

ISSN: 2278-9529

GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

May 2016 - Vol. 5, Issue- 3

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

www.galaxyimrj.com

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>

Use of Fantasy in Suniti Namjoshi's *Aditi Adventures Series I: Unlikely Friends*

Suresh Pandurang Patil

Assist. Professor in English,
Shri. Vijaysinha Yadav Arts & Science College,
Peth Vadgaon 416112, Kolhapur (Maharashtra)

Abstract:

The present paper explores the treatment of fantasy in Suniti Namjoshi's children's fiction named as 'Aditi Adventures Series I: Unlikely Friends'. Suniti Namjoshi is an Indo-British author. She always had a fascination for fables and fairytales, consequently her works are primarily feminist rewritings of fables and fairytales. Namjoshi's fables and fairytales are populated with mythology and animals that are eccentric in nature. Her 'Aditi Adventures Series' is written in a mode of fairytale fantasy. She makes use of fantasy and fable for launching a satiric attack on the unusual that she finds in the society. She rewrites the fairytale giving new dimensions to the stereotype fairytale female characters.

Keywords: Suniti Namjoshi, Aditi Adventures, Unlikely Friends, fables, feminist, and fairytale fantasy, etc.

Suniti Namjoshi is known as a writer of contemporary postcolonial transnational literature. She is an expatriate Canadian South Asian author currently living in England. Suniti Namjoshi's literary career started in India in the 1960s with the publication of '*Poems of Govindagraj*' (1967) which she translated from Marathi with her mother Sarojini Namjoshi.. Her own status as a feminist and lesbian emerged with the publication of '*The Jackass and the Lady*' (1980). As an Indian Diaspora writer, she has shown an inclination for incessant experimentation in all her works that include '*Feminist Fables*' (1981), '*From the Bedside Book of Nightmares*' (1984), '*The Conversation of the Cow*' (1985) '*The Blue Donkey Fables*' (1988), '*The Mothers of Maya Diip*' (1989), '*St. Suniti and the Dragon*' (1994), '*Building Babel*' (1996), and '*Goja: An Autobiographical Myth*' (2000).

Her literary works attempt to explore the cultural and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality. She appears to dismantle the prevailing social structure to give more space for the women. She does not use the conventional narrative in the feminist issues. On the other hand, she has used the fabulist mode for exposing the existing questionable working of patriarchy. Her work is rich in allusions. She utilizes Greek as well as Christian and Hindu myths, legends, fairytales, and fables and makes them a vehicle of new vision through the exploration of the female condition. Her mythical characters or animals are fine instances of joining the animating and in-animate worlds with the human consciousness.

Suniti Namjoshi has published '*Aditi Adventures Series*' (2000-2009), a latest work in the children's literature. It comprises three volumes containing four books each. These three volumes are entitled as '*Aditi Adventures I: Unlikely Friends*', '*Aditi Adventures II: Unexpected Monsters*' and '*Aditi Adventures III: Heroes*'.

The series '*Aditi Adventures I: Unlikely Friends*' comprises four books entitled as '*Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey*', '*Aditi and the Thames Dragon*', '*Aditi and the Marine Sage*', and '*Aditi and the Techno Sage*'. It is a world of fantasy, one of the genres of popular fiction that tends to be more closely tied in the contemporary or current concerns and trends. It tracks the mood and the tempo of the contemporary time. It is the retelling of fairytale fantasy where the human and animals live together in a natural manner. It blends the fact and fiction, dream and reality, magic and myth.

The first book in the series '*Aditi and the One eyed Monkey*' (2000) embodies the adventures of Aditi, the heroine of female-oriented fairy tale fantasy. She moves on an adventure accompanied by the unlikely friends such as the one-eyed monkey, the ant, and the elephant. Aditi is the grand-daughter of the king and queen of a small kingdom. A dragon terrorizes a kingdom unless its rulers send him their granddaughter, Aditi, for a lifetime of indentured service and she must not be accompanied by any human being. Aditi is accompanied by the nonhuman creatures such as the one-eyed monkey, the ant, and the elephant as per the promise. On their quest for the dragon, they are fully equipped with the magical objects such as cloak of invisibility, the Sword of Courage, and a ball of magic clay.

In the first book, '*Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey*', Namjoshi deals with a stock literary theme of conflict between good versus evil, one of the features of fantasy fiction in a completely unconventional manner. The protagonist, Aditi, reveals that evil after all is no monster, dragon or demon. On the contrary, the dragon suffers from the friendlessness. In this first book, Aditi holds conversations with the animals such as monkey, elephant, and dragon and even with an ant. Talking animals are often found in folktales and fairytales. In the primary world, they are known as talking animals but in their own world i.e. secondary world, they are characters. In the modern fantasies, they are treated as autonomous beings. These talking animals have all the attributes of human beings except the physical form.

The second book in the series '*Aditi and the Thames Dragon*' (2002), is abound with the fantasy, philosophy and social message. This time, the five adventurers such as Aditi, the ant, the elephant, the one-eyed monkey and their new dragon friend, set out to help the twins Roshan and Rohit, the inhabitants of London. Their dragon friend promises them to carry over to London. They carry the magic weapons such as the Sword of Courage, the Cloak of invisibility and the magic clay. After their arrival at London, they search out for the River Dragon. They notice that the river Thames has turned into an island of junk and debris. They decide to save the river dragon from the polluted water by making her smaller by applying the magic sandal wood ointment. Their dragon friend turns itself into miniature and dives into the river. He takes out the river dragon to a shore. They cover her with the cloak of invisibility and rub ointment on her. They keep her in the goldfish bowl of fresh water.

Thus, Aditi and her friends rescue the life of a River Dragon and imbibe the values such as cleanliness, friendship with nature and its myriad endangered species and the responsibilities of a citizen.

The third book in the series, '*Aditi and the Marine Sage*' (2004), is another tale of friendship between animals and humans that often leads to new adventure or learning. Siril, the ant, receives an email from The Island Sage who has collected six hundred and fifty one varieties of eucalyptus. She wants to collect more varieties with the help of dragons, the river dragon (Opal) and the fire dragon (Goldie). Equipped with the fantastic objects such as the Sword of Courage, the Cloak of Invisibility and the magic clay, they fly towards the Island Sage. They reach the Sage's island with the help of the balloon fish swimming below the sea. The Island Sage has two sisters named the Marine Sage, who lives on the Barrier Reef under the sea of Australia, and the Techno Sage who lives in Canada.

The modern fantasy authors like Namjoshi have used quest as basic for their texts. Quests require an identifiable protagonist, an accumulating mass of companions to strengthen and complicate the action. In this female-oriented fairytale fantasy, Aditi often goes on an adventure escorted with her unusual anthropomorphic friends. Three Sage sisters who assist her during their adventures are the stereotype characters of fairytale fantasy. Wise old man or woman is a recurring motif exploited in fantasy. The wise old man or woman symbolizes a protective figure that comes to the aid of the protagonist in his or her journey or quest. She or he may be a wizard, hermit, shepherd, teacher, seer or priest who bestows wisdom or provides useful knowledge or a charm to overcome the challenges that s/he encounters to achieve their goal. C. G. Jung, the psychologist, defines the wise old man or woman as a spiritual archetype:

... the guise of a magician, doctor, priest, teacher, professor, grandfather, or any other person possessing authority, who always appears when insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning etc. are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own resources(**Jung 216**).

The figure of wise old man or woman embodies the spiritual aspects of personality. Sometimes, a god or goddess is found disguised in the form of wise old man or woman, who offers poetic justice.

In the fourth book in the sequel, '*Aditi and the Techno Sage*' (2005), Aditi and her friends travel to Canada with their mission to unite three Sages who have not met each other for a long time. Aditi, the One-eyed Monkey, Siril, Beautiful, Goldie, Opal, and Gardy, the littlest lion cub set off for Canada. They carry the message and a little present of the time jewels to hand over her. The Techno Sage lives on an island protected from an invisible shield which prevents aero planes, boats and dragons from landing on it. She works on developing the anti-gravity pads. She has a plan to attach the anti-gravity pads to the bottom of the island to fly where she likes. She has experimented with anti-gravity pads to navigate through space that resulted into floods and earthquakes. Hence, she has decided to stop using the time jewels and never to leave the island. She has also maintained a good rapport with the other nonhuman creatures. The meeting between the adventurers and the Sage is quite fantastic as they encounter different type of hurdles in their quest for her. The leader of the sunfish promises to release the Techno Sage from her promise after fulfilling three conditions such as the dragon should take their ride in air, the Techno Sage should leave the island without a single eye-witness, and they should answer the question 'Why is the loon laughing?.' Aditi and her friends successfully overcome the conditions and challenges.

Being the feminist writer, Namjoshi exploits the genre of fantasy to reconstruct a story in which she de-naturalize institutions as well as institutionalized modes of behavior, the reality of contemporary world as well as the realist forms of representation. The present series parody the conventional quest narrative though she exploits the conventions of a quest narrative such as journey of the protagonist to the unknown and wonderful world of imagination, inward journey or introspection, meeting a mentor, evolution of the protagonist through experience and eventual flights to her own world. She reinvents old fables, re-imagines popular characters from the classics, and urges a review of the conventional forms of cognition. Her animal characters look on and judge the human world from their own perspectives.

She rewrites the fairytale to implore the readers to actively participate in the process of re-evaluation of fantasy projected in the apparently harmless and value-neutral tales written for the childhood amusement. Her books exploit the fantasy as; “fantasy can explore areas of life that realist literature tends to deny or repress, concepts and ideas which fall outside the ideological compass of the contemporary real” (**Le Guin 43**). Her re-vision of the traditional fairytales presents a counter system of the prevailing dominant ideology hidden in the traditional tales. Therefore her female characters are strong and active, unlike the submissive and docile females of the traditional tales.

Fantasy literature is heavily influenced by folklore motifs and traditional literary genres. In ‘*Aditi Adventures Series*’, Namjoshi also employs the traditional folklore motifs such as fire-breathing dragons, monsters, the wise old women, the little princess in distress, her nonhuman friends etc. It presents a world that is unfamiliar and appears unrecognizable in terms of the real world. It includes the impossible, the improbable, and the implausible and highly unlikely world. The twentieth century writer, E. M. Forster, attempts to describe the features of fantasy in his book ‘*Aspects of the Novel*’ (1954). He states:

It implies the supernatural but need not express it. Often it does express it, and were that type of classification helpful we could make a list of the devices which writers of a fantastic turn have used such as the introduction of a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no-man's-land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension (**Forster 106**).

A bond between the supernatural and natural orders is instrumental in fantasy. Aditi and her friends encounter various supernatural and natural characters during their adventures. The Sages endowed with supernatural powers maintain a good rapport with the natural world. The world of Aditi is also populated with the supernatural and fantastic characters. Namjoshi exploits fantasy as a vehicle to revise the traditional roles of female generally represented as monster or witches by replacing it with strong feminine characteristics such as Aditi or three Sages that help Aditi and her friends. The quest of Aditi and her friends often lead to new learning as they are able to expose the true identities of mythical animals and they give new perspectives to them. Thus, Aditi’ adventures in an unknown land function as eye-openers for the traditional fairytale readers.

Works Cited:

- 1) Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc. 1954. Print.
- 2) June, C. G. *The Archetypes*. Hull Princeton: PUP, 1970. Print.
- 3) Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Ed. Susan Wood .New York: G.P. Putnam, 1979.Print.
- 4) Namjoshi, Suniti. *Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey*. India: Tulika Publishers, 2000. Print.
- 5) - - -. *Aditi and the Thames Dragon*. India: Tulika Publishers, 2002. Print.
- 6) - - -. *Aditi and the Marine Sage*. India: Tulika Publishers, 2004. Print.
- 7) - - -. *Aditi and the Techno Sage*. India: Tulika Publishers, 2005. Print.