

The Post-feminist Flâneuse: A Study of Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Postmodern Fiction

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Abstract:

Chick lit, a descriptive marker of women's writings, is a disguised transition due to the rise in serial cohabitation, increase in singleton lifestyle, the inclination towards starter marriage and decrease in the rates of remarriage. Within the corpus of postmodern fiction, chick lit re-feminizes the women's culture, embarking upon new subjectivities of pink- packaged femininity. As a grotesque deflation of structuralist binaries, the genre invokes high culture through its lexical register. The present study tropes to establish chick lit in a different way, as a sociological documentary of daughters track, it is a lens to consumer culture and as a counter paradigm to feminism. Being a rejoinder of cultural confidence and feminist awareness, Chick Lit hinges upon self and one's own stratagems at the apex of hierarchy and also traces the paradigmatic heroine as an emblem of conventional feminine impressions.

Key words: Transition, Singleton, Postmodern, Paradigmatic, Subjectivity, Chick Lit.

Introduction

Since the dissemination of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the content which is extensively believed for generating the deluge of novels frequently characterized 'Chick lit', this character of novel has become one of the most prominent amidst the contemporary female learning community. Chick lit has captivated tremendous consideration in the scholastic world, where these documents have been deliberated, criticised and evaluated at term within the notion of 'post feminism' and in form to research depictions of contemporary femininity and experience.

Although this work contributes a beneficial description on these post feminist artistic texts, it could be said that intellectual inquiry thus far has involved with the 'chick' of chick lit, and the 'lit' prospect- that these are 'literary' texts- has been some- what excluded. The one expulsion to this is a prevalent confession of an inter textual tradition of the type which most often references the effect of

Jane Austen; earlier even here it is contrived clearly that despite Austen may lead to believe the genre, —Chick lit cannot justifiably make a claim to comparable literary status.¹

The *flâneur* was basically fixed both anciently and geographically to 19th century Paris, but during the last century he roamed in many directions, because of continued acceptance by a number of learned interpreters. The character of *flâneur* was first described by the French poet, Charles Baudelaire who characterised him as ‘a passionate spectator’ of the city and its group, one who has a ‘quantity of seeing’ and ‘an acute and magical discernment’. (Baudelaire 1964 9-12) Moreover, Amy Burns in her article, the Post Feminist Flâneuse: The Literary Value of Contemporary Chick Lit, discusses that Baudelaire asserted –A woman doesn’t have any role of her own and his original assertion was that a woman could not take on this role, predominantly because she is part of the male *flâneur*’s observation: ‘[woman is] the object of the keenest admiration and curiosity... a kind of idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching’²

Our generally ready-to-hand hotspots for what the streetscape resembled in the nineteenth century are male, and they see the city in their own specific manners. We can't accept their declaration as target truth; they saw certain things and, made suppositions about them. Baudelaire's secretive and charming *passante*, deified in his sonnet 'To a (Female) Passer-by', is commonly a thought to have been a lady of the night, yet for him she isn't so much as a genuine lady, just his imagination come to existence:

The deafening street roared around me
Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic in her grandeur
A woman walked past me, her sumptuous hand
Lifting and swinging her hem as she went.

Swift and graceful, with legs like a statue's
Twitching like a madman, I drank in
Her eyes, a pallid sky where storms are born
the sweetness that charms and the pleasure that kills.³

Obviously the reason, the *flâneuse* was limited from chronicles of city walking had to do with the social states of women in the nineteenth century, when our thoughts regarding the *flâneur* were systematized. The most punctual notice of a *flâneur* is in 1585, potentially acquired from the Scandinavian noun *flana*, 'an individual who meanders'. An individual – not really a male one. It

¹ Suzanne Ferriss and M Young, –Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction, Routledge, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203036211>.

² Amy Burns, — The Post Feminist Flâneuse: The Literary Value of Contemporary Chick Lit, Graduate Journal of Social Science 9, no. 3 (November 2012).

³ Posted by Longreads on March 2 and Longreads, –Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London, Longreads, March 12, 2018, <https://longreads.com/2017/03/02/flaneuse-women-walk-the-city-in-paris-new-york-tokyo-venice-and-london/>.

doesn't generally get on until the nineteenth century, and this time it's gendered. In 1806, the *flâneur* appeared as 'M. Bonhomme', a man about town who originates from adequate riches to have the opportunity to meander the city freely, hanging out, and viewing the different occupants of the city at work and at play. He is keen on tattle and design, yet not especially in women. In a 1829 word reference, a *flâneur* is a man 'who likes to sit idle', who savors inertness. Balzac's *flâneur* took two fundamental structures, which of the regular *flâneur*, glad to erratically meander the roads, and the craftsman *flâneur*, who poured his encounters of the city into his work. This was the more hopeless kind of *flâneur*, as Balzac notes in his 1837 novel *César Birotteau*, 'similarly as oftentimes a urgent man as an inactive one'.

Baudelaire's *flâneur* is an artist who looks for 'shelter in the group', displayed on his preferred painter, Constantin Guys, a man who ambled, about town, who may have fallen into lack of definition had Baudelaire not put him on the map. Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Man in the Crowd' opens up different inquiries: is the *flâneur* the individual who follows or is followed? Does he mix and evade, or venture back and compose what he sees? In French the words for 'I am' and 'I follow' are indistinguishable: *je suis*. 'Disclose to me who you follow and I'll reveal to you what your identity is,' composed André Breton in *Nadja*. Even for the male *flâneur*, *flânerie* does not universally signify freedom and leisure; Flaubert's version of *flânerie* reflects his own feelings of social discomfiture⁴ In the mid nineteenth century, the *flâneur* was contrasted with a cop. In Québec, says a companion who's invested energy there, a *flâneur* is a sort of con man.

Both assessor and reviewed, the *flâneur* is a boggling but void vessel, a clear canvas onto which various times have extended their own wants and tensions. He shows up when and how we need him to.⁵ There are numerous logical inconsistencies incorporated with the possibility of the *flâneur*, however we may not understand it when we talk about him. We think we comprehend what we mean, yet we don't. The equivalent could be said of the *flâneuse*.

In 1888 Amy Levy composed, 'The female club-lounger, the *flâneuse* of St James Street, lock key in pocket and eye-glasses on the button, stays an animal of the imagination.'⁶ sufficiently fair. Yet, definitely there have consistently been a lot of women in urban areas, and a lot of women expounding on urban areas, chronicling their carries on with, recounting stories, taking pictures, making films, drawing in with the city in any capacity they can – including Levy herself. The delight of strolling in the city has a place with people the same. To recommend that there couldn't be a female rendition of the *flâneur* is to restrict the manners in which women have cooperated with the city to the manners

⁴ Patricia Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris As Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 81. 7

⁵ According to the historian Elizabeth Wilson, the *flâneur* is a 'mythological or allegorical' figure who represents a certain anxiety about the city, its attack on individuality, its threatening abyss, its commodification of daily life and its possibilities for total self-reinvention. 'The Invisible Flâneur', *New Left Review* no. 191 (January–February 1992), p. 99.

⁶ Amy Levy, 'Women and Club Life', published in *Women's World*, a magazine edited by Oscar Wilde, 1888. See her poetry collection *A London Plane-Tree* (1889). Levy committed suicide not long after its publication.

in which men have connected with the city. We can discuss social mores and limitations, however we can't preclude the way that women were there; we should attempt to comprehend what strolling in the city intended to them. Maybe the appropriate response isn't to endeavor to make a woman fit a manly idea, however to rethink the idea itself. In the event that we burrow back, we find there consistently was a *flâneuse* passing Baudelaire in the road.

In the event that we read what women needed to state for themselves in the nineteenth century, we do locate that average women out in the open ran a wide range of dangers to their goodness and their notorieties; to go out in open alone was to hazard disgrace.⁷ Privileged women showed themselves in the Bois de Boulogne in their open carriages, or took escorted constitutionals in the recreation center. (The women in the shut carriage was a figure of some doubt, as the renowned carriage scene in *Madame Bovary* validates.) The unmistakable social stakes for an free young woman of the late nineteenth century are made very clear in the eight volumes of the journals of Marie Bashkirtseff (shortened and distributed in English under the fantastic title *I Am the Most Interesting Book of All*), which describe her change from indulged youthful Russian aristocrat to effective artist, giving her work at the Paris Salon a only a brief time after she began genuinely examining painting, until her passing from tuberculosis at the age of 25. In January 1879 she wrote in her journal:

I long for the freedom to go out alone: to go, to come, to sit on a bench in the Jardin des Tuileries, and especially to go to the Luxembourg, to look at the decorated store windows, to enter churches and museums, and to stroll in the old streets in the evenings. This is what I envy. Without this freedom one cannot become a great artist.⁸

Marie had moderately little to lose; she realized she was sentenced to an early demise – why not walk alone? Yet, she sustained an expectation she would get well until the prior month she passed on; and keeping in mind that she would have cheerfully humiliated her family, she had likewise disguised her way of life's issue with a young woman of good family going out alone so much that she would chide herself for needing to, writing in her journal that regardless of whether she resisted social injuries, she —would only be half free, because a woman who prowls is unwise!⁹

In spite of the fact that she followed an escort behind her, she went through days strolling the ghettos of Paris with her note pad close by, drawing all that she saw, research which would create various canvases, including 1884's *A Meeting*, which presently hangs in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, and portrays a gathering of youthful road imps accumulated on a traffic intersection. One of them holds a

⁷ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 97.

⁸ Marie Bashkirtseff, *The Journals of Marie Bashkirtseff*, 2 vols, trans. Phyllis Howard Kernberger and Katherine Kernberger, New York: Fonthill Press, 2012, 2 January 1879.

⁹ Luc Sante, *The Other Paris*, New York: FSG, 2015.

winged creature's home, and shows it off to the others, who lean in with that innocent intrigue that attempts to camouflage itself as all out impassion.

In any case, she figured out how to remember herself for the streetscape. To one side of the gathering of young men, driving down another road, we can find in the foundation a little youngster from behind, interlace down her back, leaving, perhaps all alone, however it's hard to know without a doubt on the grounds that the casing cuts off there; we can't see her correct arm. This, for me, is the most magnificent aspect of the artistic creation: Marie's mark is set beneath the little youngster, in the base right-hand corner. I don't believe it's exceeding to construe that Marie has painted herself into the canvas, in the figure of the perhaps single little youngster on her way off, leaving the young men to it.

The study on *Veere di Wedding*, embarks upon the fact that Chick lit protagonist are seen wandering and roaming around the world in order to experience it. In the contemporary decade, 'chick-lit' as a female oriented re-appraisal of femininity, provides a new articulation of young femininity and portrays feminist ideals of a robust, young woman with a strong sense of self. This heroine centred narrative revolves around the observations and experiences of the protagonist's daily tribulations tackled by modern women- from work places to female companionships to relationships while in humorous and jovial tone. One noteworthy way in which the protagonist confronts the conventional figure of the *flâneur* is by her constant need to indulge and involve in contemporary social, cultural interplay, most particularly by texting and using social media.

Consumerism and indulgence are key words that portray the lives of characters in these novels in which the vast majority of the characters will in general seek after material goods to show social status. These products in this manner come to characterize a classy life. Consumerism is one significant trademark that reflects material tendency. Jean Baudrillard claims that industrialism is an augmentation of his thought of hyperrealism. Everything in our ordinary world is a recreation of reality. This re-enactment is finished through the utilization of merchandise. Consumerism additionally creates a consumer society, a general public wherein most individuals believe material products to be a prerequisite of easy street; their work is to be expended and they are viewed as an individual's elite property.

Likewise, a new belief or conviction has appeared in the twenty-first century. In most people's mind these days, a classy life is perceived as one encompassed by sumptuous merchandise and refined offices. Louise J. Kaplan states such the present reality is a daily existence spent in quest for unauthenticated items, one in which individuals become eager for material products, buying to an ever increasing extent and henceforth working an ever increasing number of hours so as to manage the cost

of everything. Accordingly, material goods become the prime methods to arrive at the status itself (2006:179). Additionally, Baudrillard contends:

Today, we are everywhere surrounded by the remarkable conspicuousness of consumption and affluence, established by the multiplication of objects, services, and material goods. This now constitutes a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species. Strictly speaking, men of wealth are no longer surrounded by other human beings, as they have been in the past, but by objects (1994:33).¹⁰

Hypothesis

Based on the contradictions that post feminism is fraught with and whether it is a deviation or a continuation of feminism, the hypothesis is based on the argument whether this notion of post feminism is conceived as an entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist themes within them or is a textual model of —conscious-raising|. Moreover, the present paper discovers that chick lit does generally reinforce the ideas of post feminism; nonetheless, the characters show anxiety over how to consolidate feminine ways into their lives. Although fully rooted inside the consumer culture of neo-liberal societies, post feminism additionally investigates its leading values. This paradox fits inside postmodern/postfeminist standards where ambivalence and contradiction are average and focal qualities. In popular culture, the post feminist critique of neo-radicalism is prevalently enunciated through humor, incongruity and overemphasizing.

Methodology

The research methodology for this study is conducted in order to place Chick Lit as an extension of Individuality, Choice and Empowerment in a Post Feminist World by doing a study of Advaita Kala's *Almost Single*. This study is the analytical study the analytical study through textual analysis, critical analysis and feminist analysis. The main motive of this research is to investigate how feminist sensibilities appear in this text and how the protagonist copes with different sensibilities.

In feminist analysis, I have selected one post feminist theorist namely Rosalind Gill. Rosalind Gill in her famous work *Gender and Media* (2007), discusses about the disagreements and contradictions defining post feminism. Gill suggests that post feminism should be considered as —a sensibility|, meaning , that is should befit the cultural mood regarding gender that pervades Western countries in the late 20th century and early 21st century. Rosalind Gill on the attributes of sensibility which are characterized by a shift from women portrayed as submissive and passive objects to being projected

¹⁰ Alina Ilie-Martinescu, "Postfeminist Fiction in Chick Lit Novels," *Gender Studies* 14, no. 1 (January 2015): pp. 119-137, <https://doi.org/10.1515/genst-2016-0008>.

as active agents; focus on self- surveillance and discipline; emphasis on celebration of one's own identity and keeping oneself pleased.

The possibility that it is woman's obligation to oversee male desire is found in the counsel pages of magazines focused on young girls and women. Indeed, even magazines that apparently plan to empower women's (hetero)sexuality, for example, *Cosmopolitan*, sexual advice 'on the most proficient method to satisfy your man' as being 'audacious' and maintaining a strategic distance from fatigue in one's sexual coexistence, including, with a last thrive/gesture to woman's rights, that one ought not do anything one isn't happy with. Gill refers to numerous such models and contends that they are not simple inconsistency, however part of a lucid 'post feminist' venture: to consider women's liberation, just to renounce it.

Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit shows how these writings question the "consume and achieve" guarantee offered by these women's advice manuals and in doing so challenge the consumer industry to which they are firmly connected. Through their narrative structure and their portrayals of perceiving female readers and consumers, chick lit creators make fictionalized instructional aides that problematize the belief systems advertised by the advice manuals their characters read. Chick lit creators, at that point, react in differed approaches to the manuals they reference, and in doing as such, convolute the readers assumptions regarding female utilization, women readers, women's composition, and popular fiction. Furthermore, *Consumerism in Chick Lit* inspects chick lit writings from the class' initial period, starting with an investigation of Helen Fielding's novel (1996) and finishing up with an examination of Sherrie Krantz's *The Autobiography of Vivian Livingston* (2002), pairing, in every section, these chick lit writings with the women's advice literature to which they react.

Chick lit, as other scholarly developments, is a historically situated genre. In their introduction, Ferriss and Young refer to Heather Cabot's 2003 article "Chick Lit: Genre Aimed at Young Women Is Fueling Publishing Industry" for abcnews.com. In the article, Cabot cites Jennifer Weiner, writer of chick lit novels, for example, *Good in Bed* (2001) and *In Her Shoes* (2002). Weiner remarks that there is —an authenticity frequently missing from women's fiction of the past . . . I think that for a long time, what women were getting were sort of the Jackie Collins, Judith Krantz books—sex and shopping, glitz and glamour, heroines that were fun to read about, but just felt nothing like where you were in your life' || (qt. in Ferriss and Young 4)¹¹. Chick lit author Laura Zigman concurs that this need was generally arranged as women writers and readers of the late 1990s were hoping to compose and peruse texts that approved women's experience:

¹¹ Suzanne Ferriss and M Young, "Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction," Routledge, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203036211>.

In my heartbroken, urban, single, post feminist mood I felt like there was a lot going on with women that no one was really talking about . . . We had a lot of freedom and a lot of choices, but there was a price. People were lonely . . . But you would pick up these books and go, Okay, I am not mad, I am not the only loser in the world who feels lonely. (Weinberg)¹²

This feeling of disconnect provoked writers like Weiner and Zigman to start composing chick lit stories, which they felt all the more legitimately associated with their own experiences. The author bios at the rear of chick lit writings fill in as proof of this reality; they emphasize the similarities between the writers, their characters, and their readers. Bank highlights her single status in her author biography, noticing that she "lives in New York City with her Labrador retriever, Maybelline," while Sherrie Krantz emphasizes her own profession achievements, a significant focal point of her protagonist's quest. Helen Fielding's author photo for the hardcover, 1998 British release of *Bridget Jones' Diary* even ventures to such an extreme as to impersonate the cover design. Both Bridget Jones, on the front of the novel, and Fielding, on the back of inside fold, are shot in profile, smoking cigarettes.

Critical Discussion

Chick lit novels are enmeshed in the present. Nonetheless, in numerous ways, these novels, and the methodologies taken by chick lit writers, are most certainly not astoundingly new. Or maybe, their foundations are in the heroine- centered novels of the nineteenth century, novels like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Helen Fielding herself recognized her obligation to such nineteenth-century authors, for example, Jane Austen in an interview for *Time* where she noticed that she did in fact structure her novel after Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: " Yes. I shamelessly stole the plot. I thought it had been very well market researched over a number of centuries."¹³ In "Mothers of Chick Lit: Women Writers, Readers, and Literary History," Juliette Wells talks about these associations between nineteenth-century women's fiction and chick lit while critic Stephanie Harzewski in "Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners" specifically analyze the basic similarities between chick lit and the novel of manners.¹⁴ Harzewski additionally investigates the associations between chick lit, prose romance, and popular romance, taking note of how the class depends on the shows of the romance but updates them for its current day setting. And, as noted prior, chick lit additionally draws upon the female-centred fiction of the 1960s and 1970s. Imelda Whelehan's *The Feminist Bestseller: From Sex and the Single Girl to Sex and the City*

¹² Anna Weinberg, "She's Come Undone: Chick Lit Was Supposed to Be the Bright Light of Postfeminist Writing. What Happened?," 2003, <https://www.questia.com/magazine/1G1-104729745/she-s-come-undone-chick-lit- was-supposed-to-be-the>.

¹³ November 20, 2014.

¹⁴ Stephanie Harzewski, "The New Novel of Manners: Chick Lit and Postfeminist Sexual Politics," 2006, <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3225468/>.

associate the genre to Erica Jong's 1973 novel *Fear of Flying* just as Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* (1977).

Chick lit writers are not the first women writers to connect their texts to contemporary mainstream society mediums. In *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Austen investigates the effect that Gothic fiction had upon her champion Catherine Moreland; Edith Wharton specifies Tiffany and Co. in *The House of Mirth* (1905); American author Sylvia Plath accounts Esther Greenwood's summer spent interning for the anecdotal *Ladies' Day magazine in the Bell Jar* (1962); contemporary African American author Toni Morrison's details her character Claudia's energetic scorn for Shirley temple in *The Bluest Eye* (1970); and creator Diane Johnson, who "separates her time between San Francisco and Paris," closes her novel *Le Divorce* (1997) with an action packed scene set in EuroDisney. Women writers have a long history of interfacing their fiction with consumer culture, and somehow or another, chick lit novels are only proceeding with that pattern with their immediate references to magazines, self improvement guides, rom-coms, and local exhortation manuals. In these ways, at that point, chick lit is connected to the abstract customs that went before it.

Presently moving towards the Indian Chick Lit, subsequent to getting enough consideration in the western world, the genre is creating ripples in the literary scenario of India. The *desi* Chick Lit has its own *desi* flavor with all the *desi* flavors and fixings added to the plot and the story. Sunaina Kumar, the main journalist of the Indian Express addresses Indian chicklit as *Ladki-lit* and expresses that ten years after the distribution of *Bridget Jones' Diary*, the genre of fiction most unmistakable for its pink cover art of stilettos, martini glasses and lipsticks, is currently being brilliantly implanted with bindis, saris, and bangles. It is accepted that the class has been acquainted with the youthful Indian young ladies with the distribution of principally two books: *Trust Me* by Rajashree and *Almost Single* by Advaita Kala. And afterward there is seen a spurt of *desi* Chick Lit novels. A large number of them making to the head of the rundown of the blockbusters in the nation. *Trust Me*, 25000 duplicates sold distinctly in the first month of distribution and *Almost Single*, in excess of 50,000 duplicates sold.

The writer, Advaita Kala, a prior lodging leader yet now a full time author, acknowledges in an interview that the story of *Almost Single* is a bit autobiographical. She also discloses that she needed to expound on the experience of the Indian Urban women. Kala, who has composed the scripts of the movies like *Anjana Anjani* and *Kahaani*. She accepts that the things are changing and Indian Urban women are at an exceptionally critical point. Marriage, family, vocation and autonomy – all are critical to them however might be needs are changed. Her novel shows in a humorous manner the reaction of the family, society and of their own to every one of these changes. Based on these theoretical premises of Chick lit, *Almost Single* can be categorized aptly under the category of Chick Lit. The semi-autobiographical novel highlights itself to be a model of conscious-raising, facilitating an intimate and deep experience between the writer and the reader, disclosing the self and fate of

woman under andocentric realm and also impinging upon the need for change. Further to consider its current relevance- and question whether, finally, a women can be a Flâneuse in contemporary culture. The heroine-centred narrative revolves around the daily tribulations tackled by modern women- from work places to female companionships to relationships in humorous and jovial tone. Earlier connoting stereotypes like unfortunate, lonely, vulnerable, and incomplete or frustrated, they now reflect the non-conforming attitude towards the stereotypical belief and are now the self-assertive, autonomous and bold individuals. Jeannie Delombard in "Femmenism" has aptly highlighted that the new age woman is not —a mark of oppression but resistance to a context of prohibition¹⁵. When considering the portrayal of women in popular culture compared with how women are really feeling about the freedom and choices they have, Chick lit provides a clear picture of just how liberating and immobilizing their current positions can be. Although Chick lit is not without its shallow moments of body obsession, shopping and silly romantic mishaps, neither is popular culture.

The Protagonists of Indian Chick Lit are combination of Conventions and Modernity:

Despite the fact that they present a sharp logical inconsistency to the stereotypical image of an Indian woman as they break many standards, yet they speak to Indian convictions and identity. These are the girls in *saaris* and *dupattas*. They represent the educated middle class young girls of the twenty-first century India who need to become showbiz royalty in their lives. They hail from little to average estimated urban communities. They are appeared as recently urbanized that implies they originate from middle- sized towns and working class families to the enormous city to accomplish something significant throughout everyday life. They need to have everything. They regard conventions and social standards, yet unquestionably have a mind of their own. That is why they seem to be quirky sometime with their own set of eccentricities. For instance, the protagonist, Aisha Bhatia in *Almost Single*, is from Nashik however works in Delhi. She wears *saari* with Reebok shoes as her activity in a five star lodging requests her to wear the ethnic clothing however she combines it up with the agreeable shoes as her activity additionally anticipates that her should be on her toes the whole day. She smokes and drinks and needs to make an incredible most however she despite everything accepts at the age of twenty- nine that an organized marriage can happen to her and feels stressed at the point when her mom approaches her to discover a counterpart for herself as it passes on that she has passed the time of orchestrated marriage, "At the point when your parents quit matchmaking and turn philosophical, it's an ideal opportunity to stress" ¹⁶.

The present paper is based on four incidents selected from the text that showcase Aisha, the main protagonist as an amalgamation of cultural confidence with feminist awareness. The protagonist,

¹⁵ Genz Stéphanie and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).22

¹⁶ Advaita Kala, *Almost Single* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2009), 12.

Aisha, is an emblem of culturally rootedness and modern thoughts, traditional set-ups and modern concept of romance, fragility and audacity. The first incident that attests to this fact is,

No, Aisha, we need to assume control over being single. There is an entire universe of men out there and we need to contact them! This is the best approach to do it! We are excessively cosmopolitan for the neighborhood young men, we need to grow our points of view and bridle the advantages of innovation.¹⁷

This statement throws light on the character and nature of the modern cosmopolitan woman who acknowledges her responsibilities and is to compete at par with men in any field and up to any level, be it a secured job, a nice and cozy home, amiable friends, important contacts and even chasing men. More integral to this awakening is the quest for self-identity and proclaim of what one must do. The central tenet of Girl Power is that femininity is power and empowering, providing young women with the agency to negotiate the possibilities of their gender role. In this sense, women are encouraged to use their femininity to complement and propagate further the qualities of independence and emancipation cultured by the feminist movement. Proponents of Girl Power assert that it channelizes the see-saw analogy to the restrictions of feminine conventions that has undetermined women's engagement in the construction of femininity.

The novel showcases the infuriating tug-of-war between culturally deep-rooted mothers and exceptional daughters, traditional set-ups and modern concept of romance and the impact of this intermingling on a modern Indian woman. Further, it projects their empowerment and assertiveness which can be directly linked to their feminine identities and their ability to redefine the meanings of and objects related to femininity.

In the next incident, Aisha is projected as autonomous working women enjoying financial and sexual freedom- she is empowered and boisterous who refrain from romantic temptations on the other hand, is also depicted as paranoid woman engrossed in finding the right man, as in the text, she quotes, –... I have an admission to make: I am somewhat huge. I live trying to claim ignorance, obviously, and will never disclose to you the amount I weigh!¹⁸ This emphasizes her state of being of frenzy. Rosalind Gill and Elena Herdieckerhoff claim _the codes of traditional romance are reinstated —through the backdoorl by pathologising singlehood and focusing women's efforts on the creation of a feminine and sexy body and on the quest for a romantic hero who can rescue the chick lit heroine from a life of

¹⁷ Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

¹⁸ Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

spinsterhood.¹⁹ The traumatic side comes into play when these women are forced to conform to societal pressure such as getting married, shedding weight, or adopting traditional practices. One incident is evident in the novel Aisha says:

I think there is a point in everybody's life when the quest for Mr. Right is diminished to the quest for Mr. At the present time. An edgy endeavor at brief forlornness frequently brings about passing connections. It's now this point that we get all fatalistic about affection and receive the que sera disposition.²⁰

This also brings to the forefront the constant tussle between conventional mothers and modern daughters. Aisha's mother, like any typical traditional mother is highly concerned about her daughter's marriage. She contrasts her daughter's plight with the rest of Aisha's cousins who are also getting married. Although she believes herself to be traditionalist, she contradicts with certain notions such as fasting:

I speak to my mother about my intention to keep the fast. She has not kept a single Karva Chauth in her life. It always brings out the feminist in her: 'the day my better half saves a quick for me, I'll do likewise' is her hold back. This, from the woman who stated, —I will never work. For what reason would it be advisable for me to? It's my better half's obligation to be the supplier.¶²¹

Presentation of Indian Society and Culture

We as a whole realize that there are consistently a couple of things impossible to miss and explicit to a general public and culture. This novel has a tart kind of Indian-ness in it. For instance, Aisha's mother rehashes a similar inquiry day by day, "Thus, have you met anybody fascinating?"²² Aisha's answer clarifies how bothered she feels by a similar inquiry consistently, "Well, nobody among yesterday and today, however there is consistently a tomorrow"²³. Her mother, similar to a regular Indian mother, accuses her terrible karma since her around thirty young lady is as yet unmarried. She says hurling a profound murmur, "Chalo, it's all karma toward the day's end."²⁴ Aisha's mother doesn't care for Aisha's gay companions Ric and Nic. She reminds her over and over to keep up a good way from them and rehashes commonly that Aisha ought not be impacted by them. Accordingly an adept desi

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p65.

²⁰ *Ibid*,

²¹ *Ibid*, p72.

²² Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009,11.

²³ *Ibid*,p.11

²⁴ *Ibid*,p.11

factor of the book is – the depiction of the normal Indian mother. Alongside it the mother-little girl relationship is additionally uncovered. Little girls are commonly viewed as nearer to their mother in India. Girls realize that they are consistently liable to their moms for whatever they do in their lives and same way they realize that their moms are consistently accessible to guide and help them. The protagonist of this novel makes certain around one thing that whatever occurs in her life, she generally have a mother to help or admonish her. She is genuinely very much associated with her mom and sort of ingest the quality structure her to consistently continue, regardless of what terrible things occur throughout everyday life. The mother is portrayed as very solid character. For instance, Aisha's mother doesn't have confidence in keeping the karvachauth fast. The interminable clash identified with the Indian marriage, that is organized marriage versus love marriage, is introduced flawlessly in this novel. The foundation of marriage is changed over some undefined time frame. The autonomous and taught young ladies of India need profession just as marriage. They realize that for an Indian young lady having an incredible vocation isn't sufficient in life she needs/must be hitched moreover. They regard conventions and social standards, however positively have their very own brain; so marriage turns into a basic issue as they need an accomplice who can cherish them as they are and regard their opportunity. They can bargain however just to a specific level. Also, an Indian kid with such characteristics isn't outlandish however truly hard to track down. Likewise the issue, as - separation, early sex and ensuing premature births, extra-conjugal undertakings, live seeing someone, gay connections and so on., which are considered as abominations in the working class Indian culture when contrasted with the western one are talked about and introduced. These issues are introduced with a particular goal in mind that shows that however all the previously mentioned are censured straightforwardly yet every one of these things occur in the public arena; and right now Indian working class is in a circumstance of motion in regards to the acknowledgment of these western ways. Accordingly as Neelam Raaj in her article 'Review their rear entryway: chick lit detachment develops' these youthful writers "are planning a social move in India"²⁵. Besides, the utilization of Hindi swear words and expressions makes the language fascinating and desi.

Aisha's mother also has her set of beliefs and notions which do not comply with the stereotypical notions such as following one's duties and fasting for the long life of husband. –As indicated by my mother, at whatever point something isn't directly with me, this is on the grounds that I live in the huge, awful city all alone, and didn't get hitched when I was halted to²⁶ Another interesting trait of Aisha's mother is when she calls Aisha in the moment when she is going out to meet Karan Verma

²⁵ Neelam Raj, –Write up Their Alley: Chick Lit Brigade Grows - Times of India, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/deep-focus/Write-up-their-alley-chick-lit-brigade-grows/articleshow/3286008.cms>.

²⁶ Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

and his mother, she calls Aisha to say; "Beta, a saree is most appropriate...", "... It's more critical to extend the correct impression."; "I trust you're wearing some gems... The precious stone gems." , "... It gives a very khandaani impression, genuine strong gems."²⁷ Her mother appears to have an impressionistic bent of mind. This situation is quite amusing as Aisha rushes from her workplace to a restaurant where she is supposed to dine with Karan and his mother whilst her mother is jamming her with instructions which do not seem to befit the situation. This is contrary to Aisha's character who is a genuine woman by heart and does not impersonate another person whom she is not. Though her telephonic conversation with her mother, it becomes apparent that as Aisha is growing older with time, her conversations with her mother are turning philosophical and thoughtful as evident when she says: —When your parents stop matchmaking and turn philosophical, it's time to worry.²⁸ —In any case, as the ocean of alternatives evaporates, one figures out how to settle.²⁹

This inherent contradiction is also evident in Aisha who believes in the accuracy of astrology:

I am calling my astrologer. Nothing is more demonstrative of my confidence in him than the Number One Status appreciates on my speed dial. I am a conservative in that sense. I realize it's popular to go to tarot card perusers, however Shastriji is exact, and he is the family astrologer... there are consistently 'sign'³⁰

This side to Aisha also is indicative of her conflicted emotion while deciding between career and marriage and how she yearns to be in a romantic relationship to complete her. Aisha is no longer stubborn as kids are not in their teens nor does she argue with her mom like a spoiled adolescent. She is able to locate by her mother's mood by her tone and she tries to make up for her mother by apologizing and contemplating why her mother worries about her.

The romantic quest for true love has become secondary as the prime concern rests upon the popular feminist traits of independence and responsibility which has been identified earlier sheds light on contemporary women's self-formation of identity and space. As a popular genre under post feminist works, Chick lit weaves popular post feminism through its narratives which further promote new gendered ideals which center on recognizable feminist ideals of female empowerment and self-realization intersected with traditional gendered ideals of 'true love'.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p25.

²⁸ Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

²⁹ *Ibid*.,

³⁰ *Ibid*,

"... The capacity to genuinely welcome the subtleties of our antiquated culture has consistently evaded me. In my longing to be a freed Indian lady, am I passing up the rudiments? Are garlic and pyaaz indispensable to my existence?... I have been dispensed with for the most harmless explanation age.³¹

This statement by Aisha stresses on the strong need to reconsider the established notions of the so-called perfect bahu. Aisha is not striving to come to terms with her reality, but she also endeavours to seek her true identity and struggles to establish her space and hold on matters and situations that are hurled at her. Following the chain of thought, Aisha interrogates the customs she grew up listening to and in process of redefining her position as liberated Indian women, displays her unwillingness to yield to gender-based binaries. Her tone is marked with irony at the fact that she has been ignored all this time due to her growing age which acts as a delimiting factor for future prospects of happiness-marriage that is, as delineated by society.

Chick lit unmistakably portrays post feminism ideals of empowered femininity as central to its protagonist's experiences. Protagonist's quests are concerned with navigating the ebbs and flows of contemporary female experience, negotiating the challenges of juggling personal autonomy, career, family, friendship and love. Chick lit heroines are less reliant on being rescued and transformed by their 'true love' than those of traditional fairy tales, rather than relying on their own skills and their friendships to sustain them in times of adversity or when their 'luck' is down.

In her close ties of friendship, women are empowered with the ability to discuss freely and negotiate the problems they endure. However, the issues faced by Aisha are different from her female friends. In this case, Aisha feels capable of defining her situation from her stand-point. She is not desperate to chase after things which are not in her control but strives to strike a chord of harmony between her job, friends circle, lifestyle and family. She seeks to explore further possibilities of getting settled, be it through keeping karwa chauth, performing havan, or registering her profile on matrimonial website. She is satisfied with the people who inhabit her world. She is assertive, hard-working, disciplined and deserves to lead a life like any man. Aisha does not wait for any man to come into her life nor does she rely on her mother to find a suitable match for her. Even as fairy tale romance remains a focus of their lives, 'true love' and 'happily ever after' have been relegated to a secondary position in relation to the transformations of the self. The idea of a prince charming, Mr. Right, or 'true love' is still a focal part of the protagonist's quest in Chick lit. But significantly, the point and focus of the

³¹ Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

protagonist's transformation has shifted from the ideal achievement of 'true love' to an ideal achievement of the 'true self'.

Along with freedom and empowerment comes responsibility of self-regulation, constant self-surveillance and discipline which are necessary to transform and remodel one's life. When Aisha is getting ready to go out with Karan Verma, this is what she has to say:

God, dating is so costly, and not only for men. With men, it's all the undeniable costs like gas bills and supper bills and so on. With ladies there are so many shrouded costs-new garments, customary salon visits, waxing your legs, doing eyebrows, and shading your hair, new shoes... we do every one of these things in any case, however when you begin seeing somebody you truly like, the recurrence and force duplicate³²

As preference is given to personal choice on one hand, on the other is the emphasis on self-monitoring and self-disciplines are integral in post feminist media culture. As Aisha is getting makeover, this highlights women's ability to monitor their needs in which constant attention is required from makeup to packing the perfect wardrobe, from hiding pimples and age spots to hosting a dinner party.

Although there are certain aspects of Chick lit which promote antique ideas such as the 'happily ever after' ending or finding the perfect prince charming, it still advocates female empowerment through close friendships, balanced workplace and free lifestyle which serve as pillars of strength and solidarity. The institution of marriage as defined by French feminist Simon De Beauvoir states that -marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.¶³³ Aisha transcends the notion of marriage-making as her ultimate goal in life.

The traditional notion of marriage is challenged in this statement by Lata Didi, an acquaintance of Aisha who has been married for ten years. The stereotypes which are commonly associated with women, particularly within the institution of marriage, no longer fit in the contemporary frame of lifestyle. Furthermore, these lines showcase the predicament of many Indian women who sacrificed their careers for the sake of marriage, some who set high aspiration for a good married life and the disillusioned predicament of young women who only dream of having a better life outside of marriage. Under this light, this statement depicts post feminist ideals which in turn empower Aisha who begins to restore faith in her. The moment she sees herself in a new limelight, her conditions began to improve. This is the time when Aisha finally begins to accept her situation positively as the

³² Kala, Advaita. *Almost Single*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

³³ -'Marriage Is the Destiny Traditionally Offered to Women by Society.' - Beauvoir's Thoughts, ¶ JUSTICE FOR WOMEN, October 24, 2012, <https://justiceforwomenindia.wordpress.com/2012/10/24/marriage-is-the-destiny-traditionally-offered-to-women-by-society-beauvoirs-thoughts/>.

consequence of her actions and decisions. Instead of introspecting or mocking herself, she becomes clear-headed and determined to fix things which are the need of the hour.

Conclusion

Aisha is seen blurring the binaries and thus reflects an amalgamation of cultural confidence with feminist awareness which further brings forth equilibrium between feminism, popular culture and femininity. In this manner, *Almost Single* discards the notion of a perfect feminine or feminist identity and embraces incoherence and contradiction as the space of fulfilment and empowerment. Aisha lives bonhomie with her female companions; it becomes explicit towards the end of the novel that it sheds the idea of a collective female voice in favour of individualism. Aisha rely on female friends who collectively agree upon a shared set of values, a focus on the individual explains the fact that the protagonist is self- absorbed as this was evident through the confessional narratives in the work. *Almost Single* as an emblem of pluralism and difference, transcending away from previous social structures towards a new generation woman who redefines her individual goals and identity, deconstructing the structuralist binaries and reflecting an amalgamation of cultural confidence with feminist awareness.

It is generally informed that Chick Lit faces the issue of affiliation and portrayal to the extent Indian women of modest communities and rural areas are concerned however I state that we as a whole realize that there are numerous sides of the twenty first century India and the literature of the nation ought to speak to each feature of India. Also, Chick Lit passes on a positive message with respect to women's circumstance in the public eye and accordingly can rouse and inspire the young women all over India. One other issue found with these novels is their cliché content, yet on the off chance that we give a more critical look these are not just the girl- meet- guy sort of stuff; rather the novels manage numerous significant social and intense subject matters like sexual orientation separation, corporate culture, marriage and relationships, and portray the change Indian youth is experiencing. Advaita Kala appropriately states in an interview: "I am keenly aware that my book represents a sliver of Indian society, but it is a growing sliver."³⁴ So I conclude that there is no doubt that Chick Lit is a rising and advancing genre comprising of bold and heartfelt stories exceptionally composed by the young Indian women, about the young Indian women, and for the young Indian women of the contemporary India.

³⁴ Sonia Vashishta Oberoi, -INDIAN CHICK LIT: A GENRE FOR DESI GIRLS ,|| IJEL 7, no. 2 (April 2017): pp. 127 132.

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