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Precarious (E)utopianism: Intersecting Precarity and Capitalism in Suniti Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits*

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Abstract

The contemporary Indian landscape is dominated by dystopian narratives with the rising concerns about the planetary havoc caused by modern capitalism. This essay examines Suniti Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits* (2022), consisting of three stories, as a significant literary intervention that recuperates the concept of '*eutopianism.'* The analysis will primarily focus on the story "Bad People" as a eutopian text and draw insights from the other two texts, that is, "Heart's Desire" and "The Dream Book." Through the examination of the texts, it will be possible to explore how Namjoshi reimagines utopia within the constraints of a global capitalist crisis and environmental precarity. The article begins by interrogating the capitalist logic of the self-sufficient, invulnerable subject, which manifests itself in various hierarchical relationships. It is then possible to understand the depiction of alternate eutopian subjectivity against the capitalist 'self.' This will lead to a discussion on utopianism by engaging contemporary utopian theories such as 'critical dystopia,' and 'critical utopia' against the analyzed literary texts. In doing so, it will be possible to understand the ways in which Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits* diverges from contemporary utopianism and establishes what this paper will call 'precarious eutopianism.' This reading positions *Dangerous Pursuits* as a vital text for rethinking the role of literature in imagining not only more just and sustainable futures but also hope.

Keywords: capitalism, precarity, climate crisis, alternate subjectivity, precarious eutopianism, hope

Introduction

This essay reads Suniti Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits* (2022) to analyse how the work recuperates '(e)utopianism.' In recent years, there has been a proliferation of dystopian literature with few productions of utopian fiction. Krishna Kumar, in his essay "The Ends of Utopia" (2010), suggests that "the literary [e]utopia seem to have reached some sort of impasse" and "large scale social speculation also seems to have in antiutopian phase, even where it dares to hope" (561). While Krishna Kumar mentions of the literary production and social speculation with regards to the West, a similar condition can be found in contemporary India as well. In the Indian context, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* is seen as the earliest example of feminist eutopian fiction. A mapping of consequent decades will reveal the lack of literary production of the genre by women writers. Instead, dystopian fictions like *Escape* (2008) by Manjula Padmanabhan, *The Lesson* (2015) by Sowmya Rajendran, *Clone* (2018) by Priya Sarukkai Chabria, etc., seem to dominate the contemporary Indian landscape. This paper will argue for the need for the recuperation of literary eutopia through the analysis of Suniti Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits.* In doing so, it is possible to see how Namjoshi engages with the concept of eutopianism in the current capitalistic economy.

The first section will engage with the ways in which planetary disaster is propped upon the idea of the impenetrability of self and capitalism. The next section will interrogate how feminine sensibility may interplay with the pervasive capitalism in the existing society. The final section reflects on the prevalent discourse on eutopianism in conjunction with Namjoshi's text. The essay will propose a new form of utopianism, which will be called "precarious eutopianism"—a vision of hope that realigns itself with the precarity of life in our current environmental context. Before moving onto the analysis, a few terminologies used throughout the essay need clarification. The concept of 'utopianism' is proposed by Lyman Tower Sargent in "Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (1994). Utopianism is basically "social dreaming -- the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives" (3). Sargent suggests that at the heart of utopianism lies "desire" to live a better life. Utopianism for him is a phenomenon which involves both "eutopia" the vision of a good place, and "dystopia" the vision of a bad place. This article will use the term "eutopianism" to focus on the phenomenon of dreaming and desiring of a "good place". In the title, the use of the parentheses in the word "(e)utopianism" suggests how Namjoshi, in rejuvenating eutopianism, also revives utopianism in a new way. Another word which needs clarification is "precarity" which relates to the state of being uncertain, vulnerable in relation to climate change. "Precarious" is used to mean something which is elusive, temporary, and not fixed. Essentially, in the "Introduction" to her *Dangerous Pursuits*, Suniti Namjoshi states the following:

> When we first started using fossil fuels in huge quantities, surely no one thought it was reckless to try to find a way to power our machines? It's unsettling to think that now we're on the verge of destroying ourselves and the planet because of our efforts to make the world a more comfortable place. (*Dangerous Pursuits* 3)

Here, Namjoshi seems to highlight two essential and interrelated issues: the tendency of today's capitalist society to indulge in extreme consumption, and the looming climate crisis that results from such an attitude. The precarious state of the planet due to the climate crisis serves as a starting point for Suniti Namjoshi to delve into the theme of utopianism across the three unique stories in *Dangerous Pursuits* — "Bad People," "Heart's Desire," and "The Dream Book." In her first story, called the "Bad People," Shurpanakha (referred to as Shupi) resurrects her brothers Ravana, the protagonist, and Kumbha using a balm passed down by their grandmother, Ketumati. The balm possesses magical qualities that instill compassion in those who use it. The siblings, transformed by the balm, embark on a mission to combat global warming and ultimately succeed in creating a better world. "Heart's Desire" follows an elderly woman named Sycorax as she tries to find what she really desires in the face of the inevitable hour, until Death eventually arrives for her. "The Dream Book" explores the conflicting desires of the characters, such as Caliban, Miranda, Sycorax, etc. These characters communicate through dialogue to underscore the essential nature of desire. All of the stories in the book emphasize the motif of desire, which is intrinsically linked to the concept of utopianism. It is important to note that the focus in this essay will be on her first text of the book, which is "Bad People" as a utopian text, while the other two stories will help understand her idea of utopianism.

Precarity of Body and Impenetrability of Self

The narratives of Dangerous *Pursuits*, especially "Bad People" and "Heart's Desire." intend to make its readers aware of the ways our actions are making our living conditions vulnerable. At the root of the climate crisis lies the hierarchical relationship between self and

other. This dichotomy is further exacerbated by the capitalistic modus operandi of incurring maximum profit through individualism, competitiveness, and the primacy of mind over body. For the analysis of the text in this section, two distinct theorists will be taken into consideration to understand how oppression works in the capitalist economy. The conceptualization of Margaret Shildrick in relation to the idea of "monster" and "vulnerability" and their correlation in her seminal book *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (2002) will be helpful. "Vulnerability" is an "existential state that may belong to any one of us, but which is characterised nonetheless as a negative attribute, a failure of self-protection, that opens the self to the potential of harm" (1). Shildrick contends that this negation of the vulnerability of the self dominates the Western philosophical tradition. She is talking about the Cartesian dualism pervading the western modernist philosophical tradition, where "the self …is foundational without being embodied" and "a body whose integrity is so unquestioned that it may be forgotten, transcended" (48). In other words, the mind is considered superior to the body, where the former can transcend the limitations of the latter.

Such a concept of the impenetrability of the self, where the mind is given primacy over the body, can also be found in the logic of capitalism. Notably, in his essay "Climate Change and Capitalism" (2015), Jonathan T. Park while criticizing capitalism states the following: "The promise of an inexhaustible well of human ingenuity, capable of overcoming any conceivable scarcity of socially-desirable resources, ensures that capitalist economies will, theoretically, never need to shrink or slow down" (48). The dependence on "human ingenuity" suggests the reliance on human mind and its manipulation of resources. Based on this "human ingenuity," for capitalism, "[t]he finite nature of resources is not a concern because when any given resource become scarce, the market will naturally produce an alternative" (3). In other words, there seems to be a denial in capitalist logic with regard to the depletion of resources of nature because capitalism considers the human mind superior to nature. It is to be noted that many ecologists and feminists have argued that Cartesian dualism equates the mind to men and the body to women, animals, nature, etc., which has become the basis for subjugating and dominating those associated with the body. [1]

Returning to Shildrick, she contends the consideration of self as close, impenetrable, and invulnerable is false, as mentioned above, "vulnerability is an existential state which may belong to any of us". She then theorizes the concept of "monster" which is the form of corporeality where boundaries collapse and the normative loses meaning. It is both desired and feared-- desired, because in its negation or absence is the self-created; feared, as it reminds one of what is rejected or suppressed to gain self-sufficient identity. In other words, the monster has the potential to expose the vulnerability of the self, which is propped upon the assumed stable boundaries. As such, "the monstrous" and "vulnerability" are tied together in the sense where the self, projects its own vulnerability upon the other, "the monstrous," to keep it "at bay lest it undermine the security of closure and self-sufficiency" (1). Substantially, in Suniti Namjoshi's "Bad People" the refutation of planetary crisis may be interpreted in the following logic of the character the CM: "global warming is a scam the scientists invented" ("Bad People" 77). This attitude emerges from the notion of power and ignorance of the precarity of individuals in relation to the impending planetary calamity.

Further, the CM (which probably stands for Chief Minister) is friends with the capitalist KK, which stands for Karodpati (meaning Millionaire), suggesting how state officials regulate their territories based on the capitalist logic of profitability. In fact, the CM one day wants to rule the nation and subsequently the world. When Ravana and his companions negotiate with

[1] See the discussion on Cartesian dualism by Lucy Sargisson in Chapter 5 of *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression* (2000).

the CM to use grandmother Ketumati's balm as a cure to change people from violent to non-violent individuals, the CM states: "What use is a population of calm, sensible, non-violent people? They'd be sitting ducks. No, the balm is to be used against our enemies. A softened enemy will be easy to subjugate" (81). The "non-violent and non-competitive" population is considered here as "sisies" (84)—a term derogatorily associated with women. It can be argued that the feminine quality of non-violence is considered "monstrous" because it is associated with "vulnerability" and does not exhibit the militaristic, acquisitive virility that a nation deems heroic. Also, the CM wants his population to be masculine, militaristic, and competitive. He would rather use the balm on others to conquer them. In other words, the CM wants to create a subject who gains its power from the acquisition, accumulation, and subjugation of others, to bolster his sense of self-sufficient self and of his state. The irony emerges when the character of the CM, who, instead of preventing Global warming, which will be fatal to all, thinks of expanding his military resources, thereby paving the path towards further self-destruction.

The masculinist's acquisitiveness exhibited by those in power can be seen proliferating in everyday experiences where individuals stay at the intersection of race, class, gender, etc. In "Bad People," it becomes apparent the ways in which lower-class bodies become "monstrous," "vulnerable bodies." Shupi, Ravana, and Kumbh decide to disguise themselves as beggars to be "more kind, humble, self-restrained, unselfish, and concerned with the good of everyone" and to experience the world (26). When Shupi ventures out on the streets, her corporeality becomes a site of fascination and disdain: "[the boys on the streets] tugged at [her], some spat on [her]. One of them… shouted…. 'Let's see,'… 'if you're really a woman or some sort of foul creature underneath!'" (28). The appearance of Shupi resembling the corporeality of someone from the lower economic section renders her body vulnerable and on the margins of a capitalist society, which is also aggravated by her identity as a woman. By spitting and throwing rocks at her, the boys create a boundary between themselves and her vulnerability. Nobody comes to help her, which implies that her "monstrous" body legitimizes the mistreatment meted out against her. Further, a woman reluctantly provides half a chapatti to Shupi, and when she eats in front of her house, the lady expresses disdain for her. The act of providing Shupi with the chapatti indicates a sort of unwilling "vulnerability" the woman shares with her. Yet, her behaviour towards Shupi indicates her efforts to distance former from herself, creating a boundary between the self and the other or the vulnerable. It suggests how economic boundaries complicate the relationship between women, who, instead of uniting against the patriarchy, are divided by patriarchal capitalism. Moreover, the distancing of the self from the "monster" can also manifest itself differently. When Kumbh goes out in the garb of a beggar, he is also abused by the local kids and dogs. He is saved by an old woman who shooes away the dog and children and provides him with rice to eat. However, he soon realizes that in exchange for a bowl of rice, the lady intends to abuse Kumbh's labour to help her with cutting huge piles of wood. Kumbh's "monstrous" body is taken advantage of, commodified, and exploited by the lady to satisfy her own needs. Her ostensible sympathy is not out of shared vulnerability or compassion but rather for using Kumbh as a means to her end. It suggests that in a capitalist society, relationships and bonds are also commodified and based on the value of exchange.

In Namjoshi, one can interpret the subversion of the idea of the "invulnerable" masculine capitalist self through the trope of bodies. Ravana, the epitome of the egotistical self, is brought to life, and an analogy can be drawn between him and the powerful capitalists like CM and KK; all of them assume invincibility. Ravana's invulnerability is breached by his death on the epic battlefield. The image of his fragmented body invades the superficial idea of permanence created by capitalism. Similarly, in "Heart's Desire," Sycorax is unable to decide on what her heart desires in her old age when the image of death becomes sharper and sharper.

Ariel takes her to the mall and declares "[t]he wealth of the universe lies before you" (124). Through material wealth, Sycorax tries finding happiness while trying on different clothes. But once she takes off her clothes, she sees "the loose flesh, and the scattering of tiny moles" (128). It indicates how material pleasures in the contemporary world are used to hide reality underneath. Sycorax's aging body becomes a "monstrous" image which reminds one of death, making the idea of unlimited capitalist progress futile. In other words, her body exposes the superficiality of capitalism to the readers. Thus, by showing the vulnerability of the body, the narrative constantly disrupts the logic of capitalist indestructibility. In Namjoshi, one finds the need to be aware and acknowledge one's precarity in relation to the planet to avert the danger. Ignorance can lead the planet into a catastrophic future. In the text, Ravana, Shupi, and Kumbh decide to "venture out of [the] cave" to save the world from "Global Warming" (25). The cave here signifies ignorance of the current society, which refuses to see the precarity of their lives resulting from their actions. Hence, the patriarchal capitalist economy assumes invincibility of the self and a denial of vulnerability or precarity of the body. This denial not only glosses over the existing violence in relation to race, gender, etc., but also goes against nature. By articulating the fallacious logic of our society, Namjoshi intends to defamiliarize the readers from the normative of the everyday and make them aware of their vulnerable existence. Namjoshi does not merely warn, but also provides solutions through her eutopian narrative, which will be discussed in the next section.

New Eutopian Subjectivity

This section pertains to the alternative provided to the existing, exploitative capitalistic economy in "Bad People". Mark Fisher states about the cultural assumptions regarding capitalism in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2009): "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism" (i). It is reiterated in Namjoshi's "Bad People" where capitalism is pervasive and all encompassing: "Money goes round and round, unless, of course, something happens— an earthquake, or a plague or a catastrophe of some sort" ("Bad People" 50). Capitalism, according to Fisher, is shaping our perceptions and responses to the existing crisis, and there seems to be an ideological malaise that prevents people from imagining alternatives. Namjoshi, while accepting the pervasiveness of capitalism, is not unwilling to provide an alternative. Namjoshi's solution emerges from the system of capitalism. The idea is expressed by Shupi in the following statement, who is willing to save the world from global warming: "…we'll make money, and draw up a plan for saving the species…. Money is needed to get our message heard" (38). In presenting the solution within capitalism, "Bad People" departs from the exaggerated representation of good vs evil, emergent in most dystopian fiction. In her thesis *Articulating the Elsewhere: Utopia in Contemporary Feminist Dystopias* (1999), Ildney Cavalcanti suggests, "the feminist dystopias paint an exaggerated picture of the existing power relations between the sexes" (9). Defending such narrative structure, Cavalcanti argues: "these particular imaginative strategies, more easily achieved in speculative fictional modes, amount to a feminist political stance and a radical critique of empirical power relations" (10). While exaggerated gender relations might help in terms of articulating one's political ideas, it may risk creating a dichotomy between good vs evil. Namjoshi deviates from such presentation as she is seen to criticize the system in which individuals are created more than the individual. It is especially reflected in the ways in which the mythical "villain" Ravana transforms from an egotistical patriarch to that of a compassionate being.

In Namjoshi's "Bad People" the resurrection and transformation of Ravana becomes a form of subversion to the dichotomies between good and evil, hero and villain. In the text "Bad

People", the egotistical villain of *Ramayana* is resurrected into a compassionate individual who embarks upon a journey of saving the world. The first-person narrative of Ravana makes the readers empathize with him, which further disrupts the naïve distinction between hero and villain. Ravana's reinterpretation in the text can be analysed as having the following functions: one is to foster the belief that every individual is capable of doing something good, and the other is to understand the necessity of the change of consciousness for those in power, as they have the means to effect change. Interestingly, the key element required for such transformation seems to be compassion. Central to Namjoshi's eutopianism is the development of a self that rejects the excessive individualism, acquisitiveness, competitiveness, and self-centeredness of capitalism. Namjoshi's eutopianism accepts the "womanly" ideals which involve being "gentle and kind and caring about people" ("Bad People" 25). This is not to say that the world should be ruled by women, as many separatist utopian writings during the second wave feminism in the West asserted, or to claim that women are better than men. It is to suggest that the characteristics which have long been deemed as feminine and thereby rejected need to be reconsidered to guide one's ethical sensibility. At the same time, women have been relegated to the culture of care for so long that the idea itself has become associated with females. In Namjoshi, one finds an insistence on developing the feminine sensibility by both men and women to see the world differently. Evidently, in traditional utopian literature, emphasis is placed on creating idealized places, in whose image the author desires his or her contemporary world to aspire. In Namjoshi, one finds the image of an idealized individual through the character of Ravana's grandmother. Grandmother Ketumati is central to the story, even if she does not appear but is talked about by Ravana and other characters. The absence indicates that she is a eutopian figure, whose ideals are depicted as desirable in individuals. She is also called "heavenly being, a gandharva" which adds to her idealized eutopian image. The shift from the idealized place to the idealized person is intentional, emphasizing the need to create a new subjectivity. It is important to analyze the characterization of grandmother Ketumati, which is narrated from the perspective of Ravana, and her relationship with him. Ravana's mother, Kaikesi, did not love him and his sister because they were destined to be Rakshasas. It implies that Kaikesi understood Ravana in essentialist terms, as an evil Rakshasa. Ketumati, on the other hand, was affectionate to Ravana and taught him music while wanting him to be a great musician "whose music spoke to the rakshasas and to the gods, to her own people and to ordinary humans" (10). As opposed to Kaikesi, Ketumati understood Ravana through compassion instead of prejudice. In the preceding quote, it is clear that Ketumati also wanted Ravana to show similar compassion to all, irrespective of their social standing, through art. Eventually, in the narrative, Ketumati's balm becomes a metaphor for compassion, which, once applied, makes people kinder. Ravana and Kumbh are brought to life with the help of this balm by Shupi, which makes them compassionate. This does not mean a complete change in individuality with no traces of the past self. It rather suggests that by developing an ethics of compassion, one is able to listen to others instead of having rigid ideas about others. As Kumbh in one instance states that compassion makes people "sane" suggesting that it makes people sensible and open to listening and understanding others. For example, the egotistical Ravana still talks of conquering the world even after the application of the balm, but Shupi insists on saving the world from Global Warming. Ravana listens to Kumbh and Shupi, and through his dialogue with them, he undergoes a change of perspective and helps the others save the world from the climate crisis. Hence, compassion is seen to be the key to opening up dialogue between people. Moreover, the capitalist Karodpati also experiences a change of heart after using Ketumati's balm and uses his capital to aid the reproduction of the balm into various products, consuming which will make people compassionate. The alliance between KK and the patriarchal Ravana, and the feminist Shurpanakha suggests the necessity of an alliance between varied forces in order to save the planet. This unlikely alliance ultimately becomes successful

in saving the world as they establish a eutopian world in "Bad People". In other words, in order to save the planet, individuals are required to move beyond the isolated selves or groups, and the presumptions based on the binaries between good and evil, hero and villain, self vs other.

However, Namjoshi also makes her readers aware of the precariousness of human nature. Ravana changes and becomes a compassionate human being, departing from his previous image as a villain, but wonders how long he will be able to use non-violence. The Revolutionary Army threatens to topple the utopian society established by Ravana and others. The army imagines, "because they still retain their ferocity and their Will to Power. They are capable of using violence" as opposed to Ravana and his companions, who have chosen the path of non-violence (104). Ravana wonders that if violence is used, what will he do: "Catch his spear in midair, drive it into the ground and call it a fence post? We've become better, but not perfect" (104). This opens up the question of how much it will be feasible to be non-violent when faced with brutal forces. The question is posed to the readers for them to imagine and ponder upon it. Thus, in collapsing the binaries between good vs evil, hero vs villain, the text allows for the alliances to be formed between such varied forces as capitalist KK, feminist Shupi, the patriarchal Ravana, etc. While the text provides one of the roads through which a better world can be attained, it is also aware of the limitations of human nature. It is a critical stance which coincides with the discourses around 'critical dystopia' and 'critical utopia', which will be discussed in the next section.

Recuperation of (E)utopianism

This section discussing Suniti Namjoshi's utopianism in *Dangerous Pursuits* argues for the necessity of eutopianism in the contemporary context. The recent dystopian fiction can be called what Tom Moylan describes as "critical dystopia" in his seminal work, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000). In fact, Lyman Tower Sargent predicted the emergence of "critical dystopias" which have a glimmer of hope in contemporary times, in his seminal essay "Three Faces of Utopianism." In *Dark Horizon, Moylan and* Baccolini suggest *that "*the new critical dystopias allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure: the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse within the work" (*Dark Horizon* 7). In these dystopias, then, utopia is on the horizon, vague and ambiguous. In hinting at utopia, the narrative radically diverges from the traditional eutopias where a picture of a better world is articulated in concrete terms, for example, in Begum Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* (1905). Instead, critical dystopias focus more on the process towards a utopian horizon, represented through the perilous journey of the protagonist who resists the forces of subjugation, than on the picture of a better society. Despite having a utopian horizon, 'critical dystopia' essentially focuses on devastating futures, which dominate the narrative, and might be problematic for political mobility. Fatima Vieira in "Complex Democracy, Complex Utopianism" (2024) agrees that "[t]he certainty of a catastrophe…. instead of inspiring people, seems to have a paralyzing effect" (332). Another characteristic of critical dystopia, as mentioned above, is the undefined utopia on the horizon, which is also not efficient for political mobility. Vieira states that "… without a concrete idea of the nature of the horizon toward which we are to walk… we risk living in a dispersed, chaotic society…. that does not really lead us to a better place?" (331). Unlike 'critical dystopia', which focuses more on the process than an imagined better future, Namjoshi traverses the horizon between process and the representation of a radically altered society. In "Bad People", she does focus on the process to reach a better society, which takes a large chunk of the narrative. At the same time, she also provides the satisfaction of a defined better future which is visible towards the end of the "Bad People" where:

> Government fall, the arms industry disappear, as does the slave trade and traffic in drugs. A new set of politicians who want to serve the people rises to the top. Bureaucrats no longer take bribes, and the police spend their time being helpful, as do the armed forces. Spaceships are built, planets are explored, as is the asteroid belt. Famine disappears. Prices fall. There is no adulteration in the products sold, and the crass disparity between the rich and the poor is reduced. Politicians tell the truth. Drunkenness stops, as do prostitution and pornography. Domestic abuse is almost unheard of. Crimes are a rarity. Genuine excellence is recognized. The arts flourish, and so do the humanities and the sciences. Every citizen receives a first-rate education. The air is cleaner. The burning of fossil fuels is almost unknown; and as far as possible only biodegradable materials are ever used. The planet begins to recover gradually. The population decreases. Wildlife flourishes and endangered species stop being endangered. Vestigial notions of the rights of other species slowly emerge (101).

Here, Namjoshi follows the traditional eutopian format found in Begum Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* by providing a concrete picture of what needs to be improved instead of simply hinting at them. The articulation of clear pictures of where one needs to go helps with collective political action. Moreover, 'critical dystopia' according to Moylan emphasizes more on the resistance from below, the various micropolitics coming together against the capitalist leviathan. Fatima Vievera, in contrast, suggests that in relation to ecology, "[c]hange cannot come from above, nor from below, but from both sides, indeed from many sides, resulting from many utopian strategies put in place simultaneously" (332). Namjoshi, through "Bad People" also seems to emphasize the same by moving away from such a dichotomous relationship between good vs evil which, is already discussed in the preceding section. The varied forces from various directions come together—the capitalist KK, the patriarch Ravana, the feminist Shupi, and Leela, who belongs to the lower class— to save the planet from catastrophe. Also, even when one aspires and establishes a "Perfect" place "whoever fell short" of the perfect place "would have to be dealt with" (104). In other words, utopia as "perfection" demands exclusion. The idea of utopia as a perfect place has been a topic of contention among both utopian and anti-utopian scholars. Namjoshi definitely is not anti-utopian. She understands the necessity of utopian dreams: "Should we give up dreaming? I don't mean that, of course. And I don't think we could, even if we wanted to" (*Dangerous Pursuits* 3). It may also be argued that "Bad People" is critical utopia," a term coined by Tom Moylan in his pioneering work *Demand the Impossible* (1986) with the emergence of the utopian literature in the 1970s in the west. In that, the texts constructed utopian societies where there were imperfections which rendered the genre to be self-reflexive in nature. Such reflexivity on the nature of eutopian desires is found in Namjoshi as well. For example, apart from the utopian representation in "Bad People", Namjoshi raises some pertinent questions with regards to eutopia. Firstly, she acknowledges the ephemerality of eutopia, and the dangers associated with it. Even after achieving a desired world, Ravana refrains from calling the changed world a "utopia" for he equates "utopia" with "perfection." The reason being there are oppositional forces in the changed society nascent in the form of "Revolutionary Army for the Rights of the Individual" led by the CM, which threatens to challenge the stability of eutopia (104). This implies the acknowledgement of the conflicting forces that opposes the permanence of any change, making the nature of eutopia to be precarious.

Also, even when one aspires and establishes a "perfect" place "whoever fell short" of the perfect place "would have to be dealt with" (104). In other words, utopia as "perfection" demands exclusion. The idea of utopia as a perfect place has been a topic of contention among both utopian and anti-utopian scholars. Namjoshi is not anti-utopian. She understands the necessity of utopian dreams: "Should we give up dreaming? I don't mean that, of course. And

I don't think we could, even if we wanted to" (*Dangerous Pursuits* 3). Namjoshi here rejects the idea of perfection.

However, Moylan, in the "Introduction to the Classical Edition" mentions, "[a] central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream" (xv). While Namjoshi acknowledges the limitations of utopian tradition where perfection is aspired, she does present a "blueprint" by articulating a concrete picture of a better future as discussed above. In that, it deviates from 'critical utopia.' What makes Namjoshi's "blueprint" different from the traditional utopias like that of Thomas More, which presents a "perfect society", is its insistence on dealing with the "imminent crisis" rather than its establishment as a permanent solution. Rather, she provides a potent possibility for an alternative which may challenge the masculinist logic of capitalism and prevent the immediate climate crisis at hand, as Ravana in the text puts it – to avert the "imminent crisis" of Global Warming (106). Furthermore, Namjoshi does not present eutopianism as the ultimate solution to all problems. For example, the failure of eutopian desire becomes apparent as articulated in section 1, where it was discussed how the vulnerable body becomes an important trope in dismantling the capitalist logic of the dominance of mind over body. However, corporeality, due to its limitations, can become anti-utopian in nature, that is, the absence of a desire for a better place. In "Heart's Desire", for example, Sycorax, in her old age, is unable to look forward to a better future because she is aware of her inevitable hour. Sycorax desires heaven after death: "painted paradise" but comes to realise that even "that is as good as one's imagination" (160). She also wants to save the world, but her aching body prevents her from her noble venture. She is not completely dismissive of utopianism in this instance as well because in the face of hopelessness, she looks back upon her life instead of looking forward and realizes that it "mattered" that she "lived" (161). Here, her utopianism is not directed at a future, rather it is directed towards her life lived, in the mundane, everyday simple life where she completed simple things like: "play bridge once a week, meditate every day, cultivate my garden, talk to the birds…visit a dear friend…and socialize occasionally" (166). In other words, one need not always situate utopianism in the revolutionary and transformative. It can also come in the form of accepting one's vulnerability and limitations and living life regardless, which accounts for hope. In such articulation, the precariousness of the eutopian world and plans becomes apparent, yet it does not negate the essentiality of dreaming and desiring.

Essentially, dreaming and desiring are integral to human existence despite the limitations put upon their actualization. In "The Dream Book" one finds the kind of utopianism depicted by Namjoshi in the following dialogue:

> **Gonzalo:** Dream something better.
>
> **Fredie:** And if we fail?
>
> **Ariel:** Then you'll dream again.
>
> **Miranda:** That's our doom?
>
> **Ariel:** And your chance. That's how you're made.

It implies the potential danger of dreaming, as it might lead to failure. Yet, she recognizes in the idea of dreaming the potential to change the world. The conversation in "The Dream Book" continues as follows:

> **Cal:** To dream and dream again?

Ariel: Yes.

Miranda: Someday to find a good dream?

Gonzalo: Yes.

Fredie: And then to see that dissolve?

Ariel: Yes. (229)

And still, they "consent…To dream a better and kinder dream" (229). Utopianism in Namjoshi entails dreaming again and again with the acceptance of its precarious tendency, temporariness, and conflicting nature. Thus, dreaming and hoping are the starting points to protect this planet from the havoc that has been created in this world.

Therefore, despite acknowledging the ever-changing nature of eutopia, the multiple problems in relation to eutopia, Namajoshi's text seems to emphasise the importance, what may be called "precarious eutopianism" in today's capitalist world. "Precarious eutopianism" begins by acknowledging one's precarity in relation to the planetary danger looming at large. Yet, it provides concrete solutions and a clear picture of a better world, which, as Lyman Tower Sargent describes, "is radically different" than the one in which the author lives ("Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" *9*). At the same time, there is an acknowledgement of the temporariness of the solution provided in the eutopian text as it seeks to provide a solution for the imminent crises at hand. Thus, the new eutopian fiction focuses both on the process of how to reach eutopian society and what to expect in this eutopian society. In other words, instead of leaving eutopia to the imagination of the readers, the "precarious eutopianism" boldly articulates the picture of a better world in the contemporary condition of capitalist society while acknowledging its precarious nature.

Conclusion

This essay argued that Suniti Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits* provides a vital and timely recuperation of eutopianism in contemporary literature. Through a close reading of "Bad People" and with references to "Heart's Desire" and "The Dream Book," the analysis has shown how Namjoshi's narratives reject the capitalist logic of impenetrable, self-sufficient individuality in favor of a more compassionate, collaborative vision of society. Drawing from theorists like Margaret Shildrick and Jonathan T. Park, the essay has highlighted how Namjoshi exposes the precarious nature of both the human body and the environment, challenging the masculine, acquisitive forces of capitalism and patriarchal hierarchies. By foregrounding the vulnerability and interdependence of bodies and selves, Namjoshi not only critiques the present but also imagines a radically different future. Her eutopian vision—termed here as "precarious eutopianism"—insists that utopian dreaming is crucial despite its inherent limitations and contradictions. In contrast to the ambiguous utopian visions of contemporary "critical dystopias," Namjoshi's *Dangerous Pursuits* presents a more hopeful alternative by articulating both a concrete vision of a better world and a nuanced understanding of its fragility. This balanced approach fosters collective political action, inspiring readers to acknowledge their complicity in environmental degradation while simultaneously offering them a clear blueprint for change. To conclude, Namjoshi's "precarious eutopianism" speaks to the complexities of our time: it recognizes the uncertain and temporary nature of any utopian achievement while underscoring the necessity of imagining and striving for better worlds. In doing so, Namjoshi not only recuperates the lost promise of eutopia but also provides a critical framework for rethinking the role of literature in an age of planetary precarity and capitalist crisis.

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Bionote

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