CHAPTER II
SUNITI NAMJOSHI’S EARLY FABLES

Suniti Namjoshi has been active on the literary scene for more than half a century. In this span she has written in verse and prose- the fables, fairy tales, novels, short stories and children’s literature with a feminist touch. Besides, she has travelled from country to country to probe into the cultural matrix of several nations and produced both the feminist and Diasporic narratives of culture. She comments upon the universal discrimination of gender and class and that is her major thematic concern. She also posits the animal world against the human world. For this purpose, she uses different cultural myths, fairy tales and narratives of an ‘alien’ culture. One finds, as Jasbir Jain in her Preface to C. Vijayasree’s critical treatise *Suniti Namjoshi: The Artful Transgressor* has pointed out “the multi-dimensional explorations” (Jain 10) in Suniti Namjoshi’s fictional world. The Indian women novelists such as Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal deal with socio-political themes, but Namjoshi concentrates on the power-politics, sexual-politics, gender discrimination and quest for identity. In a review of *Feminist Fables*, Sherry Simon observes, “What Suniti Namjoshi succeeds in doing in the almost 100 short pieces which make up her collection of *Feminist Fables* is to subvert the fable form, making her pieces less the expression of pre-conceived dogma than the occasion for provocation and questioning” (Simon 264).
2.1 Feminist Fables

The researcher aims at the critique of Suniti Namjoshi’s *Feminist Fables* from the feminist perspective. *Feminist Fables* is a collection of ninety-nine fables dealing with women’s problems from a feminist perspective. All the fables are in the tradition of Indian storytelling. They are in a didactic form as well as in a satiric form dealing with the social issues of morality. Suniti Namjoshi is a radical feminist and her feminist agenda can be seen in her *Feminist Fables*. According to C. Vijayasree, “The issues raised in these fables are of course basic to the human condition: intimacy, loneliness, death, anger, ambition and desire; and these thread their way through this collection and are explored now with an eye for the comic, for the absurd, now with a sense of poignant sadness and longing” (Vijayasree 76).

A. Gender Discrimination and Marginalization

Most of the contemporary Indian women writers in English have raised their voices against their marginality in the patriarchal society and one of them is Suniti Namjoshi. In an Interview with Meena Kandasamy about the fables and fairy tales, Namjoshi remarks, “*Feminist Fables* sought to question social assumptions and subvert the male-dominated literary tradition” (Kandasamy 2011). She makes the use of Anderson’s tales, Christian myths, Panchantantra stories, Aesop’s fables, Greek myths and other texts to deconstruct the patriarchal world. A woman is at the centre of these fables and fairy tales. As the poet, the fabulist, the feminist as well as the lesbian, Suniti Namjoshi explicates women’s marginalization, subordination, suppression, and oppression in a male-dominated patriarchal society. She presents the image of woman struggling for self-identity and equality, autonomy and self-affirmation.
Some of her fables deal with women’s lives being erased, ignored, demeaned and mystified. She highlights the exploitation of women on social, sexual and psychological grounds.

Right from the beginning of her literary career, Namjoshi has experienced life differently. The radical changes in her life shaped her temperament and personality. She was influenced by Feminist and Gay Liberation Movements and all her personal experiences are reflected in her writing. C. Vijayasree calls her ‘The Artful Transgressor’ and says that her aptitude to writing is one of the ‘transgression’ rather than ‘aggression’. She aptly remarks, “Namjoshi is the first Indian woman writer to have openly declared her sexual choice as a lesbian and has since held that the kind of sexual life one chooses to lead is a purely personal matter, where an individual’s autonomy should neither be checked nor curtailed” (Vijayasree 26). Sumitra Puri observes, “Rejection of prestigious positions led her to investigate the nature of all modes of dominance- of class, race, gender and nationality and to transgress them. This transgression became her key concern” (Puri 32).

The opening story ‘From the Panchtantra’ is taken from a Sanskrit book of fables and it contains both Brahmins and beasts. Lord Vishnu grants a poor Brahmin’s wish for a son. Out of absentmindedness, Lord Vishnu gives the Brahmin a daughter. In a very short period Lord Vishnu appears again and the Brahmin once again makes his earnest request for a son. Lord Vishnu says, “Next time around” (FF 1). In his next incarnation the Brahmin was a woman and she became the mother of eight boys. In the next birth, the Brahmin girl asks for ‘human status’ but Lord Vishnu knows the difficulty in granting ‘human status’ to females; so the girl’s request remains unfulfilled. Lord Vishnu appoints a committee to look into the matter. Suniti Namjoshi comments on Vishnu’s prediction about
the status of woman, and it is in favour of patriarchy. Even religions marginalize women. Namjoshi attacks on caste and gender hegemony prevalent in the society.

Diane McGifford observes, “In *Feminist Fables* Namjoshi extends the traditional form of the fable, for though her fables teach and have animals as teachers; her lessons usurp the status quo to endorse feminist thought” (McGifford 293). In most of her fables and fairy tales retold, many birds, beasts and animals play the role of instructors to human beings. They are ducks, swans, lizards, monkeys, crocodiles, mares, snakes, mongooses, bears, ostriches, foxes, owls, frogs, spiders, the hares and turtles, mammals, and blue goats. They also play the roles of characters. Simultaneously, we find mythical characters such as Red Ridinghood, Hansel and Gretel, Little Miss Muffet, Jack of the Beanstalk, Goldilocks, the Ugly Duckling, Cinderella, Perseus, Andromeda, the handsome young Dyke, the new Woman and the Incredible Woman. Most of her characters are females raising their voices against male-domination and female subordination. In an Interview with Chelva Kanaganayakam, Namjoshi says, “I am always asked why I write fables and why I write about animals. I try to supply answers, but the honest truth is I don’t know. We don’t separate animals from human beings (Namjoshi 50).

Namjoshi tries to highlight the marginalization of women in patriarchy and encourages women to struggle for self-identity. In *Because of India*, she says that the fables “were a way of exploring feminist ideas and their implications for the patterns I had inherited through the mainstream literary tradition” (Namjoshi 79). She reveals her threefold marginalization in her fables, namely, the ‘Asian perspective’, the ‘alien perspective’ and the ‘lesbian perspective’. Her fables reveal
that the inequality between sexes is not a biological but a cultural construct and this acute reality is presented allegorically in the fables such as ‘The Princess’, ‘The Lesson’, ‘The Anthropoi’, ‘Happy Ending’, ‘The Little Prince’, ‘Blood’, ‘The Hare and the Turtle’, and ‘The Tale of Two Brothers’. ‘The Princess’ is about the traditional sensitive woman. The princess was a genuine princess. She was endowed with a magnificent bed and a small green pea. But she is unable to sleep because the pea was placed under seven thick mattresses. She was very beautiful, charming but amazingly sensitive. She could not tolerate anybody’s cry or hurt. If anybody was hurt, she would lie in her bed and be ill for weeks. Her parents tried their level best for her, but the princess being sensitive and allergic to everything finally catches cold and dies of it. She is unable to survive in this harsh world of reality. In the next fable ‘The Lesson’, Namjoshi attacks patriarchy, as it keeps woman subservient to male-domination through marriage. She says that patriarchal ideology constructs the image of woman in terms of passive stereotypes. In this story the girl wants to imitate the naked Emperor, but her mother denies that act. She reminds her that only little boys can desire to be Emperors and little girls have to marry Emperors and keep themselves passive and silent. They have no equal status. Namjoshi believes that daughters are trained since their childhood by their mothers to be passive, submissive, patient and complacent and to “hold their tongues, particularly on the subject of the Emperor’s clothes” (FF 8). Suniti emphasizes that women who do not challenge patriarchal constructs of femininity and sexuality are always dehumanized and silenced, though they are princesses or nymphs.

‘The Anthropoi’ presents women as human beings like men, but they are burdened with child-bearing, child-caring and all other laborious
tasks. Women are victimized in patriarchal society is a grim reality. The author strongly attacks patriarchy. She presents men as “handsome athletes and noble warriors, and they hunted and drank and were exceedingly clever” (FF 9). Every sentence in this story shows the author’s bitter satire on the patriarchal domination of men over women who are referred to as “a species that was very like man, but quite evidently inferior” (FF 9). She presents the story of their conquest as the men “trained them into slavery, transferring to them the burden of child-bearing and child-rearing, and the more troublesome tasks, which had no prestige or required no intellect” (FF 9). The author attacks the women who display the most commendable loyalty to men.

‘Happy Ending’ is like Anderson’s tale about Ugly Duckling in which there is a dispute about the ugliness of Ugly Duckling. But he was like a swan and his younger brother looks like a duckling, but shows preference for his own gender. The solution is drawn that he isn’t ugly, but he is a drake and not a swan. And they began to live happily together.

In ‘The Little Prince’, the wicked stepmother married a king who already had a son. The queen gave birth to a girl and she wanted her daughter to be on the throne. Therefore, she requested to the king to do a small favour but the king rejected her request and decided to teach a lesson to the princess. The tests in hunting, drinking, tennis, mathematics and the law were conducted in which the prince failed and the princess passed. Then the king allowed the princess to rule. ‘Fortunately, the citizens had some more sense’ (FF 15) and they did not want to be ruled by a woman. The citizens hauled out the prince and set him on the throne, and resisted the rule by a woman. Though the little princess has administrative ability, male-domination does not allow her to rule them. They set the prince on the throne. ‘The Little Prince’ is a bitter criticism
of patriarchy. The wicked queen and her unlucky daughter were exiled forever. Thus, the princess was marginalized due to gender discrimination. The gender discrimination is also shown in ‘The Female Swan’ through swans and ducks.

‘Blood’ presents the stereotypical attitude of patriarchy that treats female as a lifeless and insignificant entity. There is the Snow Maiden who waits for the Prince. The maiden is snow white, pure and virginal, but there is no blood in her body. The Prince comes, marries her and abandons her. ‘The Hare and the Turtle’ is the re-telling of the famous Aesop’s Fable, ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’. Suniti attacks the gender hierarchy in it. The turtle in this story is male and his cousin and the hare are females. The turtle challenges the hare to race with him. The hare accepts the challenge but she is placed at a fifty yard distance and he is placed a foot from the finishing line. Naturally the turtle wins the race and taunts the hare and reminds her of her female status. The turtle says that she is born as a female and is inferior to him. His cousin is also inferior to him. Due to this gender hierarchy females are always defeated and treated unjustly. They are treated as incompetent. Namjoshi attacks the humiliation of women.

‘The Tale of Two Brothers’ reveals the inferior status of women in a male-dominated society. Women are used as servants for doing the household duties and child caring. They are presented as the imprisoned birds in a patriarchal society and are pushed away from the centre. It is assumed that there was a man who performed all the household duties of a woman as a woman. On the other hand, his brother, Jack Cleverfellow, hired a wife and got rid of that domestic drudgery. In ‘Three Bears’, Goldilocks is eight years boy who enters the bears’ house where he is welcomed by all. Finally, he is taken to be a sweet and good girl.
Namjoshi’s fables advocate freedom from oppression and suppression from cultural taboos and norms, and from the restrictions of patriarchy. This feminist agenda of freedom from oppression and suppression is presented in the fables like ‘Perseus and Andromeda’, ‘Exegesis’, ‘Of Spiders’, ‘Next Time Around’, ‘Green Slave Woman’, ‘A Room of His Own’, ‘Rescued’, and ‘Heart’. In ‘Perseus and Andromeda’, the duties of the prince, the princess, and the dragon are to fight the dragon, to serve as bait, and to take the blame respectively. But, their roles are reversed and they have to perform their duties accordingly. The ambitious princess asks the prince to serve as the bait and she will fight the dragon. The prince objects to this being a stronger and manlier. Then, there is a fight between the dragon and the prince and the prince loses the fight.

There are comments on the popular assumptions of the gender identities of the sun and the earth in ‘Exegesis’. She says, ‘The sun must be male. The earth must be woman’ (FF 53). In the ancient stories the phenomenon of the earth and sun was studied from the perspective of sisterly incestuous relationships and this type of sisterly relationship was not reproductive as light can not generate in the mud. Newer studies presented another relation of the sun and the earth involved in the production of the generation on the earth. The earth has a reproductive power which is reflected through her fissures and cracks. These are caused by the fierce heat of the sun. The fierce earth gives rise to volcano and the man suffers, regrets and groans. The last two sentences of the story exhibit the gender-bias. In the patriarchal socio-cultural and political set up ‘Man is at the centre. There are no human women’ (FF 53). Namjoshi criticizes androcentric view of life which ignores women as insignificant, disposable, and lifeless things as compare to men. This
has destroyed women’s capacity to reject the stereotypes and think independently. Therefore, they are not enthusiastic about any change.

The fable ‘Of Spiders’ focuses on gender discrimination. The little girl Miss Muffet is rather lonely. The boys are interested in making jokes while she is interested in composing polished poems. She doesn’t like other school going children as they always talk about the boys, and their birthday activities. Namjoshi reflects over the class-discrimination in the world of children. Little Miss Muffet is both the best writer and the reader. She wants to establish relationship with the spiders. She observes the spider’s work and realizes that her life is like an insubstantial myth in a male-dominated social structure. Even in Greek mythology, the female life is presented as a myth. Women are destined to remain as passive and mute. Miss Muffet studies the classical mythology. She knows the myth of Archane in which Archane was transformed into a spider. Muffet learns more about her sister Athene who was angry with Archane because Athene “was a great goddess and her father’s daughter” (FF 57). The author reveals that even for goddess the issues of gender discrimination and identity were very significant.

In ‘Next Time Around’, the woman slept for thousand years. When she woke up, she found that there was no change in the status of women. The fable ‘Green Slave Women’ depicts how men transformed women and trained them for slavery. Namjoshi attacks on the victimization of women in patriarchy. She argues that woman has always been exploited by men through the thousand of years. There has been no any radical change in the social, political or cultural status of women. The woman in this story fed up with male-domination and exploitation. There she sleeps for one thousand years in the hope that there would be changes. When she wakes up and yawns, doctors rush towards her and
ask about her age, status either married or unmarried and it reflects the patriarchal gender-bias. In patriarchy the institution of marriage has great significance. While going to sleep the woman had expected that there would be no gender-bias or gender based class-discrimination. And so after waking up she asks the doctor calmly, “Haven’t things changed?” (FF 59) There are various changes in that thousand years, but there is no any change in the matter of class discrimination and gender norms. The status of woman as domesticated human animal has not been changed. In doctor’s explanation ‘man’ is more important. He is at the centre and woman is at the margin. They tell the woman about the man’s progress in space but unfortunately there is no ‘space’ for women at all. The doctors say that every unmarried man has “a house of his own and a reasonable income” (FF 59). This reveals that women are homeless and rootless. Man is independent but women have no income and so they are dependent and hence unimportant. Through this story Suniti makes an appeal to women to come out of the yoke of patriarchy, she asks them to become self-reliant and not to be parasites. The title symbolizes the tentativeness of women’s existence. Nobody knows when they would really be free beings.

The fable ‘Green Slave Women’ deals with the systematic taming of the bestial, luscious, wild and uncontrollable women by patriarchy. The encounter between the Green Slave Women and the Space Captain results in sexual swordplay and the final submission is of a woman to man. This is the foundation of marginalization and permanent enslavement of women. Namjoshi says, ‘all this is history’ (FF 61) of women and comments on the subordination of the women in the world. She warns that if women aspire for a higher social status, there will be captains or males to defeat them and put them in chains of slavery.
Namjoshi’s ‘A Room of His Own’ is a revision of favourite tale of Bluebeard and his wife. Suniti protests against the extreme slavish domestification of women through the institution of marriage. The British novelist Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One’s Own* describes the total discrimination between man and woman in a male-centred society. Patriarchy forces a woman to conceal her spirit, genius and aspiration. She is given a secondary status before and after her marriage. Woolf opines that marriage curbs woman’s all types of desires and aspirations. And the same issue is mentioned by Namjoshi in her revised form of fable. Bluebeard is the husband and when his wife retorts to his question ‘I think you’re entitled to a room of your own’ (FF 64). Then in an angry mood Bluebeard kills his wife on the spot. Suniti points out that if a woman shows indifference to her husband, then no meaningful relationship is possible. From feminist point of view, a little provocation is enough for male to harm their wives. Bluebeard killed his wife and this wife-beating has become a regular phenomenon of the institution of marriage. Even after wife’s murder for a trivial reason, Bluebeard is not punished for the brutal murder. Namjoshi criticizes the discriminatory legal system that always serves the interests of males in patriarchy. Suniti Namjoshi attacks the docile woman who is ready to accept her subordinate position as a slave to a man.

In ‘Rescued’ Anderson’s woman Rapunzel bears a harsh treatment. Though she is beautiful, she can not cope with the situation, as she is not powerful. Rapunzel rejects the dream of the original woman character and sees the dreams of liberation. Rapunzel hopes that a Prince will come and take her with him to law and order of the established society. She wants to escape from the clutches of the wicked witch.
The fable ‘Heart’ portrays a “Headless Woman” doing the jobs of cooking and cleaning without any complaints. The main purpose of her life is to serve other people. She never complained of feeling tired or exhausted. In the course of time, her children grew; her husband grew old and died. She became lonely and so she met the government and asked for pension. But her demand was turned down. The government was not cruel but “the problem was that she had no head and couldn’t ask” (FF 93). In patriarchy women are dependent and passive. They are not required to make use of their head. It destroys the ability of women to think practically and independently. So she lacks practical knowledge, loses her identity and gets a secondary status. She represents the helpless world of females. Patriarchy inculcates notions of women’s inferiority to men. It emphasizes that men are more intelligent and rational and women are romantic, sentimental and irrational in their thoughts. Therefore, they blindly follow men’s commands and it never occurs to them to challenge their validity. This has destroyed their power of judgement, so they exist only in relation to their male counterparts. The story symbolizes the lamentable status of women. Women are relegated to be sentimental fools, who simply toil and in Simone de Beauvoir’s view, ever ready “to lie down at her master’s feet and kiss the hand that strikes her” (Beauvoir 615).

In fables like ‘In the Forest’, ‘The Mouse and the Lion’, ‘Her Mother’s Daughter’, ‘Jack Three’s Luck’, and ‘And Then What Happened’, Namjoshi makes use of fairytale characters in very real settings to provide an alternative to the present male-dominated society. In all these fables and fairy tales, she craves for women’s emancipation in a male-dominated society. ‘In the Forest’ is re-visioning of the famous fairy tale entitled ‘Hansel and Gretel’. Namjoshi borrows the stories of
witches from the ancient sacred texts in order to challenge and subvert the hegemony of male gender. She points out that all the ancient texts were gender-based and emphasize that in spite of their class, caste and race differences, women have affinity and mutual respect for other females. Suniti envisions a ‘universal sisterhood’ for all the women in the world. Namjoshi suggests that women who do not conform to heterosexist code of patriarchy are driven out of society as outcasts. They are forced to exile into the forests. Such rebellious women are often labelled as ‘Wicked Witches’. In this story the young girl Gretel goes into the forest. She is accompanied by her little brother Hansel. But he runs back to his step mother as he is frightened by the witch. But Gretel stays there. This marks the gender differences. Hansel represents patriarchal values so he runs away from the world of women. He never tolerates the idea of female-domination, so he resolves to fight against female-domination and perpetuate heterosexist society. Suniti has exploited the psychological value. She has attempted to offer new dimensions to women to liberate their repressed wishes and gain psychological independence. Here it is Gretel who “stands a better chance” in the “wild witch’s world”. But Hansel will fight only when he grows to be a man. In this fable Gretel puts on a brave front and encounters the witch, she walks up the path and “knocks the door” the witch “lets her in”. Here, Gretel offers a moral boost for women’s dominant roles as ‘braver and wiser’. This fable conveys the message that women can handle problems more effectively.

‘The Mouse and the Lion’ is retelling of Aesop’s fable. In this fable a mouse has done a favour to the lion and did not kill him, but the lion denies that favour. In ‘Her Mother’s Daughter’ the mother refuses to see the point in her feminist’s daughter’s argument that women are always relegated to a secondary position in the male-dominated world.
‘Jack Three’s Luck’ is a revision of the fairy tale ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’. The powerful Giantess instead of devouring children wants to marry the boys. The roles of the boys are expected to reverse and perform the domestic household duties generally done by women. The Giantess tells them that “she would keep them as husbands, but they must cook and clean and make themselves useful and generally be pleasant” (FF 101). Docility is not a solely feminine quality. The boys are expected to take on the role of a slave to serve the master. The accepted roles of the male - master and female - slave are thus challenged and altered.

Namjoshi attacks the hypocrisy of patriarchy and explodes the myth of a successful marriage in the tale, ‘And Then What Happened’. In patriarchy woman is dependent on man, her status gets marginalized as the slave or servant. But in this story, Cinderella doesn’t live happily ever after her marriage but she prefers divorce from her husband. She enjoys liberty and walks away from her husband’s home. Namjoshi has rewritten this familiar tale by giving an unconventional ending. She has tried to subvert the gender hierarchy of the prince. The conversation between the Prince and Cinderella is very interesting as it throws light on the superior status of males in social hierarchy.

The Prince says, “You married me for my money”.

Cinderella replies, “You married me for my looks”.

The Prince says: “But your looks will fade, whereas my money will last. Not a fair bargain” (FF 118).

It is ironic that for the prince, marriage is a kind of bargain. The author strongly feels that the institution of marriage is in favour of patriarchy.
Men do not consider it as a mutual relationship. Therefore, Namjoshi insists all women to protest against their subordination through marriage.

In the fables such as ‘Local History’, ‘The Grace of the Goddess’, ‘The Derbyshire Fish’, ‘Myth’, ‘The Doll’, ’The Amazon’, and ‘The Object’, Namjoshi depicts gender discrimination, gender prejudice and suppression of opposite sex. ‘Local History’ reveals the negative impact of gender discrimination on women in patriarchy. Several thousand years ago in an ancient primitive society, a little girl was treated as a goddess. She was the deity of a small fishing village. The villagers knew that in the monsoon season the child was throwing a tantrum. When the weather would be clear and the sea would be calm, the villagers would celebrate the occasion by throwing coconuts into the sea and start fishing again. The men and women worked together happily. But in one particular year there was a shortage of fish. The stupid young man asked the villagers to kill the goddess and use her as bait. The villagers didn’t kill the goddess but cut her into pieces, but she grew back again. The author suggests that whenever there were natural calamities such as draught, floods, shortage of food and epidemics, there emerged an evil practice of sacrificing a female body to appease pagan gods. Since then women have always been the victims at the hands of patriarchy. In spite of the progress of civilization, the gender-bias has remained intact. It is the general tendency among the people that “They greet the birth of a son with joy, but the birth of daughter causes distress” (FF 50).

‘The Grace of the Goddess’ depicts women’s sufferings. A very high-minded child goes to forest, preys to goddess, and tells her about the sufferings of men, women and children. The child asks the goddess to do something. The goddess asks her to sacrifice her life and in exchange she would save lives of thousands of people. But the girl refuses it by saying:
‘I’m also human and have a right to live’ (FF 65). The goddess mocks at the girl and tells her about the low status of women in patriarchy.

‘The Derbyshire Fish’ is about the neglected women. The author describes the life of fish in the unknown and gloomy caves of Derbyshire in the English Midlands. These fish are blind because they swim in the dark. Namjoshi ironically comments, “Nature knows best, these benighted creatures do not wish to live. It will all work out. They are nearly extinct” (FF 84). The fish are in reality women who lived in complete darkness. Their life is meaningless and without purpose. The child who brings a handful of dead fish symbolizes the feminist desire to bring to light the dark side of women’s life.

The revised fable ‘Myth’ is related to the classical tales about gods and goddesses. It presents a feminist point of view. The feminists have tried to study many fundamental myths and symbols in a patriarchal culture such as myths of origins, the quest, the fall from innocence, the witch, the dragon, and island. They attempt a skillful and imaginative combination of ancient myths, pre-history and the contemporary feminist ideology in order to create a female literary heritage and tradition. In the legend there is a battle between the gods and the demons and the demons always win the battle. All the wounded or killed demons drink the milk from a lake in their city and instantly get cured. The unhappy gods went to Brahma and asked for a remedy. Brahma asked them to find out the source of milk and accordingly the defeated gods discover the secret source of milk. They meet and persuade the goddess to feed them with her milk, and she responds to their request. And lastly they conclude that “It’s all Her fault, She gave in” (FF 106). Suniti points out the domination of female gender in classical myths. The female identity is considered as instrumental in the creation of gods and demons.
In ‘The Doll’, Namjoshi ridicules the opposite sex. The two little girls make a male doll out of sticks and the name of the doll is “Brittle Boy”. The boy comes there and smashes the doll. The two girls are also very angry and they want to smash him but they maintain their patience. So they pick up the sticks and restart the process. The girls’ act of making a male doll indicates a subconscious female desire for and attraction of the opposite sex. As patriarchy has drawn a line of demarcation between the two sexes, the girls create a world of fantasy for gratification of their subtle libidinal instincts in their subconscious mind. Suniti suggests that females are gifted with patience and capacity to endure but males are easily irritated and are responsible for their own self-destruction.

Suniti Namjoshi celebrates femininity in ‘The Amazon’. The dictionary meaning of the word ‘Amazon’ is a female soldier, a warlike, manlike, strong or vigorous woman. Namjoshi says that women are not weaker sex with the help of the image of the truck-driver. Women have enough strength and patience. She shows the subversion. The female truck driver is ridiculed and criticized by the shopkeeper, the salesman and the owner but she doesn’t care for them. The author advocates the feminist message that women can no longer remain passive victims of patriarchy. They are able to do any work which is done by men. The truck driver does not allow the shopkeeper to flirt her. She does not like to be called ‘dear’ by the salesman of a wine shop. She suffers gender discrimination in spite of her capacities. She is called “Miss” so as to tempt her into an affair. Namjoshi says that in male-dominated world women are always subjected to physical, verbal and psychological abuses. The woman in the story continues to work hard for her survival and liberation. Namjoshi emphasizes that economic independence is very important for their liberation. There is irony in the remark, “But she has
not been wounded, and she hasn’t been raped” (FF 110). Namjoshi wants every woman to become an ‘Amazon’ in this battle for equal rights and status. The working women’s hardships and abrasions at their workplaces are highlighted in this fable. Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* points out:

> Women are constantly harassed to the limit of their strength because of the moral tension … because of all the tasks they assume, because of the contradictions among which they struggle. This does not mean that their ills imaginary: they are as real and destructive as the situation to which they give expression (Beauvoir 706).

In ‘The Object’, she has revised the classical myth of Medusa, the sea–monster. These powerful classical female figures dominate men. In ancient Greek mythology, Gorgo or Medusa was a terrible monster, having remarkable power and strength. Her face was round and ugly and there were snakes on her head instead of hair. Her powerful eyes could turn men into stones. People were tired of her cruel treatment. The beach was littered with men. But she was killed by Perseus. Perseus was a hero and a man of action. He cut off her head. Namjoshi reviews this legend from the point of transformation of gender identity. She reveals that since ancient times myths have always glorified man as the hero of adventure. Feminists complain that powerful Amazon women have always been labelled as ‘giantess or she-monster’ by patriarchy. This reveals the cruel side of patriarchy. It throws light on prevalent gender-prejudice in patriarchy.
B. Victimization, Oppression and Suppression

The fables ‘The Loathly Lady’, ‘Whore Bitch, Slut, Sow’, ‘The Milk White Mare’, ‘The Gods’, ‘Sheherezade’, and ‘Her Mother’s Daughter’ depict women’s victimization. Women serve males in satisfying their all physical and practical needs. In patriarchal autonomy, they become commodities and supposed to satisfy the sexual gratification of men. Women are vulnerable to inequality and exploitation as they are too timid and submissive. They give greater importance to compromise rather than confrontation, and adapt themselves according to men’s whims and desires. They silently obey their orders and follow them. Suniti in her ‘The Loathly Lady’ highlights the passive role assigned to women in a patriarchal society. Queen Guinevere calls for women volunteers to find the right answers to a woman’s question, ‘What women most want’ (FF 19). A few women came forward, but ‘their husbands object, their fathers object, their children are too young, and besides it’s most improper’ (FF 19). The Knight Arthur has to make a suitable choice and after a year he returns with a beautiful damsel and that is the proper answer to the woman’s question.

In ‘Whore Bitch, Slut, Sow’, the wicked woman is known as Whore, Bitch, Slut, Sow. She made a petition to the Chief Judge and asked to change the labels she bore so that others will blame her wickedness as a person and not as a woman. The argument started about the new label in the court, the Eldest Scholar objected to the new labels such as ‘thief’, ‘beggar’, and ‘bastard’ on the ground “that her wickedness consists in the fact that she is a woman” (FF 24).
Suniti tries to help women to establish their own independent identity by bringing about revolutionary changes in their attitudes towards life in ‘The Milk White Mare’. Namjoshi regards that the social conscience is neither important nor necessary to understand the change of mind-set of women for the desired transformation of their ‘self’. She exposes the exploitative nature of patriarchy. In times of Caliph, Prince Haroun-al-Raschid, a woman had been turned into a milk-white mare and became an object of dispute between her husband and her father. They rejected her for being useless. Her husband pulled her tail and her father tugged at both of her ears. Her husband wanted to divorce her, but her father protested to it because he had six other unmarried daughters. But, as the mare transforms herself into a useful mare with the help of a genie, both her husband and father want her possession. They start quarreling over her. The Caliph understood their problem and gave each of them fifty gold pieces and sent them off. The mare is taken to the stable of the Prince to serve the royalty. This shows that women are forced to serve the male. Therefore women should strive for their own liberation. The author blames patriarchy for reducing human beings to the level of saleable commodities. This fable is a bitter criticism of the patriarchal system.

In ‘The Gods’, the old childless couple was granted a daughter and they became very happy. When she grew up, she became a remarkable child in manners, singing, running and her studies. But one wrong thing is that she ‘is not womanly (FF 35). In ‘Sheherazade’, the Caliph’s steed and the princess’ mare mate in the garden. The mare submits to the stallion submissively. In the similar manner, the princess submits herself to the Caliph and gives pleasure to him. The Caliph and the stallion abide by the law of Allah. In the Caliph’s palace there are 1000 women and the stallion has 1000 mares to serve them respectively. Thus, this fable
highlights the victimization, oppression and suppression of women in the male-dominated society. In ‘Her Mother’s Daughter’, the daughter is a feminist who says to her mother, ‘I am going to avenge the wrongs that you have suffered. I will not hurt or hate or kill, but I will try to change things’ (FF 99). The daughter regards her own mother as submissive in particular and all women in general are dependent on men. As a matter of fact, women only exist in relation to men and this is a sordid reality. The daughter protests the male-domination.

Namjoshi deals with women’s concerns such as male hegemony and hypocrisy, women’s humiliation and subordination in ‘The Secret Wisdom’, ‘No Frog in Her Hand’, ‘The Fisherman’s Wife or the Foolish Feminist’, ‘The Debt’ and ‘Patience’. ‘The Secret Wisdom’ disapproves the male hypocrisy. It is the story of a very young and enthusiastic woman who is in search of wisdom. In search of wisdom, she visits to the Country of the Smilers and meets the Leader. Instead of letting her to know the secret of the source of his wisdom, she is deceived by the double standards of the leader. When she expresses her desire to learn how to cook refreshment, the Leader cunningly tells her that: “You have a natural talent for our native discipline. You need no training” (FF 39). This reveals the hypocritical attitude of patriarchy which believes that all women have an inborn talent to accept secondary status and unintelligent work in the male-dominated structure of society.

Namjoshi in ‘No Frog in Her Right Mind…’ depicts the plight of women in heterosexist society. The woman is likened to a frog kept with confinement. The frog in the story is fascinated by the comfortable life of the prince who is playing with a golden ball. The frog also aspires for a comfortable life. She jumps and brings the prince’s ball and this pleases to him. So he takes the frog with him in the palace and at late night put
her in a jar. This is a symbolic act of tying women with the bonds or restrictions of patriarchy. Suniti Namjoshi reflects the struggle of frog to escape from it. The moral of this story is that in the heterosexist society, a woman has to perform the role as the ‘other’. She has to depend upon man as a partner in the game of love or in the game of life. Her role is only to entertain and please the man by serving his sexual and other needs. Man is always selfish and possessive. This patriarchy always restricts the freedom of woman. She is forced to live a life of a servant. But in this fable Suniti’s frog is very clever. She refuses her status as a slave of the prince. It shows that there are possibilities of change and alter the roles in the game of life.

Suniti Namjoshi in her ‘The Fisherman’s Wife’ or ‘The Foolish Feminist’ asserts that patriarchy always controls natural freedom of women and keep them confined to social norms. Women are considered as subordinate and sub-human status of a slave. In this fable the wife of fisherman desires for a comfortable life of prosperity symbolized by the King. The fisherman tells his desire for a free and luxurious life to King. He also tells the King, ‘Sir, she wants greater power. She wants her freedom. She says she wants to be able to want what she wants’ (FF 55). Furthermore, she wants to be God. Then King explains that she simply wants divorce from him. The King represents patriarchy and the heterosexist society. He tells the fisherman, “If you are agreeable, you can stay on as a king and we’ll cast her out” (FF 55). There is a warning to women that they can not afford to entertain ideas about their salvation or freedom, and they will always be at the mercy of men.

The fable ‘The Debt’ is modeled upon Hans Anderson’s famous nursery tale in which the queen carries with her the debts of a poor widow throughout her life. In patriarchy widows are never treated as respectable
members of human community. But Suniti’s widow is a model of modesty and humanitarianism. Because of the great thunderstorm, the Prince on hunting got lost and reached to the widow’s hovel. The widow gives shelter to the strayed Prince in her hovel at the edge of the forest. When the prince reaches the palace, the King and the Queen send their courtier to convey their thanks to the widow. But she tells him, “If they wish to thank me, let them do it themselves” (FF 56). Later on the Queen herself visits her in the forest. The widow welcomes her happily and treats her with love, respect and hospitality. It is the widow’s virtue and the Queen wants to remain in her debt. At the time of her departure, the Queen says that she will help her or her children in future. Then the widow retorts, ‘Because there are too many of us and it frequently rains’ (FF 57). Suniti Namjoshi suggests that it is necessary for woman to be kind, considerate and sympathetic with other women irrespective of their social status.

In ‘Patience’, Namjoshi asserts the humiliation of women in male-dominated society. The dwarf meets the Wise One in the forest and questions him, ‘I want to find out how to stop being a dwarf and turn into a giant?’ (FF 60) The dwarf wants to grow tall as she is tired of humiliation. She knows that in society there are dwarfs as well as giants. She always blames her mother. She meets two dwarfs on her way to the wise one. One is a male and the other is female. The Wise One tells the dwarf that it is impossible and her status is less than that of an ordinary woman. Therefore, she would not grow and turn into a giant. In the male-dominated society only men have full freedom to develop their potential but women will always be suppressed by social, political and cultural hegemony of men.
In patriarchy, woman’s virginity is valued more than anything else. The loss of virginity before the marriage through religious and social rituals is considered as a stigma on a woman’s character. Virginity has been associated with the notion of a ‘pure’ woman. And if a woman is forced to lose it through rape or seduction, she is looked down upon as a criminal or sinner. She is publicly boycotted, humiliated. She is disowned by her own family members and her husband too. The author ridicules women’s abduction, seduction and sexual exploitation in ‘The Wicked Witch’, ‘For Adrienne Rich-If She Would Like It’, ‘Further Adventures of the One Eyed Monkey’, and ‘Complaint’. Suniti in ‘The Wicked Witch’ ridicules the popular perception of patriarchy that ‘the love between a man and a woman is the Real Thing’ (FF 40). When the handsome young Dyke wants to know the ‘Real Thing’, the witch advises her either to change the gender and become a man, or to enlist support of many people and convince the woman for her love. But at the end, the wicked witch advises not to think of other people; and find out what she really feels. Suniti suggests that it is difficult for a woman to lead a modest life in patriarchy. The savage and cruel males would always try to seduce their modesty.

Namjoshi comments on the sexual exploitation of women in ‘For Adrienne Rich-If She Would Like It’. Suniti shows how women have to pay heavy price for a sense of security through the institution of marriage. The heroine Scheharzade experiences agonies of hell through a thousand and one nights to satisfy her husband Caliph’s lust. After a thousand and one nights and a thousand and one deaths, she gets an offer of becoming Caliph’s queen in exchange of sacrificing her own individuality as she is reduced to the level of a sex slave. After getting the reward of queenship,
she offers her younger sister Dinarzade to Caliph’s sexual gratification. Namjoshi points out the sexual exploitation of women.

In ‘Further Adventures of the One-Eyed Monkey’, god Indra rapes an ascetic wife of a famous Brahmin and disappears. Soon it is discovered by her husband and he complains to higher gods to avenge the sinner as he has violated the chastity of his wife. Lord Vishnu asks for witnesses and the witness is the only one-eyed monkey. The one-eyed monkey gave her testimony accurately. Lord Vishnu demands purification of Lord Indra by performing a sacrifice. He asks Lord Indra to sacrifice a stallion for atonement and the horse was killed and Lord Indra was purified. Suniti points out that the patriarchal gender-bias is found in mythological tales. The patriarchal gods are not subjected to any kind of punishment for violating the honour and dignity of women. The one-eyed monkey, who had promised the crocodiles that she would find the source of the River Yamuna, on her way, comes across a woman who falls prey to the male lust of Lord Indra. Through this fable the writer focuses on the problems of seduction faced by women.

In ‘Complaint’, a young girl is abducted and raped by the knight in the forest. Another knight is her lover who rescued her from the knight who raped her. But her lover is terribly disappointed because she is no longer a virgin as per the norms of the patriarchal convention. He thinks that now he can not marry her. Instead of giving her his moral support, he becomes sad and laments the loss of her virginity. Namjoshi criticizes this evil convention and male hypocrisy. She deplores that in patriarchy woman is a ‘play-thing’ which is an easily disposable thing. Her very humanity is not taken into account by the gender-biased society.
Suniti ridicules patriarchy for its failure and inability to understand the “otherness” of women in the marginal world. The fable ‘Experts’ shows that for want of social support the female life is completely isolated. As the birds are without feet and always afloot, similarly, woman’s life always lacks firm foundation and support. Bird’s life is exhausting. They get tired, they fold their wings and then they die. In the same way women work hard and die in the world constructed by patriarchy. Though the fable is about birds ‘the incomparable fliers’ actually represent the women who are experts in leading a monotonous life like birds and when they can go further, ‘they fold their wing, and then they die’ (FF 90).

The author depicts the feminine issues such as women’s consummation, survival and their meaningless existence in the patriarchy in the fables ‘Plankton’, ‘The Disinterested Lover’, and ‘The Sow. ‘Plankton’ is about a helpless female whale that wanders through the seas in search of plankton because it is only means for her livelihood. In the struggle of survival, she gets little time for sustaining her aesthetic desire of singing. Due to her monotonous routine, she considers herself as a machine. Her complaint is that she has no time for anything else. And lastly she decides to cut down her diet and eventually dies. Namjoshi depicts the miserable condition of women in the world. It is due to the struggle for bread and survival women do not have leisure for their artistic pursuits. As patriarchal structure has silenced their voice, they have become oblivious of their capacity to become creative. The woman in the story had learned to sing but could not get enough liberty for the development of her latent talent.

Namjoshi highlights the fragile and meaningless existence of women in the world dominated by patriarchy in ‘The Disinterested
Lover’. The shepherd Narcissus is a mythological figure. He is not interested in his beautiful beloved’s physical existence, but in her image. It is a bitter commentary on the Narcissistic attitude of males. The author suggests that patriarchy doesn’t care for woman’s inner beauty. It is interested only in its well being. For patriarchy, a woman is always the ‘other’. The self-centredness of males is ridiculed in this story. The shepherd Narcissus does not respond to the woman’s love. He is more interested in an image of an ideal and beautiful woman. Namjoshi criticizes patriarchy for imposing its desires and expectations upon women because for patriarchy only the woman is the object who fulfils its expectations. This is a hidden attempt to avoid their accountability towards females. The greater value is placed on external beauty in females rather than on their real worth.

‘The Sow’ expresses an excessive love of a greedy farmer with the animal of the opposite sex, that is, a female pig whose weight is 6,000 pounds. The farmer loved her. Finally the farmer killed her and ate her himself. Namjoshi pinpoints that the farmer’s act of slaughtering the healthy female pig is symbolic of the consumptive desire of male in patriarchy that enables them to love, possess and consummate the female body through the excessive sexual exploitation.

C. Liberation and Emancipation

In ‘Bird Woman’, ‘Broadcast Live’, ‘Dragon Slayers’, ‘Liberation’, ‘The Dower’, ‘Philomel’ and ‘Svayamvara’ women long for liberation and freedom from patriarchy. In ‘Bird Woman’, there was a child who had wings. The neighbours were horrified and asked her parents to cut her wings. However, after their requests often and now, they rejected their request, and retorted ‘We are teaching her to fly’ (FF
The parents long for her emancipation. The fable throws light on the social prejudice towards women. As girls grow into young women the arbitrary code of conduct is invoked by people to restrict and confine women within patriarchal discourse. Namjoshi affirms that only the ‘enlightened’ parents would teach their daughters to fly.

In ‘Broadcast Live’, the Incredible Woman performs a number of duties. She roared through the skies and planet, rescued a starship, flattened a mountain, and straightened the building. In fact, she is really a woman who needs a normal life as a human being. Suniti challenges the existing patriarchal order which has always prescribed gender norms. She believes that unless gender norms are rejected, emancipation of women will become an impossible task. Various activities of the Incredible Woman suggest that women are capable of doing a number of tasks. In spite of patriarchal resistance and a hold over the status of women, the Incredible Woman reflects her feminist ideology. She tries to overcome obstacles in her liberation.

In ‘Dragon Slayers’, a girl had a dragon. At day-time the dragon would sleep quietly, but at night she used to take it for a walk. She grew up and the dragon became stronger. Out of anger, people shot the dragon and crippled the girl. The girl is not allowed to enjoy freedom and this shows subordination of women in male-dominated society. Patriarchy acts as a brute force while dealing with women. It doesn’t give freedom of any kind to girls and women in general. If any girl or woman challenges its authority, she is punished and ever silenced forever. Every act of woman is monitored and every attempt to fly above the prescribed limits of patriarchy is defeated. The ambitious girl wants to fly high but the society does not like it. The dragon symbolizes a natural desire for power and freedom and the young girl’s lesbian desire. The women are
always victimized through gender-bias. They are always discouraged by males. As a result they suffer isolation and alienation.

‘Liberation’ is about the experience of freedom of an immigrant woman in Canada. The author criticizes the colour discrimination and the racist attitude of the white Canadians. The woman transforms herself into a colourless bird to enjoy freedom. However, liberation for women is a prohibited fact in the Canadian context; therefore, she is prohibited from thinking of transformation permanently. The woman becomes ‘a frozen angel’ (FF 76). This is the feminist belief or ideology. Though the woman struggles for a change in her life, she does not think of any radical change in her original form and nature. In order to seek relief from the heavy burden of responsibilities, she wants transformation. The gender affiliations enable her to take the original identity but the woman craves for freedom. The ancient women lived an aimless life; and sacrificed their valuable lives but later women used logic for the liberation of other women. Savita Goel says that Namjoshi’s fables are an expression of the notion of liberty and observes, “Liberty for her means the deconstruction of social structures, so that they do not retain the shape which men have given them and she is fully aware that the world belongs not only to men but also to women” (Goel 177). This story highlights the feminist idea that women who are fighting for their rights must transform themselves.

The fable ‘The Dower’ presents a portrait of a revolting woman. There was a King who had three daughters. He wanted a son but the Queen died in childbirth. The three little princesses were not very happy. The first two princesses married but the third princess remained unmarried. People whispered that the third princess was not a real princess. After an injury to her foot, it was decreed that she must always walk barefoot. As a result, the King married her off to a poor swineherd.
The author has revised and rewritten the story in order to focus upon the feminine and masculine roles. In original fable the prince fights with the dragon to save the princess. But Namjoshi changes their roles. The princess is described as having her own mind. When she is tied to the stake, she does not become a mute and passive spectator like the original princess of the traditional fable. She uses her intelligence to escape from the danger of the dragon’s capture. She tempts the dragon to change the role. As a result, the dragon and the prince are tied to the stake and the dragon and the princess leave him alone. Namjoshi gives a message to women that if they acquire independent status, they can certainly free themselves from the gender constructs imposed by the society. She says that it is difficult for women to acquire more social, political and cultural space within the existing social structures. If they make efforts for the realization of their desires, they will come out of their failure, disappointment, and misery.

Patriarchy is blamed for victimization of women in ‘The Dower’. Women can revolt against their commodification in order to enjoy their rights. The king is disappointed at the birth of his three daughters. The King’s selfish attitude to his third daughter and the institution of marriage are bitterly criticized. The marriage has subjected woman to injustice and exploitation. And a woman is reduced to a low social status. Suniti reveals this by rebuilding the life of the younger princess after her marriage. It is an attack on the preference for male children in a patriarchal society. Suniti offers two other endings for the reader’s choice. An alternative ending was before the miracle took place, the third daughter was married off to a poor swineherd. Owing to utter poverty, she could not replace her worn out shoes. But fortunately one day, she cut her foot and her blood turned into ruby. The swineherd sold the ruby and
bought her a pair of new shoes. Another ending was that the first princess became a florist, the second a dealer in pearls and the third produced a ruby only when it suited her.

‘Philomel’ is based on the classical legend about a nightingale bird called Philomel. The rape of Philomel by Teresus and the cutting of her tongue in order to silence her shows the repressive strategies of patriarchy. It is an attempt to tame women and tie them to patriarchal sign posts to serve the men. The bird is without tongue. Philomel was the best singer that underwent transformation which restricted her message of ‘Art for Art’s sake’. Suniti ridicules the selfish stand taken by patriarchy. From the feminist perspective ‘Art for Art’s sake’ is dangerous and harmful to the liberation of women. It ignores society’s commitment towards female members. Philomel does not spell out any message. There is an irony that the women are never allowed to express their innermost feelings and thoughts. Even in the so-called progressive Western traditional societies, the female voice has always been suppressed by patriarchy.

‘Svayamvara’ celebrates freedom of choice enjoyed by women in choosing a suitable husband in ancient India. Through this legend, Namjoshi challenges the established system of marriage which gives freedom of choice only to male and making women passive spectators in their own life. The princess exercises her freedom of choice and chooses a young man as her suitor who admits his defeat. This is a symbolic victory for feminists.
D. Lesbian Identity and Consciousness

Namjoshi celebrates lesbian identity and consciousness in ‘Thorn Rose’, ‘The Badge-Wearing Dyke and Her Two Maiden Aunts’, ‘A Moral Tale, ‘Legend’, ‘The Moon Shown On’, ‘The Sculptor’, ‘The Example’, ‘Trglodyte’, ‘I See You What You Are’, and ‘A, B, C’. Savita Goel rightly observes that Namjoshi celebrates the love of women for women “as escapes from the class ‘women’ which is constituted as identity only in its relation to the class ‘men’, lesbians explode a biological myth and reveal the socially constructed nature of gender” (Goel 182). ‘Thorn Rose’ is the story of the little princess and her little brother. But, the princess was not lady-like as she wore men’s clothes. She challenged her brother for the sake of becoming a king and was defeated. She spent her one hundred years life in seclusion in the attic and then died. She had also a sister who did not like men and preferred women. The fable ‘The Badge-Wearing Dyke and Her Two Maiden Aunts’ probes into the problem of lesbianism. There is the justification and glorification of woman’s love for woman. It is suggested that this kind of love is as old as creation itself. The story deals with the life-style of two elderly poor, but respectable spinster mice who had lived together for twenty five years. On a Friday, the university-educated niece visits them. She wore many badges bearing extraordinary legends such as ‘Gay Liberation is Our Liberation’ and ‘Lesbian Ignite’ (FF 11). She protests against the discrimination and preaches on lesbianism. She is the supporter of Gay Liberation. The author’s message is that woman’s love for woman is both natural and very ancient. There is a strong protest against the conventional gender roles imposed by the heterosexist society. This feminist thought explains that the heteronormative society has
always reduced women to a lower social, intellectual and cultural sphere of life.

‘A Moral Tale’ explicates Namjoshi’s radical feminist view that there is a clear affirmation and justification of lesbianism in it. There is also a powerful and fearless rebellion against the definition and stereotypes of “woman” propagated by the patriarchal tradition. This story reveals the social resistance to lesbian love relationship. The Beast was a woman. So her love for Beauty was not accepted. The Beast’s parents were kind and liberal. But they said, ‘It’s not that we disapprove of homosexuals as such, but people disapprove and that’s why it grieves us when you think you are one. We want you to be happy, and homosexuals are not happy, and that is the truth.’ ‘Why are they unhappy?’ ‘Because people disapprove…’ (FF21). Then the unhappy Beast fell in love with a girl who disapproved the affair. The Beast then became an object of ridicule to all. The Beast understood the reality after reading books that men and women only can love each other. But the men engage themselves in all sorts of adventures and women are only caged birds at home. The Beast says, “I know what is wrong: I am not human” (FF 21). Finally the Beast lived alone and died alone. The author points out that books, stories and society uphold and propagate the virtue of heterosexuality in which only man-woman relationship is acceptable. A woman who dares to protest the male ordained laws and codes of behaviour suffers from alienation.

‘Legend’ is about a she-monster who lived submerged 20,000 feet under the sea. The scientists tried their level best to save the she-monster but ultimately she died. As a lesbian feminist, the author opines that patriarchy is responsible for it. Lesbian feminists believe that all knowledge including science has been used to justify and accentuate
biological inferiority of females to males. This fable offers a commentary on the decline of the status of women. Most of the powerful women in human history were always stigmatized as ‘she-monsters’. Females are treated as substitutes or legends or fantasy in patriarchy.

‘The Moon Shone On’ reveals the lesbian love of two women who find it difficult to express it openly due to the social taboos imposed by the heterosexist patriarchy. The woman falls in love and dreams of a suitable person. She tries to express her dreamy love for that imaginary person by singing song. But she doesn’t find the suitable person to express her love in an earnest manner. It is due to patriarchal restrictions she does not know how to express her love. And lastly she tells her friend, ‘Because I do not know how to tell you I love you’. Her friend reacts and responds: ‘But you just have’ (FF 45). At the end, both of them are very happy with each other. They live together without caring for criticism of society.

‘The Sculptor’ deals with the unconscious feminine desire for an ideal male partner which is hardly fulfilled. The woman artist attempts to create a man out of an obdurate stone but soon she finds herself ‘making a beautiful woman’(FF 49). This reflects her inevitable and unconscious lesbian choice for a female partner. As she succeeds in creating a sculptor of a male, she experiences gratification of her libidinal feelings. Lastly, she dismisses him from her mind and makes a copy of that creature out of a stone. The woman artist is capable of living without a man.

Namjoshi attacks the prejudiced attitude of society towards lesbians and denounces those who try to interfere in the private life of lesbians in ‘The Example’. This is like Hans Anderson’s fable. It is about lesbian wren who has been a tutor for sparrow’s children. One day the birds
discover that the wren’s sexuality is not normal. The sparrows are, therefore, afraid of the fact that the wren would corrupt their children’s morality. They summoned the wren and asked for an explanation regarding her sexual preferences. The wren says, ‘What is private is private, and what is public is public’ (FF 52). The parents realize that the wren is not only a lesbian but also a feminist, and feminists maintain that the public and private are not distinct. The wren explains the parents that she is not teaching sex to their children but reading, writing and arithmetic. The parents are worried about her teaching, so they dismiss her from the job.

In ‘Troglodyte’, the author shows how the lesbian desire subverts the heterosexual hegemony in patriarchy. The brutish woman lived in a cave. Her hair were always untidy, her legs were hairy, and her teeth were big, strong and yellowish. This description of her physical features shows that the primitive tribes were quite close to nature and free from the artificialities. The woman spent her spare time in drawing and paintings of mammoth, tiger, bison, fish and sketches of other cave-women. Namjoshi points out that during the pre-patriarchy period women were free and they loved other women quite naturally.

‘I See You What You Are’ is based on Shakespeare’s tale *Twelfth Night*. Viola, disguised as a page, is sent by Orsino to woo Olivia by proxy. Olivia falls in love with her. The author advocates lesbianism when she remarks, ‘But suppose that Viola had also been charmed, charmed to the point of a little indiscretion’? A little later the author again suggests, ‘Suppose, she had said, ‘I see you what you are, but you, you are deceived’ (FF 92).
Namjoshi’s another fable ‘A, B, C’ is also related to lesbianism. It is about a child playing with an educational toy, a set of dancing dolls-some women and some men. But the underlying idea of this child’s play is certainly not childish. The dancing doll of A type will be linked properly with any A type doll, B type doll with any B type and C type doll with any C type doll. If they are properly paired, they will dance. The pairing of dolls represents both the heterosexual and homosexual relationship. The child discovers that when the dolls are not properly paired “the dolls don’t dance” (FF107). The instructor becomes angry and out of despair throws tantrums at the child.

‘The Homicidal Streak’ and ‘The Friends’ reveal natural intimacy between women. In ‘The Homicidal Streak’, there was the dyke with a homicidal streak. Her first victim was a sympathetic man, the second was a garrulous woman and the third was a male homosexual. In the fable ‘The Friends’, women’s ambition is to give preference for women. The author intends to describe lesbian desire in her stories in order to demolish the heterosexual hegemony.

**Feminist Fables** is primarily concerned with making feminist statements, but Namjoshi in an interview with C. Vijayasree says, ‘In Feminist Fables I wasn’t so much concerned with making feminist statements as with using the form to understand the imbalance of power and to question it’ (Namjoshi 179). It means, she is mainly concerned with gender discrimination and marginalization of women. **Feminist Fables** has a timeless sweep through past, present and even future worlds. These fables present ancient myths, legends and fairy tales from the East and the West. From Scherazade to Rapunzel, Medusa to Miss Muffet, they invent a mythology that simultaneously entertains, provokes and makes them a vehicle of new vision of the exploration of female
condition. Suniti makes use of fairytale characters in a very real setting to provide an alternate paradigm to the present male-dominated society. She has extensively drawn on fantasy and fairy tale elements in her works to put across her ideas of feminism. Feminist preoccupations and concerns are predominant in her fables. She has re-written traditional tales from the female view-point to emphasize the neglected aspects of feminine strength. Namjoshi depicts young women with a self identity, contrary to the subordination. Female characters like Gretel in ‘In the Forest’, Cinderella in ‘And Then What Happened’ and the Giantess in “Jack Three’s Luck” are fine illustrations. To write fairytales from a feminist perspective is not simply an act of symbolic writing for self gratification, but also a political act based on the experiences with male brutality and general social violence. Zipes observes:

To write feminist fairy tales is to write with the hope that future generations will not adopt the atavistic forms and ideas found in traditional tales, but that they will arrange their lives in response to non-sexiest social conditions and the different options presented in the feminist fairytales which are still seeking to prove their humanitarian value (Zipes 33).

Namjoshi depicts the marginalization of women in a patriarchal set-up and encourages women to struggle for self-identity. She also deals with the theme of victimization of women in a patriarchal set-up. Her fables are feminist revisions of traditional fairytales to present a counter system of prevalent dominant ideology. Her female characters are strong and active. Woman is considered as the original cause of all sorts of problems. She has made her women protagonist to change their stereotyped way of life to escape from tensions and problems. In her
fiction, women revolt against the gender–bias and class discrimination. Feminists regard gender discrimination as a reflection of power-politics. The patriarchal system forces women to think of their transformation so as to win its favour and sympathy. This fatal attraction shapes women’s thought-processes in such a way that they make it as the ultimate goal of life instead of seeking liberation from the clutches of patriarchy.

2.2 The Blue Donkey Fables

This witty and delightful collection contains fables of the blue donkey, the one-eyed monkey, the magpie and other animals to satirize human frailities and weaknesses. Namjoshi makes fun of human pretensions, stupidities and frailities. In an interview with Coomi S. Vevaina Suniti says, “Sometimes I write fables based on pictures and postcards my friends send me cards and pictures which they feel might generate a fable. Among several others, the first story in the BDF was created that way” (Namjoshi 199). She acknowledges that the inspiration for these comic satiric sketches on contemporary life has come from Jonathan Swift and Lewis Carroll. From Swift, she mastered imaginative inventiveness, and from Carroll, she learned playing with structures and systems.

Suniti attempts to subvert the conventional repressive and oppressive patriarchal social structure founded on unethical gender-bias and class distinction. The Blue Donkey Fables consists of more than seventy small fables and poems. All these prose and poetic pieces are mirth provoking but there is undercurrent of criticism of discrepancies of contemporary human world. Written in a comic and sarcastic mood by making animals and birds in the absurd drama of life and putting them in equally absurd and incongruous situations, Suniti makes fun of the
trivialities and pretensions of human world. All the fables in this book are a serious appeal to humanity for a reflection upon the marginalization of women as a gendered class of second-rate citizens. She critiques the contemporary social norms, gender stereotypes, classical myths, all types of constructs and reality.

A. Gender Discrimination and Marginalization

Suniti Namjoshi in ‘The Blue Donkey’ reproaches the society for its patriarchal bias and indifference to women as a class. The Blue Donkey lived by a red bridge and the councillors called it ‘Inartistitic’. According to them the donkey must be of the purest and silkiest white or it must be moved away from red bridge. The Blue Donkey became a political issue. One group remarked that the donkey would never be white and the opposite group said that the donkey was grey instead of blue. There is no consensus among them, so they went to see the donkey. They asked the donkey either to turn grey or move away from the bridge. The donkey refused and the councillors began to dispute among themselves. Their objection was to the blue colour of the donkey. The blue colour signifies the female donkey’s efforts for liberty, but it invites anger and criticism of the male-dominated society. Lesbian affiliation may be associated with the colour blue. It also exposes power-politics and popular perceptions about female identity, gender, class and colour. Namjoshi throws light on gender and power-politics in this fable.

The main theme in ‘Apothesis’ is commodification of female body. Namjoshi suggests that human history is full of examples of the inferior roles assigned to the females. The middle aged Blue Donkey became very famous among the townsfolk and tourists. The delighted tourists told her, ‘O Blue and Beautiful One, we admire you so. Your fame has travelled
on the four winds’ (BDF 3). The public attention pleases the Blue Donkey to the extent of losing her sense of time. The aging process brings her closer to the stark reality of her empty existence so she decides to retire and prefers to become a legend. The biological difference is emphasized through gender discrimination. Cultural norms and value systems assign a secondary role to women in relation to men. Suniti deplores that women have a very low opinion of themselves. They consider themselves to be passive, dependent and incapable of accepting any challenging responsibility.

In ‘Curtain’, the Blue Donkey had retired and became a legend. The people thought her to be dead. Then she told the mayor of the town that she is not dead. She walked through the city and proclaimed that she is alive with changed colour and her colour is grey. The mayor and people became happy as the intake tourists have redoubled. Suniti satirizes the human world of patriarchy that offers a tailor-made role to women. Any difference from the prescribed path invites threats and dangers to their very existence. She records her protest against gender-based roles constructed by patriarchal discourse.

In ‘Last Word’ the Blue Donkey leads a retired life, telling lies. There were several rumours about her. Her motive for lying is her weariness and uninteresting life. The irony is that in spite of her substantial contribution to the society, she is regarded as a liar. Her lies are about her own experiences. In patriarchy she is forced to assume and perform a gendered role and suffer silently. Finally, she asks her devoted disciples to write down her innermost thoughts, ideas, aspirations that are labelled as lies by the society. It is her appeal to feminists that through a female tradition of writing women can explore and establish a sense of identity.
In ‘Explanation’, there are four poems entitled ‘No Daffodil’, ‘Lions’, ‘A Difference’ and ‘Cornered’. Suniti Namjoshi associates herself with birds and animals and satirizes them to humanize them in ‘Daffodil’. Her awareness of marginalization has also resulted from her own experiences of sexism, racism and homophobia. For Suniti, animals are more human than human beings. Her Hindu origin plays a major role in shaping her consciousness, using Hindu moral principles and identification with animals. She emphasizes the universal truths and human values and problematizes the acceptance of the discriminatory preaching of Hinduism through her clever use of animals, birds, and plants such as daffodils, trees, cats and dogs. Thus, she undertakes the critique of the debate of lesbian feminist theory. She provides explanation for her choice of animals, birds and beasts. She argues that except women, all the other natural creatures are very fortunate because they are free from the danger of ‘man-made’ constructs of gender discrimination.

‘Lions’ exposes gender discrimination and repressive attitude of patriarchy towards women. Women became the silent spectators to their own marginalization. In ‘A Difference’, the helplessness of women is highlighted and in ‘Cornered’, Namjoshi abhors patriarchy for its indifference to women. Suniti compares men with animals and suggests that males are more deadly than animals.

‘The One-eyed Monkey Goes into Print’ is a feminist agenda of asserting an authentic self. It is a challenge to theory and a new way of looking at reality, creativity, language, society and gendered structures through women’s eyes. The One-eyed Monkey decides to write a book about her personal experiences, but the crocodiles ridiculed her idea. She wrote a book entitled *The Life and Leanings of a One-eyed Monkey* and sent it to the publisher who sent it back to her with a remark that the book
lacks in ‘human interest’ (BDF 9). She disparages the resistance posed by
publishers who favour male writers and their heteronormative agenda to
ignore women’s creativity. Namjoshi protests that women’s writing has
always been marginalized, and labelled as lacking in intellectual
substance. Women’s creativity is always invaded by patriarchy. Her
subject position or self, or identity is culturally constructed.

In ‘Poetic Practice’, Suki is a cat and her friend is Suniti. Suki
intends to write a poem and Suniti dislikes the idea. Suki tries her level
best to compose a poem and finally comes out with the poet at work in
the poem ‘Poetic Practice’. Emptiness of women’s writing in patriarchy is
the main theme in this fable. It reveals that male literary tradition offers
no space to women writers. ‘Three Angel Poems’ reveals Namjoshi’s
feminist consciousness and her gradual evolution from a liberal feminist
to a radical and a lesbian feminist.

In the fable ‘Mute Swan’, there is a graceful swan and the Lady of
the Lake. The Lady of the Lake tries to educate the swan by teaching her
nuances of the patriarchy. The lady is a feminist who brings about the
initiation of an ordinary woman into a world of feminist by awakening a
spirit of rebellion in the mind of the mute swan. The author reflects the
conventional female identity. Like the swan, every woman leads a life of
seclusion and rejection by patriarchy. Thus the fable is symbolic of
disempowerment and silencing of women in patriarchy.

In ‘The Saint and the Robin’, Suniti condemns the so-called
feminists who were self–centred and have little respect for ordinary
women’s liberation. She suggests that all women are God’s creatures and
they deserve love. The Robin bird sarcastically asks the feminist saint
woman to get rid of her pretensions of being superior and wise. It is only after that she is applauded and cheered by Robin bird and the worm.

In this book Suniti includes some poems and one of them is ‘Disclaimer’. The main themes are marginalization and gender discrimination. The poem portrays a realistic picture of life of anonymity that women are subjected to lead in patriarchy. Woman has no identity in gendered society and she is always ‘someone else’.

‘The Creation Plan B’ ensures traditional organized religion, art, philosophy, history and culture in general because of their patriarchal interpretations and leanings. Namjoshi suggests that entire culture is charged with male values. The title is ironic. It reminds of the original creation, termed as plan A. In it males are perfect and first rate citizens while women are second rate citizens. So the parrot and tortoise want to exclude males from their plan B. Through this fable Suniti Namjoshi emphasizes the need to liberate the women’s world from the patriarchal intrusion.

In another poem, ‘Poem Against Poets’, Namjoshi rejects the male-centred romantic vision of life. As a feminist, she favours a realistic view of life. The male literacy establishment has not considered women as eligible writers who can write a bit of their own. She complains against the marginalization and exploitation of women. She demands a separate literacy or culture for women as they have been silenced by social and cultural constructs.

In ‘Interpose an Island…’ Suniti craves for a separate space for women because she feels that in patriarchy women are passive. They have no meaningful identity. She wants to celebrate sisterhood.
Therefore, Suniti presents her vision of feminist utopia. In ‘Baffled Beast’, having seen the bright and glossy grapes, the female fox is confronted with a contradiction of her perception of truth or reality. She believes that grapes are out of her reach but she desires them avidly. Truth appears double and she is unable to ascertain which the truth is. Thus, the female consciousness is established on the snowy, precarious and indifferent foundation.

In ‘Turf’ the main theme is gender discrimination. In patriarchy, the male hierarchy brings about the marginalization of women. The married woman leads a comfortable life along with a pet cat and a frog in her garden. However, one day the master of that house divorces the mistress. This displaces her from her position of a good natured respectable woman and destroys her sense of identity. Suniti emphasizes that unless women are economically independent, they would always be at the mercy of men. This suggests that women in patriarchy can not afford to have ‘subject’ position. They are always ‘other’ due to their gender and class difference.

Namjoshi disapproves the hierarchy of male-dominance and patriarchal discourse constructed and various cultural practices to safeguard male interest. In ‘The Bride’ the king wants the best bride for his heir, the handsome and healthy and well educated young prince. So the king organizes contests of beauty, strength, knowledge, intelligence and wit as well as archery and music also. The winners are presented to the prince for inspection. He finds that some of their credentials were far better than him. So he is afraid and tells his father that these women have excelled but they seem to be lacking in the womanly qualities. The king tells him, ‘You can choose from those who did not compete (BDF 57). Suniti attacks here the hypocrisy of male tradition that has always
sidelined the competent women. Patriarchy never allows a centred position to women. The prince refuses to select bride from amongst the winner. His patriarchal ego is hurt. So he falsely complains that the women lacked ‘womanly’ qualities. In this power-politics women’s gender is exploited for their marginalization.

A woman with a tiger’s qualities is humiliated at her trial by the jailors who represent patriarchy in ‘Lady Tig’. The hero and the tiger are locked in an adjoining cell and the lady is blindfolded and informed about the nature of choice. The lady gave up the choice and then the tiger is given a choice. The lady’s decision to give up the choice has feminist overtones because animals are better than human beings as they do not practise gender discrimination. Namjoshi parodies the patriarchal attitude towards women.

In ‘The Fortunate One’, Namjoshi suggests that the religious and cultural discourse was systematically developed for keeping women underprivileged and in secondary position. Religion and philosophy constantly emphasize that women are responsible for their society. The little girl is blessed by the gods and is made a queen, give her five children and seventeen grandchildren, long life, health and lastly intelligence and beauty. But at the end of her life she meets gods with a guilty feeling that she could not retain their gifts. The gods are not angry. They are happy for her frequent failures as they were afraid that she might become a goddess and take their privileged position. Namjoshi reveals that even the religious discourse has a prejudiced attitude towards woman. It reflects male hypocrisy. It is the gender discrimination which is responsible for sufferings of women.
Namjoshi reveals the evils of the patriarchal discourse in ‘Transit Gloria’. The Blue Donkey’s encounter with the zoologist throws light on the structured silences of women. Patriarchy presumes that women are intellectually, physically and artistically inferior to men. The zoologist succeeds in extracting a confession of defeat from the Blue Donkey. The zoologist refuses to acknowledge any distinct identity to the Blue donkey. The Blue donkey strives to prove her identity for which she takes example of grandmother ‘Shanta’ who had many distinguishing qualities. But the zoologist applies patriarchal parameters for evaluation of her identity. It is an affirmation of subordination and subjugation of women in patriarchy. The last sentence reflects her indomitable spirit and strong resolution to overcome obstacles and prevail in this unequal battle against patriarchy.

Namjoshi opines that patriarchy makes women believe that their lives do not have any definite purpose except serving patriarchy in ‘The Purposeless Pandas’. Suniti emphasizes that women must assert their identity in ‘From the Apocrypha’. The women should reject and revolt against the gender discrimination created by patriarchy to confine them within the limits of heteronormative sexuality. They should discard their passivity.

Suniti holds that heterosexual women create obstacles in the way of women’s emancipation from the restrictive and repressive gendered roles in ‘Stumbling Block’. She offers the friendship to them so they should stand united in their fight against the forces of heteronormative sexuality that promotes class and gender discrimination. The caterpillar advised the Blue Donkey not to fight but accept the gentle position prescribed by patriarchy. The Blue Donkey ignores the appeal for compromise and moves away in confidence.
B. Feminism and Women’s Liberation

The fable ‘Dusty Distance’ reflects the theme of racism. Suniti disapproves white Anglo-Euro-American feminists for their racism, complacency and indifference towards the non-white. Non-Western feminists occupy subjectivities and have a different vision of life but they deny those subjectivities to the third world feminists or women writers. Suniti satirizes the western feminists for their narrow, parochial racism and their world irrespective of their colour. She asserts that women in general are dominated by the values of patriarchy at their work places and at home. She finds that absolute freedom for women is a distant dream due to lack of unity among women. The fable ‘The Disciple’ makes fun of those feminists who falsely claim their support to women’s liberation and perpetuate interests of patriarchy. She feels that women have to fight a battle against patriarchy for their liberation.

‘The Vulgar Streak’ reflects Namjoshi’s creative ability to make new types of fables that can guide women in changing times and teach them the new age technique for their survival in heteronormative patriarchy. There is a dialogue between the blue jay and the Blue Donkey about birds. According to the blue jay, the birds are much better than donkeys at flying. The Blue Donkey conveys a message that women can not take any help and co-operation from males. Namjoshi justifies her resistance to patriarchy.

The fable ‘A Tale of Triumph’ is a bitter criticism of the male-dominance in the world of creative and critical writing. Namjoshi exposes the male hypocrisy through the Blue Donkey’s literary encounter with a male critic in the dream. The male critic doesn’t regard the Blue Donkey’s creative output worth reading. The patriarchal bias of the male
critic is presented in this fable. Suniti represents the popular male attitude towards woman’s status and her creative genius through the critic’s remarks in dream, ‘Don’t you see? You are a product of imagination. You are a fabulous beast’ (BDF 41). A woman’s human existence is due to her gender and class difference. This emphasizes that women have no concrete space in a structured patriarchy and creativity is a male right. The Blue Donkey narrates her dream with her lesbian companion Suniti. Suniti is against of the contemporary literary criticism which favours literature and celebrates patriarchy as well as subjectivities of male writers.

The fable ‘Gracious Living’ is about the future of women’s liberation movement. Suniti demands well organized efforts on their part to carve out a separate space. She criticizes women’s organizations for their vague, superficial and tentative ideas. The one-eyed monkey is invited for a tea by the rabbits and they request her to join their organization. Suniti feels that it is necessary for feminist to forget their class, colour, race and nationality. They should forge universal sisterhood for building a feminist utopia. She comments on the women’s movement which has forgotten its specific goals.

Suniti attacks on complacency and indifference of feminists who turn a deaf ear to the cries of the unfortunate and victimized members of their own class in ‘Ivory Apes’. She is extremely critical of their high sounding hypocritical stance on the question of women’s liberation. She wants to pull them down from their own ivory tower and wants them to realize the reality of their status as women in a gendered society.
C. Lesbianism and Identity Crisis

Namjoshi retells the classical myth of the goddess Athene and presents it from the feminist perspective by observing various experiences of Athene and other classical goddesses such as Arachne, Clytemnestra and Medusa in ‘Olive Branch’. Athene and her owl take rest near the unwrinkled blue sea. The lesbian relationship is celebrated through the symbol of calm and quiet blue sea. The olive branch signifies feminist identity and attitude. Athene is desirous of acquiring a new identity in the changing times because she is identified as her father’s daughter. She tells the owl, ‘It’s all a matter of identity and gender. To you it doesn’t matter. You’re only an owl. But the modern women are turning against me. They say that I’m really on the side of the men’ (BDF 46). It suggests that Suniti wants to convince women that they can no longer afford to remain slaves to patriarchy and they should struggle to liberate themselves from restrictions. In response to Athene, her compassion, a female owl invents a female tradition. She convinces Athene that the earth was her mother and the owl herself was her sister and friend. Thus they rejoined the world of women. In patriarchy women are marginalized. So Namjoshi wants to change this and re-establish dignity to women.

Namjoshi blames hypocrisy of heterosexual women in ‘If You Know What I Mean’. Such women do not contribute to the cause of the women’s liberation. She complains that most women attempt to maintain and perpetuate interests of patriarchy. They are not interested in fighting a battle against patriarchy. The female jackal wants to establish meaningful relationship with the lioness but she discourages the female jackal. She asks the jackal to learn and internalize the patriarchal code of conduct and finally she does not show any interest in lesbian advances of the jackal.
‘Dazzler’ is the sunbird capable of flying everywhere, whereas the duck can not fly but floats on the calm surface of water. Namjoshi presents differences among feminists. The so-called radical feminists ridicule complacency of complacent women. The aggressive feminists want to usher in a radical change in women’s attitudes but they are oblivious of the ground reality. The duck’s utterance to the sunbird, ‘You occupied a specific space and has carved out a lesbian feminist identity for herself’ (BDF 54) reveals the author’s concern. But the duck is still unsure about her own consciousness.

Namjoshi is critical of the narrow mindedness of feminists who indulge in discrimination on the basis of colour, race and nationality. She feels that there is a need for a concrete effort on the part of women to fight against divisive discourses developed by patriarchy. But unfortunately, the energy is wasted in fighting about trivial issues such as colour, race, nationality and ideology. In the fable ‘Birds of a Feather’, the Magpie and the Robin are female species and they start fighting with each other. At this juncture, the wren comes there and reminds them of their same class. Suniti reminds women in general, feminists and lesbians in particular of their goal to establish a universal sisterhood.

‘Craft’ is concerned with the question of visibility of women’s writing in a patriarchal social set up. The woman poet commits a symbolic suicide by becoming anonymous as women are forced to be bothered and hunts for a new horizon where she can postulate a subject position and occupy a new space. While fabricating lies about her identity, she attempts to transform her art into a craft for survival. Suniti expects women to acquire skills for preservation of their identity.
In ‘Thunder and Lightning’, Namjoshi cautions the lesbians that they should not fall prey to persuasions of heterosexual women who are ever ready to perform their gender specific role without contest of their validity and utility for their own class. Namjoshi comments that before the rise of patriarchy and heterosexist ideology, women had towering personalities. Now they have to regain their lost ‘subject’ position through a conflict with their mate adversaries. Then only there will be a true feminist utopia.

Namjoshi presents lesbian relationship between a cat and her mistress who believe in moderation and restraint in ‘Prodigal Pudding’. But the cat gets aggressive and demands love on all days of the wedding. Namjoshi blames the lack of firmness in women’s attitude. Instead of Mondays, the cat is allowed to love on Wednesdays. Suniti appeals to woman to busy their differences and seek compromise through mutual co-operation for emancipation of their class in a gender-based society.

Namjoshi celebrates her own lesbian identity in ‘The Lion Skin’. She expresses her earnest desire for a dream in which she would be a fearless and majestic lion and she would make love to a lady. The story symbolizes Namjoshi’s bold and fearness attitude to and affinity with lesbianism. In the fourth poem of ‘The Lion Skin’, Namjoshi denounces male poets for their hypocritical attitude towards women and asserts that they are distinctively creative.

In ‘The Sinner’, Suniti mocks at hypocritical class of feminists who practice colour, race and class distinction as a prejudiced attitude towards the feminist cause of universal sisterhood and their liberation from the clutches of patriarchy. She suggests that women must overcome these
prejudices and differences over colour, race, class and financial status so that they can have their subjectivities in a separatist lesbian utopia.

‘Crow and Startling’ presents the lesbian relationship between crow and startling. She attacks on the patriarchal heterosexuality. Suniti regards the lesbian relationships more sensible and friendly. In ‘Cythera’ for Suniti, the female is equally divine and has angelic qualities. She presents a concept of sexual liberation of women from the hetero-sexiest socio-cultural structure. Feminists claim that all women have the oppressive consciousness but Namjoshi is comfortable with her body and sexuality. She speaks to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and looks upon her as a familiar friend. But her consciousness is haunted by patriarchal repressions which do not permit the lesbian love. She feels guilty of cherishing lesbian love and is ashamed of displaying such a patriarchal thought.

‘Loner’ reveals affinity towards eco-feminism and attacks the politics of gender. The queen wants to establish lesbian relationship with her dear king. She tries to keep it secret. The king does not object to it. But, one evening she fails to return from the forest, so the king and his men march into the forest. They request the queen to return to the king. Then the queen leaves the forest and returns in patriarchal bonds. Her lesbian love for the deer takes her into forest, but it is against patriarchy. She is not allowed to indulge in such ideas. The queen wants to find out an alternative space for her lesbian identity, but is threatened and forced to return in the patriarchal world. She surrenders herself to the heteronormative and heterosexist society. The natural is overpowered by the artificial as per Suniti’s lesbian love is quite natural but heterosexual love is imposed on women by men and there is need for revolt against it.
‘Subsurface Sonics’ reflects a lesbian desire of a woman. Suniti asserts that lesbian relationship is quite natural. She explores the subconscious minds of the two women on the shore and finds a natural sexual resonance in them and binds them together in their effort to establish an alternative truth of their identity. The theme of lesbian love is suggested through this story ‘Doubled and Redoubled’ offers a pragmatic perspective for a practical way of life. The little magpie spreads a rumour about the Blue donkey’s miraculous power of transforming straw into gold. Suniti justifies the Blue donkey’s strategy as a necessity for her own survival.

In ‘Serious Danger’, the Blue donkey becomes a mentor to Suniti in search of her self. Suniti narrates her dream experiences to the Blue donkey. Her very process of transformation involves a dilemma. She attempts to transcend the barriers of class, colour, race and gender in the process of transformation by occupying subjectivities.

In ‘Pandas Lurking’, Namjoshi asserts that lesbian women are neither endangered, nor extinct but they are merely underground preparing for a battle against patriarchy. Namjoshi proudly flaunts her lesbian identity and affiliations. She suggests that lesbians do not need their own identity; on the other hand, it could be an alternative way of establishing ones subjectivity.

**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 gendered violence and patriarchal didacticism encoded in 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 and 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 the patriarchal societies. She observes emotional and moral pitfalls and upholds the need of moral purity. In spite of women’s victimization, subordination, suppression and marginalization of women in the male-dominated society, she gives more importance to equal status and humane values. She reworks the traditional fables by applying contemporary agendas to the fables and the mode of narration is fantastic and anti-realistic.