diip* highlights the cultural problems in the contemporary society, gender discrimination and lesbianism. The novelist tries to challenge the basic patriarchal structure in the society. This creation of matriarchal society is a kind of solution to the gender discrimination in the male-dominant society. It also supports the lesbian identity in the social structure. In fact, this identity is not respectfully accepted in the society which Namjoshi tries to create through this novel. It really bears the light to guide the society in future