Un-sacred Cows and Protean Beings: Suniti Namjoshi's Re-writing of Postcolonial Lesbian Bodies

Shalmalee Palekar

Abstract

My paper examines Suniti Namjoshi's representations of the "raced," lesbian, creative body as a site of both "otherness" and empowerment. By inhabiting the subject position(s) of a diasporic Indian lesbian woman, by operating from multiple liminalities, she engages in a political act, thus opening up spaces in which she inscribes her resistance to stable genres and essentialised traditions. My paper maps out how Namjoshi's writing, with its fluid movement between "authenticity" and dreams, between (corpo)reality and her characters' various manifestations, between split selves and fragmented subjectivities, between playfulness and polemic, crosses boundaries of the gendered body, sexuality, desire, and "race." I posit that among Namjoshi's central concerns are the actual processes of "othering" and marginalisation; that is, the various overt and covert ways in which dominant cultures/discourses create, maintain and perpetuate racist, patriarchal, heterosexist/homophobic ideologies of the ideal/idealised body. Various critics position Namjoshi as an allegorical fabulist, but I will focus, rather, on how Namjoshi's dense, dialogic and multi-layered texts use these protean animal/human bodies to examine questions of community and solidarity, and their implications for minority groups. **Key Words:** postcolonial, lesbian, feminist, Indian, diaspora, literature.

To be a lesbian, a woman of colour, and a migrant is perhaps to be minoritised many times over. Patriarchal discourses have traditionally constructed lesbians as monsters and grotesque aberrations.¹ A lesbian is a disrupter of heterosexist gender dualism. She is threatening because she challenges the hegemony of the "normal" and the "ideal" in relation to the nature of society, family, man-woman relationships and the universality of heterosexuality. An immigrant lesbian of colour is further marginalised, not only in a white, heterosexual, patriarchal paradigm — "where all sexualities, all bodies, and all 'others' are bonded to an ideal/ideological hierarchy of males" — but also by the perpetuation of racist ideologies within Anglo lesbian communities.²

Suniti Namjoshi is an Indian lesbian-feminist author, who articulates through her work, the fraught issues that arise from having to inhabit all these subjectivities. To critique her world from that margin is to wrestle with contradictions and paradoxes surrounding issues of identity

and self-hood, of self-representation, and agency. The concept of positionality is central to Namjoshi's narratives. Her characters interrogate stereotypes of race, sexuality and gender and the dominant majority's collusion in producing these. By examining the sites at which these discourses intersect and by deconstructing the "meaning" they ascribe, she opens up a "third space" in R. Radhakrishnan's terms – where oppressed and silenced minorities can not only speak, but be heard.³ These themes and politics are central to Namjoshi's challenging and complex body of work, thus positioning it within postcolonial/feminist debate.

Namjoshi can be positioned as an allegorical fabulist who employs fantasy and irony in her quest for alternative modes of being, and articulates her resistance through transgression rather than aggression, playfully rather than polemically. But going by many reviews, this reading can easily become dismissive, often missing the depth of complexity of her self/re-presentation, and perpetuating the general lack of critical attention paid to her. Among Namjoshi's central concerns are the actual processes of "othering" and marginalisation; that is, the various overt and covert ways in which dominant cultures/discourses create, maintain and perpetuate racist, patriarchal, heterosexist/homophobic ideologies. Radhakrishnan argues that there is a difference between metropolitan hybridity and postcolonial hybridity. He stresses that postcolonial hybridity does not have the "guarantees" of "authenticity" or identity posited by the (Western) secular identity that underlies metropolitan hybridity. Rather, postcolonial hybridity involves a painful "inventory of one's self"⁴; which is to say, the self must be excruciatingly produced to inhabit many discursive positions. This is seen in Namjoshi's work, and is her way of articulating her subject positionality and identity without claims to "authenticity."

Hybridity is never a comfortable "given"; hence there are in her work, deliberate contradictions and provocative position statements on patriarchy, lesbian identity, feminist theory and "Indianness." Through a foregrounding of split subjectivities and selves, she is able to theorise/make visible/legitimise a particular sort of hybrid self, through subversions of institutionalised and systemic erasures. I also see in her work the attempt to articulate and (re)define notions of "community" and "the specificity of parameters of solidarity."⁵ Most importantly, Namjoshi's writing demonstrates that finding ways of belonging is indeed different from "fitting in," or "assimilating."

Armed with an enduring suspicion of the human race, and an identification with animals, Namjoshi takes upon herself the task of deconstructing and subverting essentialised traditions and bodies through her fables, tales, poetry and novels. *Feminist Fables*,⁶ *The Conversations*

of Cow,⁷ and *The Blue Donkey Fables*⁸ offer alternate realities and different ways of being to those endorsed by Western Humanism. Namjoshi's animals expose the gendered violence and patriarchal morality of traditional fables, thus "her lessons usurp the status quo to endorse feminist thought."⁹ Namjoshi's lesbian-feminist politics means that it is difficult to analyse separately the public, the private, the artistic and the theoretical in her writing. She deliberately chooses not to be a "poet of impersonality", [and] "for Namjoshi's art, this policy... has given birth to a genuine poetic voice."¹⁰

Absurdities abound in Namjoshi's work in all their luxuriant pluralities. The irrational, the fantastic, the symbolical, collide with the pseudo-logical, over-systematised hierarchies of a racist, and heterosexual society. Paradox and contradiction are deliberate discursive strategies, used by the author to provoke readers into making a critical and political response. The result is a transgressive, thought-provoking body of work that resonates with intertextual echoes from different cultural spectrums; a political body of work that aims at locating and foregrounding "difference" on multiple levels, as well as "dykonstructing" hierarchies of power predicated on white, male, heterosexual supremacy.¹¹

The 1960s and 1970s feminist and gay liberation movements inspired a distinct body of separatist utopian novels, giving fictional realisation to "woman-identified" all-female societies.¹² These works are important in the sense that they opened up a critical space in which issues of gender and sexuality (especially lesbianism), could be explored in new ways — "a conceptual, representational, erotic space... in which women could address themselves to women."¹³ Namjoshi's articulation of separatism in her earlier work, such as *The Conversations of Cow*, means that these works could be read as being a part and product of this lesbian-feminist ideology. Her "dykonstructions" are made even more challenging to read by their focus on how ethnicity and "race" intersect with lesbian-feminism, and by their interrogation of a monolithic Indian identity.

The Conversations of Cow, especially, articulates a complex examination of subjectivity and difference. It opens up a multiplicity of reading positions, and can be read as being problematic in its seeming endorsement of a biologically essentialised separatist politics, and in the way it posits "Indianness" in relation to both Suniti and Bhadravati. But in my opinion, Namjoshi deliberately mobilises certain essentialist discourses in order to foreground the construction of stereotypes and subvert them, and also to constantly provoke readers. The novel is set in the Canada of the 1980s, and has as its protagonists, Suniti,¹⁴ an Indian-lesbian-feminist professor of English, and Bhadravati, a Brahmini lesbian cow, goddess of "a thousand shapes and a thousand wishes."¹⁵

Namjoshi, with a sharp wit, explores the creativity and subjectivities of an immigrant, lesbian, feminist, separatist through the dialogue between Suniti and Bhadravati; hence creating conceptual spaces that illustrate Suniti's problematic positionality and the socio-cultural forces that impact upon it:

"Just because I'm a woman and a foreigner, it does not follow I cannot be a university professor." "And a lesbian," B adds, looking mischievous. "But really," she goes on, "English Literature?" "Onlookers," I tell her loftily, "often see more than participants."¹⁶

Namjoshi attempts to speak for herself, but does so through the use of allegory and fable, and hence elides the fraught issue of "authenticity." But the author still engages in a political act by inhabiting the subject position(s) of a diasporic Indian lesbian woman. Thus Namjoshi's approach to "authenticity" and self-representation can be read in Radhakrishnan's terms:

an invention with enough room for multiple-rootedness
... [where] there need be no... opposition between
authenticity and historical contingency, between
authenticity and hybridity, between authenticity and
invention.¹⁷

The novel's disruptiveness, humour and poignancy arise from the disjunctions between Suniti's ways of being and seeing, Bhadravati's Goddess/ lesbian/ cow perceptions,¹⁸ and those of the predominantly white, human/cow world they both must function in.

Namjoshi makes use of both Western and Eastern mythology for her themes, narratives, and characters. For example, in *Feminist Fables*, she has done feminist/ lesbian-feminist rewritings of *Aesop's Fables*, Greek and Roman mythology, fairy-tales, as well as stories from the *Panchatantra*. This is seen clearly in "Case History," which is a reworking of "Little Red Riding Hood."

After the event Little R. traumatised. Wolf not slain.
Forester is wolf... Grandmother dead... Wolf marries
mother... Please to see shrink. Shrink will make it clear
that wolves on the whole are extremely nice...¹⁹

In a similar vein we get a rewriting of "Beauty and the Beast," which maps out the damage done by heterosexism and homophobia: "The Beast was a woman. That's why its love for Beauty was so monstrous..." Here Namjoshi subverts the trope of "lesbian as monster" by exposing how phallogentric and heterosexist economies collude to pathologise alternative sexualities. The issue of lesbian invisibility, which resurfaces in *The Conversations of Cow*, is broached in this piece. In the cultural/literary discourses produced within the above-mentioned economies, the Beast is denied access to positive images of self-identification with which to validate same-sex love.

"Man is at the centre. There are no human women."²⁰ This is a theme that is reiterated in much of Namjoshi's work, including *The Conversations of Cow*. But Namjoshi simultaneously posits the possibility for women to become "woman-identified" and subvert the constructs and constraints of patriarchy. For example, we see that "In the Forest,"²¹ the witch in "Hansel and Gretel" is depicted as a source of comfort rather than terror to Gretel; and Sheherazade from "The Thousand and One Nights" refuses the Caliph's offer of marriage and prefers to stay with her sister Dinarzade. Thus for Namjoshi, this notion of the primacy of women's relationships with other women has great subversive potential.²² She uses it strategically in order to foreground the sexual politics and misogyny in traditional fables and myths, and disrupts their heterosexual imperative and patriarchal closure; thus opening up spaces in which she inscribes her resistance to stable genres and essentialised traditions.

But Namjoshi is also critical of unqualified celebrations of "sisterhood." This concern surfaces in her exploration of racism within Anglo lesbian communities in *The Conversations of Cow*, and in her mapping of the power struggles between women in *The Mothers of Maya Diip*. Her work has been described as "modern parables addressing the contradictions of Lesbian and feminist theory [where] the sexual debates within feminism are distanced by the metamorphosis into animals..."²³ For example, the protagonist of *The Blue Donkey Fables* is a lesbian-feminist Donkey whose "blueness", rather than lesbianism, becomes the site of many debates for the unpacking of biological essentialist theories, as well as "progressive" liberal discourses. (This is a textual strategy Namjoshi uses effectively in *The Conversations of Cow*).

Namjoshi delights in breaking down boundaries of genre within the narrative paradigm of *The Conversations of Cow*. There is a deliberate fluidity of genres which echoes the fluidity of Suniti and Bhadravati's physical transformations, and suggests that genre/gender-bending is used as a discursive strategy with which to subvert Anglo/phallogentric realities, thus making the text a site which is capable of articulating

resistant positions. The use of a talking animal, which functions as a catalyst and drives the action, is a choice evidently in favour of the fable form. But this is a narrative written from a self-consciously Indian lesbian-feminist perspective, with a deliberate foregrounding of its ideology. Therefore, what seems at first to be a light, "transparent" narrative gradually reveals itself as multi-accented, multi-layered. The novel becomes, therefore, a sort of literary archaeological site that invites readers to create and construct meaning – thus subverting the traditional fable's positing of gendered violence and patriarchal morality as "objective" and "universal" truth. Namjoshi explicitly states her desire to open up a dialogue with her readers in the following poem:

Dear Reader,/ I have the power? I define? And I/
control? But it takes two live bodies, one/ writing and
one reading, to generate a sky,/ a habitable planet and a
working sun.²⁴

The fable is intertwined with science-fiction, romance, Hindu philosophy, absurdist farce, theories of subjectivity and difference, satire and feminist utopia, all of which are both, used and parodied. The structure of Namjoshi's novel demonstrates, in fact, that the political and emotional concerns of a non-Anglo, lesbian, feminist do not necessarily fit into a linear, realist narrative. Content (corporeality, search for identity, articulating marginalised selves), as well as form (mixing novel, fantasy, theory, science fiction-utopia, poetry and fable) point to an engagement with the development of a new lesbian-feminist art form.²⁵ Suniti's narrative is elliptical, and though it ends on a happy note it does not have closure imposed upon it, because the "end" of the narrative is the beginning of Suniti's writing the narrative. In the intricate dance of woman and cow, neither Suniti nor Cow ever give or accept neat, tidy, easy answers. Throughout the novel, Suniti searches for spaces and discursive gaps, into which she can speak her voices so that she will be heard. As Spivak points out:

For me, the question "Who will speak?" is less crucial than "Who will listen?" "I will speak for myself as a Third World person" is an important position for political mobilisation today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously, not with that kind of benevolent imperialism...²⁶

Namjoshi – through Suniti, and Cow in her many manifestations – breaks many silences and strategically disrupts notions of the “proper,” through her transgression of genre boundaries, and her protean bodies and stylistic experiments. In fact, Namjoshi plays interestingly with the literary convention of a heavenly Muse:

I’m down on my knees, waiting for the goddess to manifest herself. When I open my eyes, The Cow of a Thousand Wishes is standing before me on green turf. Daffodils and crocuses grow at her feet, though, incongruously enough, the cow herself is a Brahmini cow.²⁷

Thus the Goddess/Muse is a cow, and a Brahmin one at that. By simply juxtaposing these incongruities, Namjoshi creates a hybrid, disruptive symbol. It brings together the literal and the fantastic, the bizarre and the banal, the divine and the bovine. In colloquial English usage, the adjective “cow” functions in a derogatory sense to mean a large, slow-witted woman. In Vedic Hinduism, on the other hand, the cow is constructed as a Holy Mother whose every secretion is sacred.²⁸ Cow fits into neither the former nor the latter category,²⁹ thus patriarchal language is subverted with the Hindu mythoscape. Again, contrary to literary conventions, the agent of inspiration and/or wish-fulfillment arrives *before* we know the nature of Suniti’s quest. Cow is also a lesbian, as Suniti finds out soon after:

“I ought to tell you,” Cow informs me, “that this is a Self-Sustaining Community of Lesbian Cows.” I scrutinise Cow. So, Cow and I have something in common.³⁰

Also importantly, Cow is never a silent Muse, but an articulate, strongly opinionated one. Their relationship has deliberate echoes of the ancient Indian guru-shishya (teacher-student) tradition. But both the teacher and student are not only female, they are “out” lesbians. Furthermore, the student is actually allowed the space to question, disbelieve, even talk back, which could be seen as subversive in itself, even in many contemporary educational contexts. Therefore Namjoshi uses the character of Cow to subvert both, Western literary, and Hindu-Brahminical traditions.

There is a constant questioning, challenging, re-defining of boundaries, socio-cultural conditioning and role-playing right through the

novel, especially when Bhadravati decides to “become” a white, heterosexual man because she is tired of being economically disempowered and “exotic.” It is interesting to note that people’s reactions to Suniti and Bhadravati change dramatically as soon as they are perceived as being a heterosexual couple, Sue and Bud – even though tensions arise from the “interracial” relationship:

As we’re leaving the maitre d’hotel says, “Bring her again. She’s beautiful.” Bud looks smug. “There, Suniti. Aren’t you pleased?” “No. If you went into a parking lot with a foreign car, it’s exactly what the attendant might say to you.”³¹

Through the protean Cow, Namjoshi makes a succinct comment on the creation of minorities by the dominant majority:³²

It is only because married people and the bourgeois family are given such authority within a sexist/heterosexist culture, that Lesbians become nebulous unpersons.³³

Some lines in the novel suggest that sometimes Suniti does feel like a “nebulous unperson”. Typically, Namjoshi carries this sense of alienation and disorientation from the self to its surreal extreme – Suniti wakes up one morning to find herself in bed with her. They think, feel and act in almost precisely the same ways, look identical, but have two separate bodies. Yet this manifestation, S2, is not just a replica or copy, but an actual second Suniti. S2 is a necessary step in Suniti’s search for a legitimate identity – a process of discovering/constructing/reclaiming different aspects about herself and being able to articulate them towards achieving an inner coherence. It is significant, therefore, that Suniti starts to experience a genuine empathy for S2. The creation of, and necessity for S2 could be seen as tying in with Radhakrishnan’s analysis of postcolonial identity as excruciatingly produced through multiple traces, which I have discussed earlier.

Similarly, when Suniti encounters racism at a hotel, the issues raised by Namjoshi are more complex than Suniti’s reaction suggests. The author explores the material and ideological specificities that constitute Suniti as “powerless” in this context; Suniti is constructed as “racial other” and “non-man” by the waitress, which makes the waitress – rather than Bud – the perpetrator of oppression. This tactic disrupts simplistic

connections between gender and power (man/perpetrator, woman/victim), and debunks the liberal feminist assumption of a sisterhood based purely on gender, that transcends ethnicities, cultures, histories and classes. "Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in historical and political practice and analysis."³⁴

I suggest that Namjoshi deliberately and strategically sets up binary oppositions but the author's depiction of racism in Anglo lesbian communities shows that she is aware of the various contexts, asymmetries and histories that can disrupt these dichotomies. This awareness comes across clearly in later works such as *The Mothers of Maya Diip*. This novel is a study of oppression and unequal relations of power within a mythical matriarchy. Maya Diip is an island ruled by the Ranisaheb, whose title, as the Blue Donkey points out, means "Queen. It does not mean the Feminist Poetry Collective."³⁵ Namjoshi clearly implies that essentialised gender binaries have to be unpacked and dismantled in order to achieve any sort of progress – the mere inversion of binaries is not enough. This matriarchy, with its worship of motherhood, abuses of power, class hierarchies, intolerance of difference, and complete devaluing of one gender/sex is no different from a repressive patriarchy.

This examination is more challenging and subtle in *The Conversations of Cow*. Bhadravati claims that men are colonisers from Mars and that to be a Martian, and gain access to "Martian circles", all that is needed is some make-up and appropriate padding – thus implying that men only impersonate "received" and stereotypical notions of masculinity, which are easily duplicated with the right "equipment." An implicit comment on the "performed" nature of gender itself, once again emphasising the potential for subverting the fixity of phallogocentric representation.

The humanising of/identification with animals also raises complex issues of interpretation. What does it mean in terms of the strategies Namjoshi deploys in her writing? A passage from Namjoshi's non-fiction shows that her Hindu roots play a strong part in shaping her consciousness and voice, particularly in relation to her use of and identification with talking animals.³⁶ Romila Thapar contends that in Hindu teachings:

Considerable emphasis is placed on the universal quality of all human beings, on the values of tolerance and compassion, and on the need for harmony [between humans and nature] through recognition of the rights of each – all of which would lead to spiritual peace.³⁷

Namjoshi uses this tenet that both humans and animals have souls and are therefore part of the whole fabric of creation, which explains to an extent, why she humanises animals. But she then uses the technique/strategy of anthropomorphism to subvert these constructs. Through her use of human animals, she is able to both, effectively problematise the uncritical acceptance of the teachings of Hinduism, and critically examine the debates of lesbian-feminist theory.

Namjoshi's work also raises the question of "imagined realities" in relation to inhabited realities.³⁸ This is seen especially in the invention of a self-sustaining collective of lesbian cows. This invention be read as a self-critique of the longing for a pure space of marginalism beyond the cultural-political, a space that is transcendent of ideological interpellations and regimes of power.

But the cow-collective simultaneously posits another possibility, and that is – an exploration of ways of belonging, through an examination of the notion of community. Radhakrishnan contends that minority communities must share "worldviews, theories, values and strategies" in order not to be disempowered and co-opted.³⁹ In the context of the end of *The Conversations of Cow*, the invention of lesbian cows can be read as Namjoshi's attempt to depict a solidarity between minorities which is achieved slowly and is fraught, but is ultimately empowering. It is a concept of community that has the space for "multiple-rootedness," which breaks down the epistemological opposition between "authenticity" and "invention", but which does not, in the process, posit an "authentic" hybridity.

On one level, Namjoshi constantly fulfils stereotypical Western expectations in relation to "Indianness," with regard to Suniti, and Suniti's attitude to white men, women and white cows – Suniti is a small, brown, Hindu-Indian woman who believes that Bhadravati the Brahmin cow is a Goddess. But apart from being an outspoken lesbian-feminist, Suniti also has an ironic awareness of Cow's "colonial" fondness for scotch and water, and that this makes Cow a scotch and water guzzling Brahmin Goddess with a contrived American accent.

Many of the cow-human relationships illustrates what Chandra Talpade Mohanty contends is the potential of "imagined community"; in the sense that it is an alliance across divisive boundaries, which emphasises the political, rather than essentialist notions of "biology" or "culture" as a basis for alliance.⁴⁰ The use of allegory and fables, and specially the use of "human" animals, is a form/style/tactic that has been appropriated by "post-colonial/postmodern" writers like Salman Rushdie. This tactic enables them to highlight and drive home the various points

they make about difference on a multiplicity of levels. It is true that Cow does appear “magically” out of the blue. It is also true that Cow’s appearance both, disrupts the banality of Suniti’s everyday life, and yet, reinforces it through the very “humanness” of Cow. But there is more than just literary defamiliarisation going on here; Namjoshi explores what it is to write out of multiple liminalities, and yet instead of betraying anxieties of “unbelonging,” her work embodies plural possibilities – and does this without losing its sharp and witty edge. All the characters in the text talk volubly, laugh, cry, fall in love, fall out of love, ponder the meaning of life; interactions between characters are “normal,” except some of them are cows, and change at will into women, men or Goddesses.

“But, of course, B, you are always you whoever you are – if you see what I mean.” What on earth do I mean?... I decide to do nothing. I shall treat B exactly as though she were B, which she is, who she was, well as she would have been.⁴¹

It is possible to approach Namjoshi’s works in a sequential manner and read them as increasingly moving towards non-hegemonic forms. For example, in her second-last book *Building Babel*, Namjoshi has been exploring how the Internet can be used as a medium for a dense text and poetry. The book includes an electronic chapter which readers can add to, opening Babel to everyone.

Namjoshi’s examination of Indian lesbian-feminist subjectivities and selves means that new spaces, new images, new languages, new creativity, new bodies can emerge. These non-hegemonic forms combined with lesbian sexuality allow for new resonances and symbols, as well as provide for new relationships between one’s selves, between women and between minorities. Thus Namjoshi’s narratives move away from isolation and move towards formulating a concept of community; they effectively thematise and validate marginalised or resistant feminist/ lesbian/ migrant/ postcolonial selves and identities. In effect, Namjoshi makes possible, and affirms, new ways of belonging.

Notes

1. Patricia White, “Female Spectator, Lesbian Specter,” in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 132.

2. Teresa de Lauretis, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 144.
3. R. Radhakrishnan, "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity," *Callaloo* 16.4 (1993): 755.
4. Radhakrishnan, 753.
5. Ibid., 760.
6. Suniti Namjoshi, *Feminist Fables*, (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1993).
7. Namjoshi, *The Conversations of Cow*, (London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1985).
8. Namjoshi, *The Blue Donkey Fables* and *The Mothers of Maya Diip*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1991).
9. Diane McGifford, "Suniti Namjoshi (1941-)," in *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Emmanuel Nelson (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1993), 293.
10. Ibid., 292.
11. A term coined by Meeta Chatterjee in her PhD-in-progress, English Department, University of Wollongong. Used with her permission.
12. Diane Griffin Crowder, "Separatism and Feminist Utopian Fiction," in *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*, eds. Susan Wolfe and Julia Penelope (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 237.
13. de Lauretis, 141.
14. I will refer to the author as Namjoshi, and the character as Suniti so as to avoid confusion.
15. Namjoshi, *Conversations*, 122.
16. Ibid, 34.
17. Radhakrishnan, 755.
18. Patricia Duncker, *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction*, (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 161.
19. Namjoshi, *Feminist Fables*, 3.
20. Ibid., "Exegesis," 53.
21. Ibid., 95.
22. In fact Namjoshi subtitles this piece "For Adrienne Rich - if she would like it," which suggests that she has consciously based it on Rich's concept of a "lesbian continuum."
23. Duncker, 59.
24. Namjoshi, *The Blue Donkey Fables*, 51.

25. McGifford, 293.
26. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, "Questions of Multiculturalism", in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 60.
27. Namjoshi, *Conversations*, 13.
28. W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology: Vedic and Puranic* (Bombay: Rupa & Co, 1986), 339.
29. Though Cow does operate on one level as "Kamadhenu," the "Cow of Plenty," yielder of all that is wished. This aspect is underscored at the end of the novel, in Suniti's invocation to Cow.
30. Namjoshi, *Conversations*, 17-18.
31. Ibid, 105.
32. Also see J. Pugliese, "Language and Minorities," in *Minorities*, edited by Shirley Fitzgerald and Garry Wotherspoon, 192-215 (Sydney: State Library of NSW Press, 1995), 193. In his analysis of ethnic minorities, Pugliese says: "What is this seemingly homogeneous other (majority) against which minorities emerge? The majority's very identity is staked out in the manoeuvres by which it defines its others," that is; any history of minorities also functions as a tacit history of aspects of a perceived majority.
33. Duncker, 61.
34. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 56-58.
35. Namjoshi, *The Mothers of Maya Diip*, 114.
36. McGifford, 293.
37. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1978), 27.
38. Radhakrishnan, 769.
39. Ibid., 767.
40. Mohanty, 4-5.
41. Namjoshi, *Conversations*, 51-53.

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