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Post-Feminist Times in India: A Study of Nirupama Subramanian's *Keep the Change*

Ankita Malik

Government College, Bahadurgarh
Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak.

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Abstract:

The society has become an intermesh of globalised and localised cultures. The nation is witnessing a dialogic engagement with the cultures which is mediated through the media. Indian women, in search of identity, have traversed from the religious epics to the core of the present day popular culture. The shift is in the focus of women from being domestic, traditional, sacrificial and ever possessing the maternal mystique to a more assertive individual who has her own choices and preferences. The opportunities offered by the career roles women play are shaping the Indian young women's identity which is not only deeply rooted in the family and values of tradition but also engaged in a constant process of reinventing the self in terms of the western construct. This paper explores the change in the perspective of women as well as its presentation in the public space, posing a challenge to the conventional patriarchal ideology. Where the earlier projections of women in literature were of powerless subordinated being constantly resisting the dominant ideologies, the current hegemonic thrust fuelled by the mass media projects the presence of female 'power'.

Keywords: Globalisation, patriarchy, chick lit, urban, women.

"The increased space for enterprise that 1991 opened up showed a new what middle-class Indians can do if allowed to pursue their natural talent for making money." (Varma, xxii)

The impetus provided by globalisation to the Indian society has resulted in the rise of a 'new' middle class which is pluralistic and complicated as far as their manifestations are concerned. The changes came in the society with globalisation were fuelled by the fervour created by media. In contrast to the earlier images of a colonised nation, in the twenty first century, India, the largest democracy, came to terms with the rest of the world, by showcasing its cultural diversity as well as the infinite possibilities of change, at the hands of innovative constructions generated by media. "The Indian media is the in-between agent that has the dual potential of ruthlessly perpetrating homogenization of regional cultures as well as securing the longevity of heterogeneity of cultures from the urban to the tribal sectors" (Dasgupta, 2).

The society has become an intermesh of globalised and localised cultures. The nation is witnessing a dialogic engagement with the cultures and is mediated by the media. The popular culture of India was infused with images of change by "the growth of the media, the extension of corporate reach, commodification and the changing role of state and government intervention" (Curren and Gurevitch, 16). The transformed India finds its voices coming from shopping malls, software professionals, scientists, call centres and celebrities. While

searching the "post-feminist sensibility" it is well recognised that "post-feminism emerges in the intersections and hybridization of mainstream media, consumer culture, neo-liberal politics, postmodern theory and, significantly, feminism" (Genz, 5).

Indian women in search of identity have traversed from the religious epics to the core of the present-day popular culture. Indian popular culture demonstrates the ideals of Indian traditional women on the one hand and plays with the liberties of post-feminist projections of womanhood facilitated by the advertising world on the other. The shift is in the focus of women from being domestic, traditional, sacrificial and ever possessing the maternal mystique to a more assertive individual who has her own choices and preferences.

"Ganguly – Scrase (2003) studied the impact of liberalisation and globalisation on lower middle-class families in Bengal, and found that while this class is cognizant of the fact that they are unable to accrue the benefits of the consumer lifestyles of the middle class, some young women feel empowered in terms of greater opportunities and freedom as reflected in the emerging diversity of role models shown on television" (Ghadially, 19). In a scooter ad, Priyanka Chopra teasingly asks, "Why should boys have all the fun?" which signals towards the recasting of woman image in the changed contemporary Indian scenario. What educated, urban, young women of India experience is the foundation of the social construct of the new woman, and it resonates with the idea of 'girl power'. Surrounded by the global images, expectations of the society and dynamics of familial environment allow the creation and formulation of gendered identity by negotiating appearance and refashioning of the self. The opportunities offered by the career roles that women play are shaping the Indian young women's identity which is not only deeply rooted in the family and values of tradition but also engaged in a constant process of reinventing the self, regarding the western construct.

The scholars have well comprehended the construction of gendered identity in post-colonised India. It documents the mediated identity which is a consequence of patriarchal controls and global cultural forms of westernisation. The post-colonial construction of woman is the fertile ground for sowing the seeds of post-feminism. The end product constitutes a liberated-self, but still holding its allegiance to the traditional norms of femininity. The change in the perspective of women, as well as its presentation in the public space, poses a challenge to the conventional patriarchal ideology. Where the earlier projections of women in literature were of powerless being and subordinated, constantly resisting the dominant ideologies, the current hegemonic thrust fuelled by the mass media projects the presence of female 'power' (riot girl and girl power).

The questions and challenges faced by women have always found a place in female narratives of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and other writers. The idea of being a woman and its stance is conveyed by Shashi Deshpande in the following words:

Yes, I did, and I do write about women. Most of my writing comes out of my intense and long suppressed feelings about what it is to be a woman in our society, it comes out of the experience of the difficulty of playing the different roles enjoined on me by society, it comes out of the knowledge that I am something more and something different from the sum total of these roles. My writing comes out of my consciousness

of the conflict between my idea of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman." (Bhalla, 1)

The idea of the subaltern, or being at the periphery, is being re-conceptualized by the urban, middle-class women and the pan-Indian phenomena of women coming out to work have catapulted them in the process of socialisation. This new found opportunity is creating ripples in the old, established traditional norm. The realm of the imaginary proposes a possibility of a resolution between patriarchal authority and youthful fantasy, offering a negotiation between the choices of individuals and societal criterions. A visible present of new age woman is emerging in the Indian scenario. This image of new age woman does not exist in a vacuum but in contexts of "institutional and social/ historical contexts of production and consumption" (Kuhn, 53). The nonexistence of symbolic as well as structural imagery while constructing the gender is a tangent of the modernity perceived in urban contexts through popular print texts (magazines, chick lit, newspapers), etc. When one considers the development of educated, professional, urban, and gendered spaces, it is the construction and contestation of the refashioned womanhood which comes to the fore. Oza defines the professional Indian woman "who is between the ages 20-40, also a homemaker probably has young children in school. That's the obvious target ... But beyond that is the target that I think is more relevant... the woman who wherever she is and whatever she is doing is interested in improving her life... it's very aspirational kind of target (Oza ,36-37).

The construction of gender in the urban realms is a manifestation of individuality and the choices Indian women have. They have started emphasizing on the beauty rituals, fashionable products of various kinds "massages, yoga, acupuncture, 'reflexo therapy' eating habits, 'colour therapy' and use of fragrances" (Femina, June 1, 2001). The approach of womanhood has been inspected through the roles of wife, mother, and sister and their degree of devotion was the parameter of success and fulfilment of a woman's life. But in contemporary urban India, provision of space is created for driven, careerist women who are trying to break the feminine conformity to matrimonial dependence. Chick lit construct of Indian womanhood is locating the modern woman in a domain of multiple perceptions creating a glamour induced persona within the normative tradition. Indian women have now entered the post-globalized, post-modernized, post-feminized era. She is now a dichotomy of ambition, confidence, challenging stereotypes yet anchored to cultural values.

Agency and Post-Feminism in Indian Chick Lit

The result of juxtaposing chick lit and post-feminism ideology is the construction of a feminist thought relating to the pivotal issues of agency and alterity in chick lit. This paper illustrates that the determination of concepts of gender and femininity are rooted in traditional structures whereas the feminist scholars across the world are wary of using the term and find themselves "unable to decide whether it represents a trick engineered by the media or a valid movement" (Gamble, 36). The term is certainly gaining validity in the arenas of popular culture and can be considered, if not stamped, that 'post-feminism' can be understood as a transitional move in feminist ethos. Post-feminist thinkers do emphasise on the cogency of aims and goals of the second-wave feminism. The creation of identity as a socio-cultural process in Indian society is dubious and unsettling as cohesive subjectivity cannot be

conceived due to the heterogeneity of womanhood. The conception of the twenty-first century as an age of post-feminism can be echoed in India as well. To trace the shift, a focus on politics, health and beauty industry, media and fashion world and other popular constructs need to be done. The images of super woman managing roles of careerist and a committed wife-mother and still being the archetype of perennial beauty conforming to the traditional femininity embedded in culture. Pamela Butler and Jigna Desai call this shift as a version of "neoliberal feminism" which echoes "the multiple contemporary feminist discourses that reflect this shift from a liberal concern with state-ensured rights to a neoliberal politics understood through the notion of 'choice' (Butler and Desai, 8).

It is important to note that "the notion of choice" cannot be interpreted as feminism in terms of consumer choices. It is not the ideals of feminism finding its place but the manifestation and establishment of consumerist ideology. But somehow showcasing women as emancipated young women following their pursuits of career and lifestyle is a challenge to patriarchy. The representations in popular culture are serving as role-models for Indian women who are negotiating traditional patriarchal values in their everyday lives. The songs with lyrics like 'Jimmy Choo Ki Nok pe Rakhi Duniya Saari Hai' (The world lies on the tip of a Jimmy Choo Shoe) echoes the neoliberal consumerist practice but portrays the topographical representation of feminist self-expression in India. It is yet to be ascertained whether neoliberal post-feminist discourse facilitates the desired agency to express the notion of choice. Gerbner and Gross (1982) claim, "representation in the fictional world signifies societal existence; absence means symbolic annihilation". It justifies an exploration of chick-lit texts like Nirupama Subramanian's *Keep the Change* as narratives of neo-liberal post-feminism in India. Astonishingly, the demographic shift in educational scenario where women have acknowledged that the path of liberation and empowerment can be achieved through education is witnessed. The financially independent status is much lured by women but constructing their identity around the consumerist ideology creates a kind of subjugation in terms of femininity. A feminist media expert, Elspeth Probyn defines this as, "new traditionalism," speaking of the notion of choice. Chick-Lit texts campaign for female agency as the texts are centered on the choices made by lead protagonists. The decisions made by the protagonist are an expressions of choices they have or make is the validation of legitimate agency and actual alternatives available to women. Ann Branaman elaborates agency as "the ability of an individual to take an action or have a thought that is not determined by his or her social context or biography" (Branaman, 146). It would be chimerical, indeed, to consider that the cultural and social influences can be negated completely.

The societal establishments and cultural affinities mould the agency of an individual. The cognizance of these forces and societal structures is a step towards attaining agency. The exchange of ideas and experiences created by the reciprocation between society and the individual is the desired effect propelling agency. Damayanthi, the protagonist in *Keep the Change*, is a female character who is aware of the controlling patriarchy surrounding her. The novel in epistolary form creates a platform for Damyanthi to analyze her possibilities as a woman. Damayanthi writes to her alter-ego Vic who is an anti-thesis of the gender roles portrayed by Damayanthi. The diary entries are a kind of juggling with the choices available and the notion of agency in construction of Damayanthi's identity. In the very beginning of

the novel, Damayanthi declares, "I want to be anyone but me and be anywhere but here." (Sybramanian, 2) It is this feeling of displacement and assistance in conforming to the imperatives of Indianised womanhood which creates negotiation with patriarchal control. Damayanthi's parents want her to get married but she detests being objectified and conveys her thoughts about the "seeing business" as "It's like being displayed in a shop. It hurts my self-esteem." (Subramanian,11) Then mother retorts, "I trusted my parents to make the right decisions for me" (Subramanian,11) reflecting the societal otherness experienced by women where they are treated like lifeless objects placed in ships and also the conventional conformity to patriarchy where parents have all the rights to take decision for young women in India. Damayanthi challenges the stereotypical patriarchs in the form of her parents who find this questioning inadequate in the process of disposition of fixed societal roles.

Damayanthi's position in the dynamics of power is that of an "other," demonstrating a clash of femininity and normative patriarchy. She acknowledges a little voice (LV) as an expression of what she "really wants to say." (Subramanian,14). Damayanthi differentiates between the world voice and the little voice because her consciousness starts a pattern of belief creating polarity to the societal structures and negotiating the female experiences in the constructs of patriarchy. Time and again Damayanthi acknowledges the systematic oppression of women by the patriarchal powers in the familial framework. She assumes, "custom has stultified my senses. I have become an ossified fossil sitting in Amman Kovil Street and entertaining grotesque boys". (Subramanian, 28). Damayanthi's mother represents a reiteration of traditional gender roles. She proclaims that it is marriage, which should be the sole aim of a woman's life. She thinks that education has spoilt her daughter "all those English books you have read and the silly English movies you see where all the women wear short-short clothes..." (Subramanian, 12). The clash of opinions between the mother and daughter is certainly comic in nature and conveyed in a light witty tone, but Subramanian precisely manages to display the feminist discontent of the second wave versus the third wave. The Mother in *Keep the Change* imparts her own rule book laid for young women which is in consensus with the patriarchal values. The mother becomes the agent of patriarchy who revokes individual stories to ascertain that her daughter should follow the conventions.

While making her choices clear, Damayanthi emerges as a post-feminism embracing protagonist which is "a flexible ideology which can be adapted, to suit individual needs and desires' (Gamble, 36). With all the resistance diluted by Damayanthi who transgresses as an agent of post-feminism and applies for job in a Mumbai-based bank, she dreams of herself as Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, a popular movie character who has an empowering discourse of feminine potential. Lara Croft is a post-feminist construct as an alternative to the traditional womanhood which challenges "the definition of women as victims who are unable to control their own lives" (Gamble, 36). Lara Croft is a depiction of woman who is a personality and a voice that claims an identity. Subramanian's protagonist denotes a transition and reinforcement of agency by not being a xeroxed image of her mother and elaborates on why she chose Lara Croft as a role model, "Because she is very sure of what she wants is determined to achieve her goals, faces challenges courageously and is in control of her life" (Subramanian, 52). The response boasts of all the post-feminist ideals and demonstrates the

narrative's construction of womanhood which in India is by and large postulated around traditional concepts of gender, but calls for agency. While the underlying conflict of the novel is consistent, the narrative progresses on Damayanthi's coming of age as she leaves the traditional conception of life in Chennai by accepting a job at a multinational bank Mumbai. The transitional shift in her career exposes the discontent amongst values and speaks of the growth and realization of post-feminist notions via neo-liberalism. Damayanthi's association with other characters elaborates on the feminist concerns of contemporary women. To cast away from the patriarchy and familial/ cultural ties, Damayanthi's decision to move to Mumbai is an effort to position herself away from her mother reinforcing Damyanthi's subjectivity. Damayanthi is quite aware of her cultural identity and the element of hybridity as she concludes that her future vision of self is correlated to her ability to find her space in mainstream professional world.

The imagination let loose in the world of diary gives Damayanthi an opportunity to create a vision of self in Vic, who is an assertive woman living in America and runs a parallel discourse of what Damayanthi as a woman longs for. She confesses, "I envy you, Vic. I can see you in your short skirt and long books, on the arm of your latest Hugh Grant lookalike, sashaying into the Ritz-Carlton, tossing down a strawberry daiquiri...." (Subramanian, 4). All the talks of fashion and style, as evident in chick lit texts is a kind of resistance which neo liberal feminism tends to create through consumption. Amber E Kinser proclaims,

"These are all styles of resistance to something or another, each of which makes sense and/ or a statement in given context. My point is neither to critique the usefulness of these choices nor to minimize their impact on personal transformation. My point is to clarify that these acts do not equal feminism, yet often enough function as substitutes for feminist movement" (Kinser, 144)

As the gender identity is constructed and manipulated by the patriarchal agencies in the Indian context within the bounds of culture, a deviation is contrived through self-indulgence in consumer product within the assigned space of femininity. The notion of domesticity is also vital in delineating agency through post feminism in the chick-lit world. One of the psychological and sociological functions of "othering" the feminine is creating a chasm or divide, spatial positioning of man in the outer world and woman in the domestic realm. The traditional notion fuels this distribution and separation of gender roles. Damayanthi's narrative can also be read as a challenge to the conventional gender role. Damayanthi points out the non-conformity to the imperatives of traditional womanhood, "But Crochet for Calmness seems a bit more appealing than Potato Peeling for peace or Divine Dish washing." (Subramanian, 155). She tries to dilute the impositions of sex-based separation of gender roles by suggesting that while career-oriented woman will have more opportunities in the public realm and men can try their hands in securing an active participation in the familial duties and responsibility Damayanthi's proposes, "Any man who is handy with needle and thread is a treasure. At least he will never ask you to sew his buttons or darn his socks". (Subramanian, 159).

The attainment of an agency by an individual is a process which is interconnected with one's practised identities, as stipulated by Christine. M. Korsgaard, "include such things

as roles and relationships, citizenship, memberships in ethnic or religious groups, causes, vocations, professions, and offices" (Korsgaard, 20). Damayanthi had several identities, a daughter constantly in negotiation with the traditional mindset of her parents, a professional banker who wants to shed her small town girl image to an established career woman with an urban Midas touch a young woman, who is trying to unravel a new-self through body image. But in the course of the narrative, she dismantles all her identities and comes to terms with her own self. Damayanthi asserts, "I had always wanted my life to mean something..... I had rushed into the First Global job just to escape my dreary life. Now I wanted to think about it a little more. I guess this is what they mean by being older and wiser" (Subramanian, 349).

Mapping Post-Feminism in the Office Space

When one traces the career choice and options available to women in India, we have to consider the association of women with their "home." As put by Hayes the place of women at the workplace is second 'not only to the work of men, but also to what was seen, until comparatively recently, as women's true vocation-domesticity" (Hayes, 190). Although the postmodern world has opened new avenues in the working place, the presumption of a secondary status to women is deeply embedded in the society. Women are judged by their diligent performance of duties associated with marriage which is the, "most honourable career, freeing her from the need of any other participation in the collective life (de Beauvoir, 167). Indian women are no exception to the common presumption that the world within the walls of domesticity is the real place. The relationship between home and the women is such that to any normal woman who is married and has children, "maintaining the household was to be their proper destiny; indeed it became an identity in itself, to the exclusion of all others" (Whelehan, 7). This nation does not hold unmarried women out of its reach as the highest purpose of life for an unmarried woman would be to find a suitable match and settle down in the confines of domesticity. The above said restriction of women while constraining their potentials and attenuating them to the roles of homemaker, mother, wife as attributed to the patriarchal structures by the theories of feminism, "the often-invisible force of patriarchy [which] dictated that a woman's natural place was in the home raising children and caring for her husband (Eaton: 2000, <http://www.feminista.com/archives/v4nl/eaton.html>, par.12).

There are some societal forces which work in tandem to encourage women to stay in the home. The media projects women in the variety of roles of attaining fulfilment in familial life. The media representation of the "happy housewife" promotes the patriarchal censored image of women through television, film, literature and advertising. In an article entitled 'Future Education of Indian Woman' Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) stresses making women more 'efficient'. Within the congruence of a 'modern' family and a consumerist ideology is a path suggested by Parry, a situation where the focus is on the significance of the conjugal bond and "wives pay the price in individual autonomy for the greater stability of their marriage". (Parry, 817)

The stereotypical presentation of such images has curtailed the options and possible routes of identity formation in the public sphere. It is not a necessary proposition that every woman tends to work outside the home, but this fact cannot be denied that the working world is no more "an alien mystery as it was to women at the beginning of the twentieth century"

(Walter, 256). The working space has widened in such a manner that Indian women have become an integral part of the workforce which, in turn, has created a chasm between experiences of previous generations. It is not a surprising fact that Indian women in the urban scenario have commonly accepted that women also have the right to pursue a career or family but with its own teething troubles. One of the foremost constituent of the barricades in the path of a career pursuing women is patriarchy because of which, traditional stereotypes encouraged people to believe that women will lack the authority and competence of men in certain areas; and therefore “the pursuit of power is seen as peculiarly male” (Walter, 210).

This attitude has been the focus of the post-feminist perception as many women while balancing the "home and a highly pressurized working life is too difficult to sustain, in sharp contrast to the successful male, for whom marriage and family life is seen as a positive bonus in terms of both emotional and practical support” (Hill, 211).

Indian Society is slowly and gradually opening up to the idea of working women but with certain disapproval and has also harnessed criticism. The working women are for less that the women who remain at home. The women crossing the thresholds of domesticity to pursue their career were treated as self-seeking, self-centered and considered to be a threat to the patriarchal norm of women to stay at home and raise a family. Such situations are constantly referred in Nirupama Subramanian's *Keep the Change*, in which the protagonist Damayanthi, a career oriented, ambitious woman who plans to build a career for herself, is constantly pulled back by the agents of patriarchy. Damayanthi is the representative of change coming in the lives of women in India especially the urban Indian. Damayanthi's Mother wants her to get married, but she wants to pursue her career. She retorts, "These days marriage is not everything. “But her mother is of the staunch opinion that ‘Marriage is the main thing for a woman. You have become spoilt from all those English books you have read and the silly English movies you see ...”, Chick lit as a genre features characters and stories with which readers can relate to, then extracts such as these voice the concerns of young Indian women who retrace the path of their lives through career and ambition and a conscious descent from the established norms of Indian Culture.

Subramanian stresses upon that it is work which can provide the required answers to the interrogations of female subjectivity in a consumerist-capitalist society. In a subtle manner, *Keep the Change* is a very progressive text, as far as journey of womanhood is concerned. Walking with the notion of choice and making a mark through a career, is not a cakewalk for Indian women. Due to society's disapproval, the women who do pursue a career are prone to criticism. Women who pursue a career are considered self-centred and also they are taken as deviants from the natural course, a woman should prefer in her life. Damayanthi retorts, "Even if you have a successful career you are a social failure if you are single and unable to mingle.” (Subramanian 29) Irrespective of their status whether a woman is single or married but if she is focusing on her career they become on evil for the society in a sense, " She is the epitome of otherness and insanity, standing in direct antithesis to the virtuous housewife and threatening the traditional family unit”(Genz, 105). Women who work pose a threat to the patriarchal societal norms. Damayanthi documents the trials and tribulations articulated by the pessimistic view points of society. A boy who came to see her for the

prospects of marriage questions Damayanthi "I hope you are not planning to be employed after marriage?" (Subramanian, 26).

As chick lit is a genre that gives its readers and opportunity to identify with the stories, such extracts can be a signal of resistance offered by the society to the women who are interested in pursuing career and have ambitions of achieving in professional life, it would be challenge to the patriarchal voices who demand affinity for women's domesticity. It may be said that things are changing on the work front but again they are considered a novelty in the male dominated office atmosphere. A conversation between Jimmi and Damayanthi showcases how it is a long journey to achieve equality of status at work place.

I believe there is a little room on the fifth floor. 'That is so typical of men,' I retorted. 'You guys think that I just have to open up a button or drop the sari "pallu" to get ahead. Actually, because of all your stupid notions, we end up slogging twice as hard and getting half the credit,' (Subramanian, 87). This is a fictive construction on the operatic nature of gender relation in the urban capitalist world. When one thinks of wages offered. There are studies by (Dev 2000; Jhabwala and Sinha 2002) which concentrate on female employment and argued that due to the structural adjustments in India, women workers have been marginalised. (Rehana Ghadially, 233).

Indian patriarchal concepts offer a limited set of professions and careers to women due to fixation of domestic chores around women. Although women tend to come out of the shadows of domesticity and take a post-feminist stance in the sense of getting full control of her life. Damayarthi describes Jyotsna, an officer who has returned from maternity leave, "Instead of being a contented new mother, she seems to be suffering from withdrawal symptoms from being away from her precious work stations" (Subramanian, 89). The new age woman has an acquired a position where she is leaving the age-old expectations of getting married, becoming a mother and other roles of domesticity. In a way, chick lit heroines are expanding the bounds of women representation in the panorama of popular culture. As put by Greer, "women still need a room of their own, and the only way to find it may be outside their own homes" (Greer, 361). Although chick lit texts tend to embark on a journey of making choices by the protagonists, but it is still to be decided that how much choice can they make while satiating their ambitions "as unlike the male experience of work, women's choices often have to, at the least, be informed by a recognition of their, "natural" obligation to their families,' (Whelehan, 52). When Indian women have started to step out of the homes to the work place, the patriarchal forces have also started to show up in the public arena. Where earlier it was the familial patriarchy in action now it is 'the whole of society in which to roam and be exploited' (Walby, 201).

Chick lit texts are full of lecherous bosses and flirting colleagues which has changed the working world scenario. With a post-feminist perspective Damayanti asks Jimmy "why do you guys always notice a woman's er...er... body first," and Jimmy answers "Because it's more visible than her brains!" (Subramanian, 77). Subramanian has tried to present the issue of sexual harassment at workplace in a very original and simple manner. The male perspective is also included in the conversation to address the issue and showcase the idea

that the 'glass ceiling that still stands between (women) and the top echelons of society' (Walter, 16).

It is not necessary that even after arriving in the working world one find it satisfying. At the end of the novel, Damayanthi is not sure whether she wants to pursue a career or get married and settle down as per the whims of her family. She confesses to Vic, "I need to talk to someone who can give me some advice. On the one hand, I have the option to marry and go off to California and live the NRI dream with a stranger. On the other, I can be in Mumbai and.... I just don't know. (Subramanian 349)

It is a shift from post-feminist perspective to "new traditionalism" which, "centralises a woman's "choice" to retreat from the public sphere and abstain from paid work in favour of family values" (Genz, 58). The shift in focus is or evidence of deep rooted perspectives of women's experiences embedded in everyday life. Chick lit texts prove to be a tool at the hands of feminists and other gender-oriented researchers, as one can visualise how the characters provide mimetic images of post-feminist theories. Chick Lit texts become the commentary on the journey of young urban women, of what milestones they have achieved and what is yet to be achieved.

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