CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Suniti Namjoshi is one of the ‘new’ Indian women novelists in English from Maharashtra and she is emerging as a creative writer and a blooming star on the horizon of Indian English fiction. She has been active on the literary scene for more than half a century. She is more inclined to fictionalize women’s private as well as public experiences, fears, anxieties, aspirations and frustrations. She has written both singly and in collaboration, in verse and prose; fables and dystopias, novels and short stories, fantasies, satire with a feminist touch, and almost in each genre except drama and epic. She has travelled all over the world to probe into the cultural foregrounding of several nations and produced both the feminist and Diasporic narratives of culture. Namjoshi’s fiction provides the multi-dimensional explorations. Her main themes are gender discrimination, victimization, suppression, oppression, subjugation of women, feminist consciousness, radical feminism, lesbian/gay and queer theory, racial discrimination, sexual orientation, the quest for identity and the plea for equality in the male-dominated patriarchy. She is deadly against women’s subordination and subversion and their positon as subaltern; therefore, she is in favour of women’s quest for self-identity and emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy. Namjoshi also posits the animal world against the human world in her writings. For this purpose, she uses different cultural myths, fairy tales and narratives of an ‘alien’ culture.
Just like Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Kavita Dasvani, Anjanna Appachana, Sunetra Gupta and Anita Rau Badami and many more, Suniti Namjoshi is a very significant writer of the Indian Diaspora in the contemporary literary world scenario. The researcher has concentrated only on the thematic preoccupations of her fiction. The proposed research work has taken into consideration her fables, short stories and novels published up to 2006. Her fiction infuses multiple viewpoints and perspectives; therefore, the researcher has undertaken the exploration of the diverse cultural influences which affect her fiction with its complex blend of the Eastern and Western ideas. It is also intended to probe into the inner tracts of the minds of her characters and the social milieu in which they dwell and offer comprehensive statements on the major themes. A thematic assessment is made by using analytical and interpretative methods. The aim and the objective the present study is to make a modest and coherent study of Suniti Namjoshi’s fiction which will enhance the readers’ understanding of her as a major writer of the Indian Diaspora. The hypothesis of the study is to highlight the universal discrimination of gender and class. She also concentrates on the power-politics, sexual-politics, marginalization of women and the quest for identity. She celebrates lesbian identity and feminist consciousness. Her reputation at the national and international levels also deserves a greater further study.

Though Namjoshi has written eight volumes of poems, she is more popular as a fiction writer than a poet. She has published numerous poems, fables, articles and reviews in anthologies and journals in India and abroad, that is, in Canada, the U.S., Australia and Britain. However, the researcher has restricted her study to Namjoshi’s following collections of fables and novels:
1. **Feminist Fables** (1981)
2. **The Conversations of Cow** (1985)
3. **The Blue Donkey Fables** (1988)
4. **The Mothers of Maya Diip** (1989)
5. **Saint Suniti and the Dragon** (1994)

In the Introductory Chapter, a brief survey of the contribution of contemporary Indian women novelists in English, both the native and Diasporic, insiders as well as outsiders is undertaken. Basically the post-1980s Indian women novelists following in the footsteps of Salman Rushdie are taken into consideration. Similarly, the contribution of the established and canonized Indian women novelists such as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Githa Hariharan, Jai Nimbkar, Dina Mehta, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De and Jhumpa Lahiri is briefly stated. Even, the contribution of the emerging new women writers in the realm of Indian English fiction like Kiran Desai, Nina Sibal, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rani Dharker, Radhika Jha, Sunny Singh, Suma Josson, Anita Rau Badami, Indira Ganesan, Lakshmi Kanan, Kavery Nambisan, Meena Alexander, Raji Narasiimham, Mrinal Pande, Prema Nandkumar, Anita Nair, Sunetra Gupta and Manju Kapur is taken into consideration. All of them are in the favour of feminine sensibility. They raised their voices against female humiliation, suppression and women’s subordination in the male-dominated patriarchy. This Introductory Chapter also constitutes the methodology to be used for the present study which is followed by the
rationale and significance of the study. At the same time, the biographical profile, the making of Suniti Namjoshi, her works published up to 2006 and the shaping influences are fully explored. Finally, the review of relevant literature is surveyed and the design of the thesis is made accordingly.

Suniti Namjoshi, who is the influential writer of the post-Rushdiean period, undergoes immigration due to the job obligation of her father. The purpose of the present study is to draw some conclusions based on the analysis of her fiction. The present research work is a modest attempt to interpret and analyze Suniti Namjoshi’s fiction from the thematic perspectives in order to place her at the national and global scenario.

The Introductory Chapter is followed by the theoretical framework of feminism, lesbian and gay theory, and queer theory. It explores the meaning of feminism, three waves of feminism, feminist consciousness, gender discrimination, women’s subordination in patriarchy, male-domination, victimization and marginalization of women, lesbian/gay theory and queer theory. Feminism is a protest movement started by the women of the West for equal socio-political, legal, moral, cultural and economical status and rights to women with men. Feminism and feminist literary theory may be termed as a cultural politics than a ‘theory’ or ‘theories’. Feminist literary theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical approach which includes many disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, women’s studies, psychoanalysis, philosophy and literary criticism. It is an anti-masculine movement of the women, by the women and for the women that deals with the problems of women’s subordination and inequality in society. It is an ideology that seeks to understand as well as change the world to suit
the woman. The Women’s Liberation Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s is a reform movement aiming at equality of women in society and the change of their fates. The ‘Queer Theory’ is elaborated with the different theories of the critics such as Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, David Eng, Michael Foucault, Judith Halberstam, Jose Munoz, Philips David, Halperin David, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Diana Fuss and Lauren Berlain.


Namjoshi reveals the fact that the inequality between sexes is not a biological but a cultural construct. The women who do not challenge patriarchal constructs and sexuality are always dehumanized and silenced forever. Namjoshi’s fables advocate freedom from victimization, oppression, suppression and the subordination of women from the cultural taboos and norms, and from the restrictions of patriarchy. She argues that women have been permanently exploited by male hegemony and there is no any radical change in the socio-political or cultural status of women. The status of women as the domesticated human animals has not been changed. Man is at the centre and the woman is at the margin in patriarchy. Suniti namjoshi attacks the hypocrisy of patriarchy because in patriarchy the woman’s status gets marginalized as a slave or a servant. Therefore, Suniti Namjoshi makes an earnest appeal to women to come out of the yoke of patriarchy and be self-reliant. Women should aspire for higher social status or at least equality with men. Suniti Namjoshi’s message to all women is that they should not remain in the chains of slavery of male-domiantion.

**Feminist Fables** explore self-definition and self-affirmation of a woman. They also explicate feminist ideas and three phases pointed out by Elaine Showalter-the ‘feminine’, the ‘feminist’ and the ‘female’. The first phase indicates women’s submission to male domination, the second phase marks out the protest while the third phase stands for search for female identity. Sherry Simon rightly sums up Namjoshi’s contribution to the feminist cause in these words, “What Suniti succeeds in doing in the
almost 100 short pieces which makes up her collection of *Feminist Fables* is to subvert the fable form making her pieces less the expression of preconceived dogma than the occasion for provocation and questioning” (Simon 264). Suniti Namjoshi interrogates the marginalization of women in patriarchal society and inspires them to struggle for self-identity and autonomy. She exposes the exploitation of women on social, sexual and psychological grounds.

In *The Blue Donkey Fables*, Namjoshi’s animal characters expose the gender violence and patriarchal didacticism encoded in the traditional fables in order to present the feminist thought. Gender discrimination as a strategy for male dominance and marginalization of women has been criticized by feminists like Suniti Namjoshi. To her, it is the patriarchy that incubates gendered notions about class of women through systematically built structures. Her women crave for authenticity of their self and experience. Because of their secondary subhuman status they feel completely baffled and helpless.

*Feminist Fables* and *The Blue Donkey Fables* are a superb retelling of myths and legends from *The Arabian Nights* and *Aesop’s Fables* as well as from the Indian epics and the Greek myths. In her first collection, Namjoshi is against feminism as a political flag waving ideology and reveals the hidden biases and absurdities through faceless and anonymous women in all patriarchal societies. She observes emotional and moral pitfalls and upholds the need of moral purity. She reworks the traditional fables by applying contemporary agendas to the fables and the mode of narration is fantastic and anti-realistic.

Chapter III concentrates on Suniti Namjoshi’s later fables and short stories entitled *Saint Suniti and the Dragon, The Aditi Stories*,.
Building Babel, Goja: An Autobiographical Myth and Sycorax: New Fables and Poems. Saint Suniti and the Dragon is a mixture of dialogues, monologues, Gulf War diary entries, prayers, postcards and songs. Namjoshi in her pursuit of the nature of good, evil and sainthood talks with angels, flowers, dragons, saints and ordinary people. She draws on the traditions of Indian fable and Western legend and gives us a thoroughly modern fable in Saint Suniti and the Dragon. These fables deal with the themes such as women’s victimization, feminist consciousness, lesbianism, quest for sainthood and the theme of evil. Building Babel indicates the possibilities of building of a new culture and world in which women will get freedom from subordination and male hegemony. Suniti describes the process of culture which is an important activity that enables the sisters to develop a sense of universal sisterhood. She also emphasizes the need for female bondage. She appeals for equality and mutual understanding in the male-dominated society. It focuses on gender discrimination, feminist consciousness and quest for identity.

Goja: An Autobiographical Myth offers a new perspective to look at the East from the eyes of the West and vice-versa. It analyses her experience of living in between two cultures and continents. As an immigrant writer in the US, Canada and UK, she penetrates about her own identity in different sexualities. Goja relates her experiences geographically, psychologically and sexually and says: “This account is autobiographical in that my experience is all I have. It’s fiction since any version manipulates facts. And it’s mythical because it’s by making patterns that I make sense of all I have” (Preface to Goja ix). There are two main figures who contributed to her career, Goja, her maid servant and her grandmother, Goldie. Suniti’s life is closely related to these two
old women who played very significant roles in her development of personality in India and outside. Thus it becomes a fictional autobiography of a Diasporic writer staying in India and abroad. This autobiography is a truer proof to her live experiences in inside and outside India. Through this autobiography, she opens her lesbian identity to Goja and her grandmother. Thus this becomes a lesbian novel of female bildungsroman and Suniti’s fictional autobiography in which she talks about her own lesbian identity. She also deals with the male-female gender discrimination in her early life and the issues of racism and ethnocentricity. Goja also concentrates on the class conflict between the rich and the poor, victimization of women in male-dominated society and the theme of alienation of women. This autobiography reveals Namjoshi’s growing up between the rich and the poor, in the house of Rajasaheb, Ranisaheb and Goja, the maid servant and these two polarities reveal Suniti’s bildungsroman as a child, student, teacher and writer. However, she is not able to live in India as a lesbian because of her relationship with Gillian Hanscombe. The Aditi Stories are especially about teenagers and they include the series: Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey, Aditi and the Thames Dragon, Aditi and the Marine Sage and Aditi and the Techno Sage. These stories are adventure stories which deal with women’s victimization, feminist consciousness, quest for identity and racism. Sycorax is a parody of Shakespeare’s famous play The Tempest in which Prospero, Miranda and Sycorax play very significant roles in the dramatic action. The book is in fable as well as poem forms in which Sycorax is delineated as an old yet defiant and fierce woman. The poems are both satirical and elegiac and the myths and fables show that Suniti Namjoshi is a fabulist writer who poses the questions about the nature of good and evil and nature and war. It also
deals with feminine issues such as gender discrimination and feminist consciousness.

Chapter IV is a modest attempt to make a thematic analysis of Suniti Namjoshi’s novels entitled *The Conversations of Cow* and *The Mothers of Maya Diip*. *The Conversations of Cow* is a novel, political satire, science fiction, 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. This novel is about the gender discrimination, quest for identity and lesbian relationships. It explores the problem of identity, colour, gender and sexuality in it. It also attacks on patriarchy.

*The Mothers of Maya Diip* deals with cultural, social problems of the contemporary society regarding women’s issues such as gender discrimination and lesbian relationships. Suniti Namjoshi tries to protest against the basic patriarchal structure in the society. According to her the creation of matriarchal society is a kind of solution to the gender discrimination in the male-dominant society. It also accepts the lesbian identity in the social structure. In fact this identity is not respectfully accepted in the society. It also highlights the cultural problems of the contemporary society, gender discrimination, and lesbianism.

The last Chapter elaborates the conclusions arrived at by the researcher and it is followed by the select bibliography of Suniti Namjoshi. Suniti Namjoshi is still a living writer engaged in creative writing about women’s significant issues. She employs ancient myths, legends, folk tales, fantasy and irony as literary devices to cater for humane values of women’s burning problems such as gender discrimination, humiliation, subordination, suppression, victimization, feminist consciousness and lesbian relationship in her narratives. She
also describes male-domination, patriarchal norms, hegemonic structures, familial and sexual codes. She posits strongly a resistance to gender oppression, racism and class conflict in her works and demands for liberty, equality and fraternity in a male-dominated society for women in the modern or ultra-modern world. She staunchly demands for a radical change in the existing behavioural patterns and norms and social systems in current situations. She is deadly against women’s subversion and their position as subaltern; therefore, she is in favour of women’s quest for identity. Her writing is most significant in the modern feminist discourse. Namjoshi’s writing presents a revolt against decentering the predominant discourse of male hegemony, which is a need of modern times.