

**“I SHOP, THEREFORE I AM”: A STUDY OF
POSTFEMINIST EPISTEME IN GLOCALIST
CHICK LIT NOVELS**

By

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Glocalist Chick Lit Novels**

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ABSTRACT

Title: “I Shop, Therefore I am”: A Study of Postfeminist Episteme in Glocalist Chick Lit Novels

This dissertation is a step toward tracing the presence of consumerism in chick lit novels. The study investigates elements of consumerism in the texts of the selected genre. It underscores a new facet of chick lit novels by showing the promotion of consumerism in a variety of ways. Four chick lit novels are analyzed in this research: Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Sophie Kinsella’s *Shopaholic Abroad*, Saba Imtiaz’s *Karachi, You’re Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips’s *Beautiful from this Angle*. A multipronged lens using the selected works of Rosalind Gill, Fredric Jameson, Roland Robertson, and Arif Dirlik has been used to analyze these texts. By analyzing the primary texts, the study shows the promotion of the core capitalist ideology of wealth accumulation through consumerism, with the help of feminist rhetoric in concealed packaging. The study also identifies the positions postfeminist women take under the influence of consumerism and how they influence and shape both the literary canon and the *écriture féminine*. Moreover, the study investigates the global reach and its translation ability into local trends: the common rhetoric of glocal trends. Its illustration is found in all four primary texts. However, the analysis of the Pakistani texts specifically highlights a flow of culture from West to East and an economic flow from the global South to the global North. This trend in the chick lit novels is hindering an epistemological advancement by reinstating the colonial narrative in the postcolonial times benefitting the capitalist concerns of the global North. Therefore, as a result, these novels become a satire on themselves rather than on society as they were originally envisioned by their writers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BJD</i>	<i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i>
<i>SA</i>	<i>Shopaholic Abroad</i>
<i>KYKM</i>	<i>Karachi, You're Killing Me</i>
<i>BFTA</i>	<i>Beautiful from this Angle</i>

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DEDICATION

To my teacher, Dr. Sibghatullah Khan, who inspires me to acquire knowledge, share it selflessly with the world, and strive to become a better teacher.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Women, according to writers like Virginia Woolf (1977, 2001) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1792, 2014), have largely remained absent, misrepresented, underrepresented, or under erasure for a long period in the literary canon of both fiction and nonfiction works. The ontological existence of women also could not be, predominantly, registered in the world either, because they were usually absent from episteme or were placed in object positions across a different body of writings. Feminists in general, want women to seek “knowledge” (Wollstonecraft 22), develop and utilize “human potentials” (Friedan 140) and thus “writ[e]” and “inscribe” (Cixous 878) themselves, to register their existence in the world. The present project is focused on analyzing the voices of female authors belonging to the genre of chick literature, with a particular emphasis on the concern that these voices seem to be endorsing consumerism.

Consumerism may be linked to capitalism and neoliberalism. This study makes use of these three terms in a broader sense, and therefore, they are used reiteratively in this research. Both consumerism and neoliberalism support capitalism. When people go beyond the basic needs of necessity; that is “food, water, shelter, health and security”(Lister 9), they indulge in consumerism and support capitalism. A similar tendency can be identified in neoliberalism as well. The historical underpinnings of neoliberalism lie in classical liberalism which was founded on John Locke and Adam Smith’s philosophies in the early nineteenth century. They favored laissez-faire free market capitalism to benefit individuals instead of restricting the benefits to monarchy and aristocracy only. Neoliberalism is a restatement of classical liberalism in the twentieth century but with new features. It promotes the “worldwide spread of an economic model emphasizing free markets and free trade” (Steger 10); as a result, like consumerism it also supports capitalism. To refer to this “new moment of capitalism”(Jameson 15), which occurs after the Second World War as Jameson reminds us, his use of multiple terms like “late capitalism,...consumer

society,...or multinational capitalism” (15), may be juxtaposed with Dirlik’s terms of “global capitalism, flexible production, [and] late capitalism”(Dirlik 53) and Gill’s term “consumerism” (149) and “neoliberalism” (163). Therefore, the overlapping nature of these terms qualifies them to be used interchangeably.

The above-mentioned terms are of pivotal significance for this project. “I shop, therefore I am” in the first part of the title conveys the project’s concern with capitalism. The title resonates with Descartes’ adage “Cogito, ergo sum,” “I think, therefore I am” (qtd in Russell 516). Using Descartes’ aphorism, Barbara Kruger, a conceptual artist, in 1987 presented a painting on black and white background with the caption, “I shop, therefore I am”ⁱ written in red font. It portrays the connection between twentieth-century human existence and consumerism. My use of the adage, “I shop therefore I am” is likewise, in the vein of this Cartesian philosophy. Just as Descartes’s aphorism was a route to be certain about his own existence, recognizing his ability to doubt and think (515), the characters of the selected texts for this study may be seen as using the thought, “I shop, therefore I am” as a means for validating their existence. Descartes wanted to find answers to a profound truth, such as the truth about the self within a human being, using rationality as a tool to discover the truth. Similarly, I use Kruger’s aphorism in this exploratory study, to seek answers about how the writers and some of their characters in the novels construct their self-images through consumerism and capitalism.

The second part of this bipartite title elaborates on other parameters of the study besides capitalism. These parameters include postfeminismⁱⁱ and glocalismⁱⁱⁱ in the novels under study. As I am trying to illuminate capitalist motives present in both postfeminism and glocalism, Kruger’s assertion applies to capitalist motives present in both of these ideologies.

The term postfeminism became popular in the late twentieth century, in cultural, political, and academic contexts. As its morphological structure indicates, it comprises two morphemes, thus, postfeminism is an ideology prevalent after feminism. Therefore, to understand the term it is important to comprehend feminism first. Feminism is a pluralistic ideology and cannot be categorized into watertight compartments because different schools of thought overlap and intersect each other (Tong 1). However, a common characteristic among different schools of feminism is that they strive for justice against the oppression of women. Usually, feminists believe that patriarchy is practiced for oppressing women, and

besides being internalized by both men and women, it is institutionalized as well. Resultantly, women are marginalized, and their concerns are treated as peripheral.

The prefix, post in postfeminism indicates death or “redundancy of feminism”(Genz 3). It emerges as a new term to voice the end of a particular stage of feminism and a shift in understanding the relationship “between men and women”(Genz 3). It is a contested term and is considered to be aporetic “like postmodernism” and does not have a monolithic definition, but it clearly shows an “epistemological break” (Gill 147) from the second wave of feminism. Postfeminism is polemic in nature because it is used to condemn feminist discourses. While first and second-wave feminists fought against patriarchy, the proponents of postfeminism believe feminism is “irrelevant” (Denfeld 182) for today’s women. It is irrelevant because sexual inequality is no more a problem for modern women and they are not confined to their traditional gender roles like women in the past. They are aware of this that gender equality is their “birthright” (Denfeld 2); therefore, they do not require it anymore. In this way, the proponents of postfeminism seem to be at war with the traditional feminists while giving a new definition of modern empowered women. Taking four novels as core texts, this research project endeavors to identify some postfeminist characteristics in order to add to the knowledge bank for the identifying features of postfeminism.

It is important to understand the difference between postfeminism and the third wave of feminism because they became popular in the same period. Third wave feminists not only recognize the feminist legacy but also consider their efforts to be a continuation of the efforts of previous feminists and focus on regional diversity among women. They openly accommodate diversity, change, and conflict (Tong 271). Thus, they seem to be sponges that are absorbing some features of all forms of feminist thought that preceded the third wave. This way the third wave feminists are different from postfeminists because while they are not denying gender oppression, they are looking at it combined with other forms of human oppression such as marginalization based on race, class, age, and diverse sexual orientation.

Many critics view the 1960s and 1970s as decades when the censorship control on literary products was progressively relaxed under the influence of postmodernism and multinational capitalism (Power 51). This postmodernist revolution made literature an industrial product that also expanded in an economic and social climate of *laissez-faire*, free-market capitalism. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed an immense

transformation in popular publishing by the development of several new fictions that claimed to dismantle the past fictions with respect to their form and content. Notable among these new genres are “chick lit,..mum lit,..lad lit” (Gill 487), etc., which became well-formed genres of literature by the mid-90s.

Chick literature also emerged as a well-defined genre by the end of the past century. Chris Maza in an essay claims to be the one who coined the term “chick lit” (Ferriss 14). Therefore, for the sake of convenience, the terms Chick literature and chick lit are used interchangeably henceforth. This “female-oriented” (Genz 76) genre depicts the lives of single women falling in the age bracket of “twenties and thirties” (Ferriss 3). While it “celebrates the pleasures of feminine adornment and heterosexual romance” (Genz 76), it also shows how these women are dealing with the challenges of balancing demanding careers along with their personal relationships. They give realistic semblance by portraying the lives of everyday working women who are shown as characters with their shortcomings, making readers identify with them. Moreover, as Genz and Brabon assert, giving insight into the protagonist/ heroine’s personal life and psychological dilemmas, chick lit provides an “authentic female voice” (86). The genre is also linked to a traditional romance genre which gives happy endings (85), aka getting married. These works are easily identifiable among other books due to their appearance. They have emblematic jacket designs, usually with cartoon figures and girl’s accessories, unique titles, distinct heroines, and special narrative styles, targeting single, urban-based, female readers in their twenties and thirties.

Some similar aspects may be traced between chick lit and postfeminism. Postfeminism or girl power of the nineties is viewed as represented in music by Spice Girls while, in the publishing industry, it may be seen in the form of chick literature (Genz 83). In order to make women understand their subjugated status in a patriarchal society, during the second wave of feminism, fictional novels were written besides academic writings to tap into the lay public and spread the message of feminism for the consciousness-raising journey. In a similar way, postfeminism is projected through academic writings and novels of chick literature (Whelehen102). This new form of women’s novel writing, though not strictly academic, uses the same framework of postfeminism, because it promotes agency, assertiveness, and independence of women.

Where chick lit has attracted the admiration of fans, it has earned the contempt of some critics, who label it as “trashy” fiction (Genz 84). Its impact on publishing houses and readers has been impressionable, because, despite the “endless prophecies of the demise of

chick literature, still there are plenty of them on bookshelves in markets, distinctly wrapped in their trademark covers”(Whelehen 16). Moreover, “[w]ebsites and fan bases”(Whelehen 16) of chick lit writers are increasing with every passing day, putting a stamp on their success. In addition to other dimensions, my research project examines the implications and reasons for the popularity of chick literature with the help of selected novels.

The next parameter of this dissertation as mentioned in the title is glocalism which is used in its adjectival form in the title. The word glocalism is a portmanteau as it is a blend of two words globalism and localism. Glocalism relates to globalization, which may be understood as an umbrella term for glocalism. Globalization is “omnipresent” (Ritzer 2) in the era in which we are living because there are multidirectional flows of ideas, money, cultures, and people. Defining the term glocal in his article “Globalisation or Glocalisation”^{iv} (2012), Roland Robertson prefers the use of the term “glocalisation” instead of globalisation. He asserts that globalization is generally understood as a “cultural homogenization...[or] as a process involving the increasing domination of one societal or regional culture over all others” (33). He is of the view that the homogenization of cultures under globalization is a misunderstanding. He does not agree with the prevalent perception of the globalized world as a single culture with the assumption that the local cultures get absorbed by a dominant global culture, giving a perception that globalization is against local cultures. He believes globalization is not against local culture; rather local is an aspect of globalization as it “involves the linking of localities” (Robertson 35). In his view, culture in a globalized world is an integration of the global and the local which he terms glocal. Under this definition, global and local are not in conflict with each other rather, they move mutually, and “what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global (Robertson 35). The four novels selected for this research project seem glocal as they represent their local cultures by creating global impact or reciprocating it.

The combination of global and the local culture is criticized by Arif Dirlik in his work *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (1997). He looks at the combination of global and local from a postcolonial perspective. He is suspicious about the sudden importance given to the local representing third-world countries. In this way, in the combination of global and local he finds the West dominant over third world countries. Dirlik finds links between “global capitalism and the emergence of concern with the local” (85). Globalization is generally reduced to the “economic aspect” (Ritzer 2) only. Though the economic aspect of globalization is quite significant,

globalization has implications far beyond the monetary facet. I aim at identifying the links among glocalism, consumerism and the selected postfeminist chick lit novels as glocalism, consumerism and postfeminism are endorsed during the second half of the twentieth century.

I have selected four novels to study chick literature. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) (*BJD* henceforth) is one of the texts selected for this study. This book gives prominence to a figure of a single woman in her thirties who is employed, financially independent, sexually assertive, and unhappily single. Bridget Jones becomes a recognizable emblem and a point of identification for a predominantly female readership. Fielding's fiction stayed on the best sellers' list for many years and to date has sold more than five million copies and has been translated into more than thirty languages. These economic indices indicate the immense popularity of fiction. Moreover, a host of Western writers jumped to follow the formula constructed by Fielding making *Bridget Jones's Diary* an image of success. This book, including many of her other books such as *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999), has been adapted into films and is said to break records at the box office, according to *The Guardian*.

My second novel is *Shopaholic Abroad* (2001, 2012) (*SA* henceforth) by Madeleine Wickham whose pen name is Sophie Kinsella. It was first published in 2001. Though she writes novels using her real name as well, the Shopaholic series made her pen name famous. Like Fielding, she writes a series of novels and has written seventeen novels to date. Her works have been translated into thirty languages. Two of her novels have also been adapted into a film called *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009). Besides narrating the love story of Becky Bloomwood, the female protagonist of the novel, the story also reveals her irresistible urge for shopping which lands her in trouble.

In addition to these two Western novels, the features of chick lit can also be found in the two Anglophonic Pakistani novels that I have selected for my project. These novels have many aspects in common with my first two texts. Though the resonance of the new form of chick lit, as mentioned above, was felt most powerfully in the Western publishing industry, Pakistani writers also seem to follow the lead. They are also looking for new formulas to attract young readers. *Bridget Jones's Diary* provided that formula and generated a huge number of copycat novels with the dominant theme of marriage, the

pursuit of an attractive man, and bodily perfection. Pakistani chick lit novels, selected for this study, provide local Pakistani flavor while simultaneously subscribing to global trends.

One of the Anglophonic Pakistani primary texts selected for this project is *Karachi, You're Killing Me* (2014) (*KYKM* henceforth) by Saba Imtiaz. She is a journalist who is currently working for New York Times and The Guardian and has written articles for Marie Claire magazine as well. She has also been a fellowship holder of the International Reporting Project to report on LGBT and gender rights. She writes about urban culture, religion, and human rights in her fictional and non-fictional works. *Karachi You're Killing Me* is her debut novel which recounts the story of a young journalist named Ayesha. The Story is about Ayesha's adventurous job as a journalist in Karachi and finding Saad, the love of her life.

The other novel is *Beautiful from this Angle* (2008) (*BFTA* henceforth) by Maha Khan Philips. She is a Pakistani British writer who frequently moves between Karachi and London. Philips is the author of *The Mystery of the Aagnee Ruby* (2014) and *The Curse of Mohenjodaro* (2017). She has a double Master's degree and is a graduate of Kent University and City University, UK. Besides being a writer, she is a financial journalist and has been working in London since 1994. *Beautiful from this Angle* was written by Philips as a project for her Master's degree in Creative writing. It depicts a story of a magazine writer, Aynah, who tries to make a documentary about violence against women practiced in Pakistan. The documentary gives her fame and troubles at the same time.

My niche in this research is a theoretical nexus of consumerism, postfeminism, and globalization. Studying these theoretical perspectives, where they intersect each other in general, and in literature, in particular, through the selected texts is the gap I plug in this research project. On a larger level, this dissertation is a step toward revealing the presence of consumerism in different types of literature produced by Western and Eastern Postfeminists. On a smaller scale, it is delimited to four novels of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Part of my larger argument in making a consumerist, postfeminist, and glocalist study of these novels is because these novels share certain common features. The four theories of Rosalind Gill, Fredric Jameson, Roland Robertson, and Arif Dirlik, used as a lens for this study, support the analysis of these common patterns found in these novels. I am trying to trace the elements of consumerism in these novels as they seem to be engaged with consumerism. My argument in this research is that there is a relationship

between this top-selling fiction and capitalism. The writing practices, depiction and the production of these novels is in sync with consumer culture and its core ideology.

Moreover, I argue that these novels are portraying an amalgamation of feminist and anti-feminist ideas but they are not taking any political position to question them rather they are portraying this amalgamation in humorous form creating retrosexism (the modern portrayal of sexism in general means of communication). Furthermore, I argue that these novels use the rhetoric of independent women but they are actually voicing the concerns of consumerism in a concealed packaging, proving this burgeoning literature as promoting consumerism through postfeminism. Being linked with consumerism, the independence of women seems to be a myth. Rosalind Gill has found links between postfeminism and consumerism studying various media forms (147). Thus, with the advent of consumerism in daily life, literature also depicts the influence of consumerism. The primary texts under discussion serve as an example.

The dissertation attempts to consider how postfeminist concerns and postfeminist sensibility have given a new shape to *écriture féminine*^v in the present times. The study analyzes the tectonic shift witnessed in the novels from classic to chick literature. Here sensibility refers to a set of distinctive characteristics associated with contemporary women presented in different forms of media (Gill 2). It also studies the reasons behind the evolution of this new form of literature and hence analyzes the beneficiaries. This research explores how postfeminism is influencing the boundaries of women's writings. Feminists wanted to move the pendulum of patriarchy in the opposite direction which was considered by them to be moving only in one direction but their aim is manipulated by consumerism which is halting their process of self-actualization. They seem to be accepting and not challenging the notion of biological determinism.

I also argue that following the global culture of portraying an independent woman locally in Pakistan is more damaging than in the West. These banal novels are damaging because they highlight the flow of culture from West to East and economic flow from global South to global North as it had been in the colonial times, something, which has been criticized by postcolonial theorists. I argue that capitalism is a hydra-headed beast where on the one hand it is using the rhetoric of independent women, while on the other, in Pakistani culture, it is using the rhetoric of glocal along with the independent women. My aim is to study how capitalism, postfeminism, and glocalism are co-creating and co-maintaining human oppression.

1.2 Thesis statement

Engaging with postfeminist aspects of *écriture féminine* in glocalist chick literature, the selected texts, Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*, Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips's *Beautiful from this Angle* seem to be inadvertently endorsing consumerism.

1.3 Research Questions

Q1. To what extent have postfeminist concerns redefined the boundaries of *écriture féminine* in the selected texts?

Q2. How does the selected fiction engage with the consumerist mindset and, simultaneously, subscribe to feminist issues?

Q3. How do the selected texts reflect glocalist cultural concerns?

1.4 Research Plan

According to the nature of the research, the sketch of the research is cautiously crafted. The study is based on six chapters. In Chapter One, I have introduced my research project. It gives an overview of my entire thesis. I have explained my title and key terms briefly. I have also traced the literary trajectory of my primary texts and the significance of the work which I am trying to do in this project.

Chapter Two concerns a review of the literature covering major debates carried out by experts in the fields of consumerism, postfeminism, and globalization. It builds background for my study and also these areas are presented critically to identify gaps with regard to questions under investigation that lead towards the topic of this research project. It also gives a critical view of the research work done on all four novels.

Chapter Three relates to the theoretical framework, research methods, and research methodology to analyze the primary texts.

Chapter Four, titled "Postfeminism, Consumerism, and Glocalism: A Textual Analysis of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*" is based on the discussion of two western chick lit novels written in the form of a personal diary. In this chapter, I discuss how *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Shopaholic Abroad* present postfeminist concerns. The chapter weighs the contribution of the chick lit female

authors and investigates how they are in conflict with the aim, long journey, and struggle of feminists. It also explores the dimensions in which they are engaged with the consumerist mindset and its consequences. It identifies the positions they are taking as postfeminist women. The first section deals with observing their shift in behavior from feminists to feminine beings. The second section deals with the ways in which consumerism is significantly carving their feminine and feminist identities. It also considers the distracting consequences of consumerism for the evolutionary women struggle in general. The discussion is followed by a conclusion.

Chapter Five, titled “Disguised Oppression and Parochialism: A Reading of Saba Imtiaz’s *Karachi, You’re Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips’s *Beautiful from this Angle*” presents a discussion of the two mentioned novels. This chapter discusses the impact of global cultures followed locally in the setting of Pakistan. Like the previous chapter, it is also divided into different sections. It shows how female characters are subscribing both to feminist and anti-feminist ideas at the same time. The second section shows similarities in these novels, relating them to the influence of capitalism. The next section deals with the representation of local in these novels and how a particular perspective of viewing and presenting local is linked with capitalism.

Chapter Six concludes the discussion done in all the previous chapters. It also provides recommendations for further research in this area.

1.5 Significance of Research

Chick lit as a genre is usually ignored by critics considering it disposable fiction. Moreover, its readership is limited to women falling in the age bracket of the twenties and thirties. But considering the popularity and success of these novels which is proven by the awards given to them, the series of these books by the same writers and the clone production by different writers makes one wonder about the reason for its success. Thus, the significance of the study lies in the identification of the reasons governing the polarized status of chick lit fiction.

Though *Bridget Jones’s Diary* has been linked to postfeminism and Sophie Kinsella’s works have been linked to consumerism, an extensive scholarly study of both these particular novels in combination is not done before. Moreover, there is no academic work done especially on the two Pakistani novels under study. Thus, so far, such an extensive study which I am attempting to do using the theoretical lens of postfeminism,

consumerism, and glocalization, has not been conducted in the genre of chick literature. This exploratory research will create room for conducting future research concerning the capitalist consumer culture from a glocalized perspective. It will also add a new dimension to postfeminist perception.

1.6 Tracing the Trajectory of Texts under Study

The discussion is divided into two sections in order to contextualize the primary texts selected for this research. The first section traces the development of chick literature, and the second section develops the context for the two Eastern novels. I do not claim to cover the entire literature written by women but focus more on the themes women had been writing about in their novels.

I

Tracing the history of chick lit is significant for both Western and Eastern novels. This section is about the development of Chick lit, a sub-genre of a novel. It discusses the roots of chick lit and its various types, which are being produced at present.

To trace the history of chick lit, I have primarily used Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young's book, *Chick Lit: A New Woman's Fiction* (2006), besides a few other works. The book is considered to be "the most comprehensive study of the genre" (Smith 5). The writers have presented a comprehensive study of chick literature in their anthology containing fourteen essays by different writers. These essays deal with the origins of the genre and its subgenres. It discusses the genre generally using multiple chick literature texts.

Many critics agree that the genre is inaugurated with the publication of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, which offers a recipe for success to all other chick literature writers (Whelehen 57-58). However, Fielding acknowledges it herself that she owes her success to nineteenth-century female authors, such as Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen. She accepts that she "borrowed much of her plot and many of her characters" (Ferris 4) from Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Ferris and Young also consider Bridget Jones a "direct literary descendant of Austen's Elizabeth Bennet" (5). They believe the story has changed slightly from *Pride and Prejudice*, in both the book and film versions because these heroines are searching for security in a different way than Elizabeth. Thus, in their

view, the *BJD* or the genre of chick lit in general simultaneously owes to and is independent of the influence of Austen.

The genre proves to be lucrative financially, as both defenders and critics of chick lit agree upon its commercial success. Ferriss and Young try to measure its success and, assert in 2002, the publishers of the genre produced above \$71 million. Moreover, in the same year, seven books of the genre occupied *Weekly* best-seller lists for ninety weeks (Ferriss 2). They consider it to be a “big business” (Ferriss 2) involving both publishers and film producers who are equally getting benefits from it.

There are polarized views about the genre. One school believes if the literature is being written by women and about women, it should portray “their struggles in a patriarchal culture and offer images of strong [and] powerful women” (Ferriss 9). While the other school does not believe in an ideal woman but believes in portraying a woman as she is in reality in modern times. Therefore, despite huge criticism made on the genre, chick lit fans believe the genre is able to hold their interest because they claim the genre represents reality and realism. Thus, they are able to associate with the heroines who are “fallible-like them”(Ferriss 4). Another reason for the readers to find an association with the genre is the frankness and spontaneity with which the writers are writing, using the “diary form”(Ferriss 4) of writing to develop a reader’s personal link with the author. The “first-person narration”(Ferriss 4) removes the formal distance between a writer and the reader.

There is diversity in the genre for readers. It has crossed all sorts of boundaries of age, nationality, and ethnicity. Issues of adult women are covered in genres like “mommy lit” and “lady lit” (Ferriss 5). Racial variety is now found in the form of “‘Sistah lit’... ‘Chica lit’... ‘black lit,’ and ‘Indonesian chick lit’ called “Sastra wangi”. National divide is found in “Chinese American,... Indian American” chick lit(Ferriss 6). Each of these manifestations of the genre has molded the original form of chick lit in new ways, proving its resiliency and adaptability for different races and nations.

II

To trace the literary trajectory of Anglophone literature produced by writers of Pakistani origin, it is significant to consider the historical background of Pakistan. Before the country came into being in 1947 it was part of the subcontinent, therefore people had to choose their country. Hence, a clear demarcation of national identities cannot be made between this generation of people belonging to the subcontinent. People had been producing literary

content at that time; however, they cannot be categorized as Indian and Pakistani because the writers and their content overlap the two countries.

Moreover, the development of Anglophone literature by authors of Pakistani origin is mainly the result of “colonization”(Shamsie 1). Pakistan before becoming an independent state in 1947 was part of the Indo-Pak Subcontinent which was ruled by the British government for more than a century. Britishers who had come to the subcontinent for the purpose of trade realized their power to overthrow the local government and became rulers of the land in the nineteenth century. As English was their language Muslims had resentment against their language because they had resentment against English. But the importance of English could not be ignored because it was a key to modern education and Western knowledge (11).

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan realized this situation and worked for educational reforms for Muslims and encouraged them to learn the language. Even after these initial efforts to teach the English language to Muslims, part of the nation that is Muslim women refrained from learning the language. Women were restricted to learning vernacular languages only. The reason for the acquisition of English being gender specific was that many Muslims including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan believed that education given at home was enough for women and they were more focused on what they should be taught rather than the medium of education (12-13). However, schools for Muslim women were built towards the very end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. So Pakistani women were acquainted with the language much later than men.

Shamsie writes South Asian English novel began at the same time when the people of India started struggling for independence from British rule in the 1930s. Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Ahmed Ali are among those writers who wrote English fiction. The only novel written by a female author at that time is Iqbal un Nissa Hussain’s *Purdah and Polygamy: Life in Indian Muslim Household* (1944) which was based on feminist rights. Many of the writers of undivided India had to choose their national identity after the partition. The themes of their works remained the partition of the subcontinent. For example, Ahmed Ali chose Pakistan as his national identity but his love for Delhi is shown in his novel *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) depicting the diaspora he experienced after getting separated from India(Shamsie 16). Mumtaz Shahnawaz’s *The Heart Undivided* (1957) also shows a similar theme of partition.

With the increase in migrant communities, Pakistani novelists such as Zulfikar Ghose, Adam Zameenzad, and Hanif Kuresishi to name a few, wrote about their diasporic experiences. Sidwa also depicted feminist issues through her novels such as *Water* (2006). Many of the female authors of this era from Diasporic backgrounds also wrote novels to share diasporic experiences. *The Red Box* (1991) by Farhana Sheikh, *A matter of Detail* (2008) by Maniza Naqvi, and Zeeba Sadiq's *38 Bahadurabad* (1996) all wrote about their diasporic experiences (346).

The post-9/11 era and the impact it has on the lives of Pakistanis is depicted by many writers such as Mohsin Hamid and Kamila Shamsie. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) became a significant work to depict these issues. A recent work of Kamila Shamsie i.e *Home Fire* (2017) uses the same themes of diaspora and racism. *Red Birds* (2018) by Muhammad Hanif and *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid portray the after-effects of war-trodden areas and people.

Contextualizing my primary texts in this backdrop is significant to form the background of the discussion in the coming chapters. After tracing this trajectory, I have delimited this research project to study selected works of Western and Eastern chick lit in order to analyze the changing trends in the genre. This trajectory sets the ground for the analysis of the primary texts.

End Notes

ⁱ I have taken a phrase from Kruger's painting for the title of dissertation and have adapted it according to the norms of a title.

ⁱⁱ The word Postfeminism and its derivatives like Postfeminist have been used by Rosalind Gill in her work "Postfeminist Media Culture" (2007) with both capital and small "P" according to the use. Hence I am also using both forms of the word according to need.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The word Glocalism and its derivatives like glocal and glocalist have been used by Roland Robertson in his work "Globalisation or Glocalisation" (2012) with both capital and small "G" according to the use. Therefore, I am also using both forms of the word according to need.

^{iv} Robertson uses the word Globalisation spelled using s, while Arif Dirlik uses "globalization using "z". I am mainly using Dirlik's version of spelling.

^v The term *écriture féminine* has been used by Helen Cixous in her essay "The Laugh of Medusa" (1976). She used the term with reference to the style of women's writing while I have appropriated this term to discuss themes of writings produced by women. I have selected chick literature written by female authors. These fictional works are written in first person pronouns and foreground women's experiences about their bodies and perception of life.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION of EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I study Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*, Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips's *Beautiful from this Angle* from consumerist, postfeminist, and glocalist perspective. This chapter presents a critical review of major works done in the fields which are broadly identified as consumerism, postfeminism, and globalization in the previous chapter. As the analysis in chapters four and five is based on these three fields, therefore it is helpful to review the literature concerning these aspects. The material discussed here is mainly arranged thematically.

This chapter comprises three parts. After this first section about the introduction and stating the names of the works selected for this research the second section is the main body of the review. This second section of the chapter is further categorized into seven different units. The review in this section assists me in contextualizing my research project by reviewing the critical corpus available in the said fields which helps me in avoiding repetition in my research project. Secondly, it also helps in identifying gaps in the existing scholarship, while suggesting areas for further research, and determining the significance of my project. After identifying gaps in the existing scholarship and contextualizing my research, I conclude my review in the third section and link this chapter with the chapter of the theoretical framework following it.

2.2 Review of Critical Sources

For the sake of convenience, I have divided this section into eight units. These units include discussions on:

- i. consumerism
- ii. feminism

- iii. postfeminism
- iv. postfeminism and consumerism
- v. globalization
- vi. the financial aspect of globalization
- vii. the cultural aspect of globalization
- viii. review of literature on primary texts

Some of these topics overlap each other, such as postfeminism and postfeminism and consumerism, and globalization and its financial and cultural aspects, but I have put them in separate sections for the sake of clear understanding.

2.2.1 Consumerism

As consumerism forms the major part of the research project, therefore it is essential to study the thoughts of various schools on the subject. This unit defines consumerism and gives its background to reflect on its contemporary and historical underpinnings. A review of these thoughts helps in contextualizing the present study.

Roberta Sassatelli's book *Consumer Culture: History, Theory, and Politics* (2007) is helpful in providing the historical background of consumerism. The literature on consumerism intersects various disciplines including Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, History, and Economics. The term "consumerism" or "consumer society" (Sassatelli 2) is frequently quoted as having negative connotations, by critics after Second World War, as consumerism reached the middle class. Roberta Sasstelli considers Marcuse, Packard, Galbraith, and Baudrillard responsible for popularizing the term with this connotation. They believe the late twentieth century "is a variant of capitalism"(Sassatelli 2) distinguished by the dominance of consumption. It is a pertinent tenet of the global economy and an increasingly influential social paradigm

She traces the history of consumerism with a question of whether consumerism evolved with the advent of industrialization and increase in production termed as "Productivist" or it existed before industrialization in the traditional societies, termed as "Traditional thesis" or "anti-productivists"(Sassatelli 13). The anti-productivist theorists such as McKenderick and Campbel are of the opinion that the process of industrialization began as a consequence and not as a ground to consume more. Consuming provided an opportunity to fulfill the newfangled desire among the nouveau riche for social advancement. They bought goods more than their needs in order to emulate nobility. Thus,

their demand for consumption prompted capitalism and catered to the need for consumption. In economic terms, the situation can be described as there was a demand for goods among the ascending bourgeoisie therefore the supply was given by consumerism. She affirms that while consumption among people increased with an increase in the production of goods and consumerism is a late consequence of industrialization but people in the pre-industrialized period also consumed goods more than their needs.

On the other hand, the Productivist theorists being Pro-Marxist believe, that with the advent of industrialization and an increase in the production of goods, human needs are twisted to cater to the needs of the production system in order to get capitalism operational. Consumerism created the need among people to consume goods because production was increasing and they wanted people to consume. Prominent theorists supporting this idea include Vance Packard, Stuart Evans, and Samuel Lawrence. They maintain that consumer culture operates by creating consumers, besides producing commodities, and in a “post-Fordist” (Sassatelli 49) era different social institutions and scientific disciplines helped in designing consumer identity for citizens. Sasstelli refers to Kenneth Galbraith’s work *Affluent Society* that genuine needs do not spring from advertising. A substantial amount of capital spent on salesmanship and advertising ostensibly demonstrates the service, performed to contour the desire of people, by informing them about their needs, which they did not genuinely feel they possessed. Thus, these inorganic desires are created in the affluent society by presenting goods as emblems of prestige.

Sasstelli identifies the advertisements of products that existed in the past as well but in a crude form. Sellers flaunted their goods in the past to sell them, but with modern technology promotion of goods has developed more, using television and newspapers as a vehicle. These advertisements modify and expand the needs of a consumer through hegemonic discourses.

The book is relevant and significant for my project because it traces the history of consumerism and sheds light on contemporary consumerism as well. Though the author discusses various aspects of consumerism, she does not link consumerism with contemporary literature which my work addresses.

The Frankfurt school of thought, studying the cultural superstructure of the post-industrialized society defined the characteristics of ‘culture industry’. Their study analyzes

new forms of alienation and commodity fetishism. In this regard, Marcuse's work is important to review.

Marcuse in his book *One-Dimensional Man* (2007) considers the advanced industrial features of the latter half of the twentieth century and describes it as a technological society. With the change in the dynamics of industrial society, he felt the need of giving a critical social theory for the new situation. Being a proponent of the Frankfurt school of thought, he analyzes new configurations of the state and economy in a capitalist society, criticizing the pertinent role played by mass culture and communication.

Marcuse asserts in this industrial society; technology is providing a new and more gripping mode of domination and control than in the past creating a one-dimensional society. This technological society has restructured labour and leisure which is influencing both lives and thoughts of individuals pacifying or liquidating the opposition ending all the possibilities of radical social change and stabilizing the capitalist system. He points out the achievement of capitalist society in creating a bipartisan policy, general approval of national purpose, and wiping out pluralism. Thus, the established society is declining social change by "using the scientific conquest of nature for the scientific conquest of man" (Marcuse xlv). He believes society is still able to bring a qualitative social change, which can establish fundamentally different institutions and provide novel modes of existence to humans if they can come out of the pleasing forms of social control.

Marcuse's work is very important in this regard. Written in a thought-provoking way, his work explains the domination over human beings through technology controlled by capitalists, which suppresses human rationality. While Marcuse talks about general capitalist supremacy, my dissertation, through my selected texts, looks into the phenomenon of consumerism suppressing human rationality as portrayed in literature.

Lawrence Samuel in *Brought to You By* (2001) traces the trajectory of consumerism in America and asserts that people became good consumers after World War II, subscribing to the ideology of the "American dream" (Samuel ix), which emerged in the 1920s but was suppressed during world war and the great depression. From an economic point of view, it promised huge corporate profits and a large tax base. From the social point of view, it guaranteed the eradication of ethnic and class divisions and from the political point of view, it assured the suppression of the ideology of socialism and communism.

He considers television responsible for promoting consumerism among Americans and thus shaping American culture. As television could reach more people than the radio could reach in the past, thus it helped in creating a homogeneous culture. People started buying items from the market which they did not even need because television commercials convinced them to buy them. The people were convinced that each purchase they make is a form of “democracy in action”(Samuel 223). This was done to boost the American economy. Americans were impelled to spend money, selling the message that shopping was beneficial not only for them but also for the economic uplift of the nation. Thus, television shaped American culture. It benefitted America from both an economic and political standpoint by benefitting capitalism.

This book focuses on the spread of consumerism specifically in America. With intricate details of facts and figures, Samuel explains how easily Americans were convinced to buy the idea of the American dream. In this regard, he focuses on the role of television in spreading the message of the American dream. As my project deals with consumerism, therefore this work is very important to be included in the review. While his work emphasizes the role of television to spread consumerism, my dissertation analyzes the role of literature to spread consumerism.

Vance Packard’s *The Hidden Persuaders* (1980) presents a research report to show how a small group of people such as politicians and industrialists try to control the minds of Americans, to vote and buy on their command. These experts call themselves “Motivational analysts”(Packard 35). They study the subconscious yearnings and desires, and cravings of human beings. Once the needs are recognized and certified to be persuasive, they begin constructing the promise of their fulfilment in advertisements, manipulating our thought, behaviour, and action. They want to create wants among people to convince them to buy products they do not need or did not realize they needed.

He says experiments of various kinds are conducted before an item is launched in the market. For example, “Colour Research Institute” (Packard 38) checks the colour of the wrapping of the product to test its attractiveness. The placement of the item is then selected, which is also done carefully, by placing profitable items at eye level. Thus, through the analysis of advertisements, television programs, and political campaigns performed in the 1950s he gave his arguments and showed the hidden face of the corporate world.

Packard notes that advertising agencies study women-centred problems and try to provide solutions such as studying a woman's menstrual cycle and its psychological effects with the aim to find strategies and products that would appeal to them. They also manipulate women's thinking with advertisements. The women purchase a product coupled with a guarantee to make them gorgeous. Thus, the women do not only purchase a product but they buy that "promise" (Packard 35) as well shown by the advertisement.

Packard's book deals majorly with consumerism which makes its review important for my work. He picks examples from various political situations and television programs mainly from the 1950s. But his work is short of recent tools of consumerism and literary examples which I am including in my research project.

Likewise, Stuart Evans in *Captains of Consciousness* (1976, 2006) argues that the advertising industry began as a tool for corporate survival. In the post-Ford era of the 1920s, there was an increase in mass production. Thus, to create a market for these products compulsive buyers were required, and advertising was used to impact American consciousness. Advertising assisted mass industrial capitalism by familiarizing people practically to conform to consumerism. They carefully planned and educated people to acknowledge their novel consumer identity. Like Packard, he also believes that manipulation through advertisements was the consequence of the efforts of numerous skilled minds who he calls "captains" (Evans 10); who turned advertising into a profitable industry. Advertisements targeted all classes equally. They made readers and viewers focus on their own weaknesses, flaws, and insecurities and provided them with solutions. They did not face any resistance from the public, because they influenced and shaped the opinions, thoughts, impulses, and feelings of people.

Evans critique of the advertising world and its techniques is significant because he has profoundly analyzed its mechanism considering real-life examples. My project is similar to his work as I am trying to analyze the impact of consumerism in literature.

As all of these theorists discussed above are from the Western part of the world. As part of my dissertation has a Pakistani context therefore it is important to consider the thoughts of analysts from the Eastern part of the world as well. Pakistan shares a long geographical border with India and a shared history of colonization, which makes the circumstances of India and Pakistan similar to each other. In this regard, Arundhati Roy's work is important to review, as she critiques consumerism in India.

Roy, in *Capitalism a Ghost Story* (2014), considers the consequence of American corporate values in India. Though it is a short book but is powerful enough to question Indian plutocracy. It is a collection of seven essays dealing with different issues related to the Indian government. As the essay “Capitalism a Ghost Story” is more relevant to my project, therefore I am reviewing this essay from the book mainly, besides the introduction of the book.

Roy, illuminates loopholes in the democratic system of the contemporary Indian government, due to a boost in the privatization of industries and agglomeration of power in the hands of the oligarchy. She criticizes the Indian government for forcing people into urbanization and making them homeless while bulldozing the houses owned by these villagers and using that space for their personal interests.

In this poor situation, the dilemma she points out is that the people of India admire their government for this reaction rather than questioning them. She explains the reason behind the silence of the middle class is that they are convinced by the government that these people are “criminals” (Roy 2) and they should be put behind the bars for their sake and India’s sake. She finds links between Indian industrialists such as Mukesh Ambani and famous television channels, that show that the superstructure of the country is in their control. The media generates revenue mainly through corporate advertisements, thus the line between media and business is blurring. By quoting an incident from Jaipur literary festival, sponsored by Tata Steel, she discusses the concept of “free speech” (Roy 18) defined by the system and adds any expression of opinion is considered to be an act of freedom of speech if it suits the interests of capitalists, if it does not suit them it is called as blasphemy. Salman Rushdie was invited to the event to read from his polemic book *The Satanic Verses* (1988), as the book was against the teachings of Islam the Muslims revolted against him and attacked the venue of the festival. Though the Muslims were criticized for being against freedom of speech, the news was highlighted internationally in the newspapers. On the other hand, the freedom of speech of the people who suffered at the hands of Tata Steel in other events such as a war in the forest and murdering of innocent people by the corporation was ignored. Even the public hearing against Tata Steel which was mandatory was held in a special office with a “hired audience”(Roy 19), hundreds of miles away from the victim community.

The book is highly interesting to review because Roy has traced links between industrialists and media and how they are promoting an ideology that suits them, and it forms the bases for my project as well. Where Roy is contextualizing in the Indian context, I investigate examples from Pakistani literature.

In this section, I have reviewed the development of consumerism in general. I have also included analysis given by different theorists showing how consumerism has an increased grip on humans with every passing day. Some of the works are included to give the historical background of consumerism while other works are included to show the hold of consumerism in the Eastern and Western parts of the world. The reviewed works are important for my research as they discuss the hold of consumerism on people, while my analysis will link aspects of consumerism being spread through literature.

2.2.2 Feminism

As a major part of my project deals with postfeminism, therefore it is important to review works done in the field of postfeminism. However, the works done in the field of feminism are equally significant or perhaps more significant to review, because the discourses of postfeminists are palimpsest in nature as the term postfeminism also indicates. This unit presents phallogocentric discourses and gynocentric responses showing the struggles of feminists to secure rights for women. It also defines objectification and how women have been objectified in different eras and through different philosophies. Reviewing the scholarship present in this area helps me in developing a background for my analysis.

Wollstonecraft's work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792, 2014) which was initially published in 1792 is considered to be one of the earliest texts of feminism. Though it was written in the eighteenth century, it is still significant. The editor of the book traces the scope of the book and writes in the introduction of the book:

[It] was well known in the British Isles, continental Europe, and the United States during the 1790s. It has continued to influence women's rights discourse and activism around the world. Nineteenth-century novelists, journalists, abolitionists, chartists, labor organizers, suffragists, socialists, anarchists, missionaries, and a variety of feminists found in the text a rich resource for their arguments and activism concerning the promotion of social justice for women. (1)

This proto-feminist wrote this book as a reply to the patriarchal views of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand. Rousseau in his book *Emile or on Education* (1762, 1979) gave a parenting guide and educational reforms, by stressing the Nature of human beings. While the content of the book is still admired today, the book majorly focused on the development of a male child, whereas only one chapter out of five chapters of the book titled 'Sophie' is dedicated to female education. He believed as women are weak therefore a woman's morality must be guarded by men throughout her life. A woman's education must be planned in relation to a man's education. He advocated developing the skills of man because he has to transcend the bounds of time while a woman has to be static. Thus, in his opinion a woman should know the "labors of her own sex" (Rousseau 306), like housekeeping, cooking, and sewing, just to support and provide comfort to a man. Similarly, Talleyrand presented a report to the French national assembly and printed "pamphlet[s]" (Wollstonecraft 21) stressing on domestic education for women, because he believed the men had to stay upon the stage of the world and lead it, therefore there should be a difference between the education of men and women. They started the debate of the dichotomy of the public and private sphere.

Wollstonecraft advised these men to reflect on their beliefs. She criticizes the excessive sensibility among women which she believes, can be harmful. Therefore, women should not be emotional creatures only but should focus on intellectual development as well, because in this way they can positively contribute to society. They should not be reduced to pleasing factors only, by society. A woman should earn respect with dignified behavior and this can only be done by logical accomplishments and she must work consciously for it. Criticizing Rousseau's model of the education system, she contended an educated woman can be a better companion to a husband rather than just being a wife and a wise mother who can provide basic education at home to her children; else the progress of knowledge will be hindered and restricted. Women are considered irrational because rationality has been denied to them in education by giving them domestic education only, although it is their natural right to get an education. The women are encouraged to act like mindless "toys" (Wollstonecraft 59) of joy to please their husbands while the rational side of their being remains underdeveloped. She does not desire to breed a generation of independent women, but she seeks to develop wiser and virtuous mothers through good education. While her contemporary philosophers were defending the equality of all men,

she wanted the rights of women. She does not build a case on equality of men and women like other feminists but demands equality in some areas such as morality and education.

Wollstonecraft's work criticizes the patriarchal discourses of eighteenth-century Western societies, which kept men at the center of discourses. However, her ideas can be applied to my primary texts under examination to develop the context of study. Though the primary texts are fictional, they represent the problems of contemporary Western and Eastern women.

Women were given limited chances of development not only in English culture but in Greek culture as well, Susan Moller Okin notes in *Women in Western Philosophical Thought* (1979). She asserts that the Greeks had a functional approach toward women by defining women according to their reproductive functioning. Focusing on her reproductive makeup, the woman's primary duties were to entertain and reproduce. The men in Greek culture married respectable women for the sake of progeny and kept mistresses for pleasure and concubines; to satiate their everyday needs. Thus, women were restrained to the private sphere and were excluded from outdoor activities, courts, and gymnasia.

In philosophical works of scholars like Plato, Okin notes that women are considered weak beings and are reduced to minors and animals. Plato gives his views, underpinned on the prevalent assertion that women are created from the "souls of the most wicked and irrational men" (qtd in. Okin15) therefore they are not only bad; but they are worse than men. He categorizes humans as virtuous and evil and according to him all the people who control their emotions and live a righteous life return to earth as men, whereas all the people who are dissolute and overwhelmed by their passions are reborn as women.

Likewise, Aristotle also reveals misogynist streaks in his texts. He considered women as deformed and "an imperfect man" (qtd. in Okin82), who can deliver their duties to men and be passive receivers of life. He also believes that women exist to provide happiness to men, who have a privileged status. He justifies the patriarchal order of society. The hierarchy of beings, with gods on the top of the ladder, followed by men and then women and animals who exist for the pleasure of men and to cater to their needs.

Okin's work is significant in tracing the patriarchal views regarding women in antiquity. This work helps contextualize my research, and it also assists me in comparing the general perception of women in the past with the present, which my selected primary texts offer.

Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" (1977), now published as a book, is an important work to be considered in the review. This essay was first published in 1929 based on her lectures. In this essay, she wonders about the life of a common woman in the past but finds it "absent from history" (Woolf 49) and silent in literature, mainly till the eighteenth century. She believes the women remained poor throughout their lives. Therefore, they are missing in episteme because only geographical and financial freedom gives liberty to a person to express an opinion and to register their existence without the fear of being an outcast. Throughout history, women remained poor and could not even get properly educated to write literature, as intellectual development depended upon "material things" (Woolf 116).

Woolf asserts that women do not have exposure to the world like men, yet she encourages women to write, even if it is about trivial topics. Her work is important for my project because all four of my primary texts are by female authors.

In *The Feminine Mystique* (2001), Betty Friedan discusses the feminine identity given to women by culture. This identity is given by patriarchy and endorsed by sociologists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, and anthropologists to maintain the status quo. It is created in response to the advancement of women to stop their growth and the women are muffled in the concept of false femininity which acts like their "concentration camps" (Friedan 303). But the women can feel the dissatisfaction that they have even after having husbands, kids, and home; which she calls "the problem that has no name" (Friedan 332).

Friedan observes, that in the 1940s during World War II, due to the absence of men in the homeland, women had to enter the public sphere as a need to run the system. Thus, because the women had careers during World War II, so the magazines depicted independent women, but after that in the 1960s when the men were back in their homelands, the magazines depicted either happy housewives or less happy career women, pushing women back to the domestic sphere, giving the message to tell women that to be happy is to be at home. She shows how media molds and dictates the thought of women according to their wishes.

Referring to Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (qtd. in Friedan, 303) Friedan argues that freedom, intellectual growth, and gaining knowledge is also a need of woman, just as it is a need of men, but confidence and independence among women are despised in the

society because it destroys the power structure and affects the status quo. Achieving personhood is their right, but they are denied this right because they are restrained in true feminine identity by restricting them to domestic passivity. Like Wollstonecraft, she also criticized the set pattern of women's education which concentrated on non-challenging classes focusing on the domestic sphere. This, she believed, arrested a woman's emotional development. Hence, after figuring out the problem suffered by twentieth-century American women, Friedan in the last chapter of the book gives a piece of advice to the women to be independent.

Though Friedan's focus in the book is only on the problems of white American middle-class women and takes rather an extreme position, a limitation she even accepts in the introduction to her other book, *The Second Stage*, this book serves an important reference for my research.

Friedan wants women to be independent and do challenging tasks to give meaning to their lives. In this regard, she criticizes the post Second World War magazines that encourage women to be feminine and abide by society's expectations. In my research project with the help of primary texts, I am analyzing the depiction of an independent woman of contemporary times to study whether there is a difference in the lives of the women or not.

Nancy Cott in *The Bonds of Womanhood* (1977, 1997) traces the role of women in different aspects of life, in the early and mid-nineteenth century in "New England" (Cott xii). She analyzes the division of labor between men and women and their roles in the home, families, work, etc. She asserts the gendered division of labor existed in the pre-industrial era as well, but it reached its peak with capitalism. The industrial revolution required a labor force, but menial jobs were reserved for women. Moreover, though the increase in the labor force was beneficial for capitalists at the same time, it empowered women as well, making them economically independent, unlike in the past. The work they did occupied their time but it also helped them in shaping their "social identity" (Cott 20). Restricting them to women's sphere helped them realize that they are bound by "economic and political" (Cott 188) constricts which resulted in their "sisterhood" (Cott 160). However, to maintain the status quo in society and to maintain patriarchal privileges, society endorsed the discourse of domesticity. Victorian institutions, therefore, stressed the role of wife and

mother, and the house was seen as an embodiment of peace and order for husband and children.

Like Friedan, Cott voices the problems of the upper strata of society only, ignoring the women of other classes. Her critique of the separate sphere to maintain the patriarchal status quo is an important point of feminism; therefore, its review is important for my project, as I analyze the manipulation of the discourse of separate spheres by consumerism, in literature.

Women had been given an object position in society since antiquity and many theorists have criticized this view showing how it is degrading and unfair to women. Views of selected theorists are reviewed below with reference to their works, discussing the issue of objectification.

Martha Nussbaum in her article titled “Objectification” (1995) expresses her thoughts regarding the objectification of women. She argues feminism criticized the sexual objectification of women done by men as an act that is at the very heart of feminist politics. In this article, she gives seven characteristics to identify a person being treated as an object, because we see and touch things and we do the same to human beings, but they do not suggest objectification. Thus, to define and clarify objectification, she gives seven features mentioned below, to show there is something morally problematic (Nussbaum 251) in these acts. These include:

1. *Instrumentality*: If a person is treated as an instrument to serve the purpose of an objectifier
2. *Inertness*: When a person is treated as lacking activity and agency.
3. *Denial of autonomy*: When the objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
4. *Denial of subjectivity*: When a person is treated as devoid of emotions and feelings
5. *Ownership*: When a person is treated as possession of another person; where one can buy or sell another person
6. *Fungibility*: When a person is treated as substitutable by other people or objects; the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects

7. *Violability*: When a person is treated as lacking in bounding integrity the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary integrity (Nussbaum 257)

Nussbaum discusses different forms and ways in which women are objectified. It is an important work for feminist research. Considering the element of objectification of women in my primary texts is necessary because the texts are about female characters.

Published in 1997, Immanuel Kant's *Lectures on Ethics* describe objectification as reducing a human to a status of an object. He describes rationality as a significant characteristic of a human being, thus, human being is capable of setting up a rational goal and achieving it. Moreover, a human being is aware of one's "inner worth" (Kant 44) which differentiates him from animals and inanimate beings. But, in a sexual relationship with a concubine or a prostitute one person becomes an object of appetite for another and is soon thrown away like a "lemon" (Kant 156) which is sucked dry. This makes the person who is loved, lose his humanity. Moreover, when a person becomes an object of appetite for another person, morality ceases to function in a relationship. Discussing the status of prostitutes and concubines in society, he showed that women were more vulnerable to objectification. They are reduced to a commodity through which men gratify sexual appetite.

Kant's observation of male-female relationships on individual level and especially on the sexual level is enlightening as it shows how one person is always selfishly used by the other person. Though his work represents the situation of women of the eighteenth century and my primary texts are representing contemporary women, it holds a seminal position in feminist criticism. Therefore, it is relevant for my project.

Catherine MacKinnon in *Feminism Unmodified* (1987) relates the inequality of genders to objectification. She criticizes pornography which shows graphics of subordinated women, mutilated, bruised, raped, and humiliated images that are consumed by men. The women are "dehumanize[d]" in these images while creating sensuous entertainment for men (MacKinnon 147). Thus, besides other practices of gender inequality, through pornography, gender discrimination reveals to be both socially and sexually factual. Moreover, referring to Kant she writes, according to him a person is a free being, whose existence is an end in itself but in pornography, a woman is not an end in herself but she exists to provide pleasure to men. She condemns the efforts of organized

feminism which she believes is a failure particularly from a legal perspective because it “has not changed the status of a woman” (MacKinnon 2). 1

She is criticized by sex-positive feminists or pro-sex feminists who believe in the liberal status of women. Views of this camp are discussed below with the reviews of postfeminist texts. Mackinnon’s work is significant for my project because I am analyzing the representation of women done by the selected female authors.

Sandra Lee Bartky in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (1990) expresses that she considers her works as “consciousness raising-vehicles”(Bartky 21). She asserts to understand gender oppression class oppression cannot be ignored. Using Marx’s theory of alienation, she synthesizes Marxism and feminism to explain the objectification of women. In Marx’s theory of alienation, he stresses the laborer’s association with the product, which is the exteriorization of a laborer’s being. But, under capitalism, this association between the product and the laborer is missing, which consequently leads to the fragmentation of a person. Similarly, a woman in a patriarchal society suffers from a type of fragmentation, because she is strongly identified with her body than with her mind or personality. A woman is objectified by keeping all the focus on her body and it eventually leads to her “fragmentation” (Bartky 39).

Bartky discusses the disciplinary practices which train women to view themselves as objects. These practices demand conformity to a certain standard size and shape of a woman’s body. Thus, the women, in an attempt to reach that standard follow special diet plans and often suffer from anorexia and bulimia. Women have internalized the notions of beauty and therefore it is difficult for them to fight against objectification. Their preoccupation and obsession with appearance are considered natural and voluntary. Though Bartky believes not only men are responsible for being the disciplinarians, the rules are “institutionalized” (39) through media, parents, teachers, and society.

Keeping Bartky’s ideas of objectification in mind, it is important for me to analyze female characters in the primary texts under study. She considers her work as a consciousness-raising vehicle in the society; however, it is written in 1990, and my project considers the same issue presented in literature in contemporary times.

Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* (2002) notes that women for centuries were restricted by the ideology of glorious femininity or of a “separate sphere” (14) till the twentieth century but with women gaining legal empowerment and the right to enter into

the field of trades, professions and education a novel dogma was imposed upon them. This ideology particularly targeted politically independent and economically empowered women pulling them back to their object position. The women tried hard and with a lot of effort set themselves free from 'feminine mystique' however, they are now entrapped into "beauty myth" (Wolf 14). They are made to view themselves as childlike, mindless doll which is against the core principles of feminism. Wolf believes, these ideals were serving a political end as well, because as the women were becoming politically strong, beauty standards were raised for them to distract their "energies" (Wolf 92) and undermine their progress.

Naomi Wolf in her book criticizes media for employing young girls even below eight years for petty tasks such as dressing them up like sex workers. By doing this the media sets a beauty standard to which the girls of this age are made to subscribe. It is because of the standards of beauty presented in the media that makes the women suffer from "bulimia" and "anorexia" (Wolf 127) so that they can reach an ideal and socially accepted body shape and weight.

Although Wolf tries to prove her views with facts and figures, she is criticized for giving flawed facts. Wolf criticizes mass media for pressurizing women to subscribe to beauty standards and there are scattered references to various literary novels as well in her book, which are mainly western novels. However, my study provides a detailed analysis of the pressure of subscribing to beauty standards for women in literature.

Susan Bordo in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (1993) asserts, that Rene Decartes' idea of binaries such as mind and body, spirit and matter, etc. influenced Western historical and philosophical traditions and politics. Thus, West has always been considering the duality of man and woman. Many feminists agree that usually women are associated with and identified with their bodies more than men. Moreover, a woman's value lies in her physical appearance. Since a long time in the past, woman's morals and intellect were measured against men and were always found to be short of becoming a subjecthood, because men were considered the yardstick, being strong, moral, and active beings. Thus, being considered devoid of intellect and rationality, women were associated with emotions and sensuousness. Considering the biological makeup of a woman, she was considered inferior, because she deviated from the standard. Furthermore, she emphasizes a woman is considered to be symbolizing a man's distraction from pursuing

serious aims of getting knowledge and seeking God, by charming him towards sexual desire. She is considered responsible for failing his willpower and bringing disorder to his life.

This sort of cultural comparison between men and women forces women to focus on their appearance. She analyzes a complex relationship between culture, media, and the bodies of women. She observes these cultural ideals regarding female bodies have evolved over time and the media is strongly reinforcing certain beauty standards. She advocates for a more inclusive and diverse definition of beauty to make women free from the unneeded burden. In this way, women can focus on their rational abilities rather than being sensitive emotional beings.

This work is important for me to review because of Bordo's defense of women against the accusation of emotional beings. In my analysis, I am analyzing characters of my primary texts to check whether they are behaving as emotional or rational beings.

Susan Brownmiller in *Femininity* (1983) analyzes the notion of femininity. She explains femininity is manmade and a cultural product perpetuated through fairy tales and media. It teaches women how to dress, act, look, and even feel just according to the demands of patriarchy. She challenges the established straitjacket of female norms, which stops the economic, intellectual, and emotional growth of women. She criticizes the society which polices and polarizes women by stressing on femininity and in this way upholds patriarchal power structures. Like Woolf and Bordo she criticizes the role of media; including advertising and films to promote femininity.

She encourages women to challenge these limitations and recognize their strengths. She shows hope that by challenging these notions of society regarding femininity, women may create a more just society.

She criticizes society for forcing women to have feminine behavior which she considers a kind of prison for them because it dictates them to be in a certain mode ignoring their individuality. In my analysis of the texts under examination, I am trying to find out whether the women are being represented as feminine or unfeminine and what consequences are they facing as a result of the choices they are making.

Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970, 2000) written in a witty style, is considered to be a hallmark of second wave feminism. She critiques the works of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Jean Genet, and Norman Mailer in a humorous way, criticizing them for their patriarchal discourses. Being a radical feminist, she argues a revolution not reformation can assist in ending the prejudice practised against women because society believes in gender

stereotyping as a natural difference than a cultural difference. The first wave of feminists tried to reform the existing system, but it did not end the problems. She believes only a strong and “a true sexual revolution” (Millet 62) can help to end this discrimination from the roots because the discrimination it presents is not only in legal structures but is practised by all the institutions such as family, religion, and educational institutions. In her view, until the constructed truth of “male superiority”(Millet 26)is dealt with radical spirit, the oppression of women will continue.

She criticizes literary texts from social and political perspectives, but her work is short of analysis of literary texts written by women except for Charlotte Bronte’s *Villette*. Moreover, the writers that she criticizes are mostly white male writers only. Thus, the feminist flag that she is holding is not representing Postcolonial and Third world women. Still, her work is important due to the discussion of gender politics, as in my research project, I am analyzing the representation of gender done by female writers in contemporary times.

The discussion in this section represents significant voices in the terrain of feminism showing different aspects of their struggles. It shows the efforts of women for basic rights, the pressure to subscribe to set standards given by society, and their fight against dictated femininity and objectification. I study these issues of women as depicted in the primary texts.

2.2.3 Postfeminism

As my primary texts are postfeminist therefore it is important to review literature in this area. This section of the review brings in the works of postfeminists. Along with the works of postfeminists, criticism done on these works is also presented in the same section.

Natasha Walter in her book *The New Feminism* (1998) asserts the old school of feminism is not relevant for the women of her time; firstly, because the feminists of the previous generation who were fighting for the rights of women have made the lives of contemporary women easier. They can now vote, get a degree, use contraceptive pills upon their will, and are economically independent as well. Thus, they do not feel suppressed anymore, unlike the women of the previous eras. Secondly, the relationship between men and feminism has also transformed. Feminists were against men to an extent that they considered every man to be a rapist, but in the twenty-first century, men are also supporting feminism. She, therefore, views the rhetoric of personal is political as becoming too

personal and dictating, which independent women do not desire. Moreover, Walter believes there is nothing degrading in women's concern about their appearance because in our society men are also concerned about their appearance and want to be appreciated by women.

Walter is right in saying that the oppressed situation of women has improved compared to the past. Making use of Walter's thesis point, I evaluate this changed situation of women in the novels selected for this study. I analyze the attitudes of both men and women regarding the positive change brought by the efforts of the feminists in the past, which Walter discusses in her book.

Rene Denfeld, as a postfeminist in *The New Victorians* (1995) expresses her views regarding feminism, which she says in the subtitle of the book as "A Young woman's challenge to the old feminist Order". Regarding pornography, she asserts, that "pornography" and "belly dancing" (Denfeld 123) are beautiful expressions of celebrating female power. She criticizes feminists for fighting against pornography considering it to be oppression because she believes they are linking everything illogically with patriarchy.

She critiqued first and second wave feminists calling them 'New Victorians' because of their rigidity and serious political stance. In Denfeld's views, these feminists dictated and patronized young women with their "fanatic[al]" (Denfeld 164) dogma, especially about the fashion statement, which confines the new generation of women. The earlier feminists believed that fashion and beauty regimes were oppressive tools of patriarchy and they wanted to liberate women from these practices. It is because of the strict rules which they wanted women to follow, that made the younger generation of women keep themselves away from the title of feminism. Postfeminists assert that instead of dictating a fashion statement for women, which is their personal matter, feminists need to pursue serious aims such as child care, etc. Therefore, to invite the young generation of women to be part of feminism the older generation must show some flexibility.

Denfeld is ignoring the oppression in pornography when it considers looking into the aspect of the celebration of the female body only while keeping a blind eye towards beneficiaries who are taking advantage of this form of celebration. My project tries to find out the possible answers to this question through the representation of women in literature.

Wolf in *Fire with Fire* (1993) gives a transformed opinion from what she gave earlier in *Beauty Myth*. She asserts to balance the centuries-old inequalities of sexes the

“genderquake”(Wolf xvi) occurred in the twentieth century in the form of feminism which became successful in securing the rights of women, including their legal and economic rights. However, the problem remaining is to make the women accept the reality that they are not weak, helpless, and in chains, thus they should stop playing “victim feminism” (Wolf xvii). Contemporary women need to be aware of their new status and power. The consciousness-raising journey has blinded women from the power they already possess. They should subscribe to “power feminism” (Wolf xvii) and identify themselves with other women through mutual pleasure and strength rather than identifying with each other on the basis of vulnerability and pain.

She is different from other postfeminists such as Denfeld who believe that contemporary feminism only focuses on victim feminism; however, she acknowledges that many feminist groups focus upon power feminism as well, but they are not brought into the limelight.

As the selected novels for my project are about females therefore this book is important to be included in the literature review. I am analyzing the portrayal of female characters in the novels under study to identify their representation as a victim or empowered characters.

This unit shows the conflict of postfeminist discourses with feminist discourses as the arguments in these works generally move in the opposite direction of feminists. It also shows a shift in discourses from victim feminism to power feminism.

2.2.4 Postfeminism and Consumerism

Both postfeminists, as well as the discourse put forward by them, are criticized by third wave feminists and other critics. They try to find links between postfeminism and consumerism. Some of the works of authors discussing this issue are discussed in this section.

Walter in her other book *Living Dolls, the Return of Sexism* (2015) transforms from her opinion discussed in *The New Feminism*. She admits that her prejudice against feminism, which she put forward in her previous book, was not laid on strong grounds. She considers the job market for women, such as pole and lap dancing, modelling, etc. where, although the sex industries are giving economic freedom to women, at the cost of their sexual objectification. This discrimination against women is believed to be a natural

preference by women, considering biological determinism but she does not consider these job choices as empowering choices available for women. As in the past, women are again made to believe that it is their sex and body which is significant. With the combination of a Barbie doll and a figure of women, patriarchy is setting up new standards for women. This redefinition includes big breasts, thin waists, revealing dresses, and above all, the mental capabilities of women are again ignored, as in the past. Young girls are made to see Barbie doll figures as a standard of beauty and the women have to reach these beauty standards against which they are judged.

Gender difference is becoming increasingly popular through the media with the help of Disney Princesses and Barbie dolls and with the fusion of feminism and consumerism, women are going through more oppression than in the past. The new feminists are promoting everything from special diets to cosmetics to improve the physical beauty of a woman while ignoring her intellectual growth. The wide acceptance of the new beauty standards shows that women have started buying the idea that their worth lies in their physical appearance only.

In my analysis, I am taking up the issue of how women in my primary texts are subscribing to the beauty standards set by consumerism not only in 1960s Western countries but all over the world. I am trying to find out the reasons for the increase in gender differences and the possible beneficiaries of this discourse.

Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (1992) considers consumer culture responsible for contaminating feminism. Feminists have passed through a long journey to achieve their rights in legal, political, and social spheres, but reaching near the “finish line” (Faludi 11), they were distracted by consumer culture. Postfeminism, by using the rhetoric of empowerment and equality, is promoting consumer ideology, blinding feminists from their original aims. Since the time women stood for their rights, patriarchy backlashed them using different strategies, but this time a tactic used by patriarchy is more powerful than ever before, because this time no men came forward against feminism, but the independent and empowered women using the tag of feminism are brought against it. Leading feminists were launched in the media to pose for selling undergarments and tobacco, to show their independence. Stamped with a “feminist seal of approval” (Faludi xiv) they were selling jeans, high heels, shampoos, etc. Through which it seems feminism had completely absorbed the requirements of consumer culture. In the

consumer culture, the feminists' aim of economic independence turned into women's purchasing power which directed them to 'credit card debts', their precept for self-determination shifted to bodily changes to reclaim their youth; and their aim of public agency transformed into a desire for popularity.

She believes the backlash by consumer culture being subtle and latent is more dangerous than all the preceding straightforward attacks of patriarchy, because the women themselves are promoting it, therefore it is strengthening women's shackles rather than breaking them. Faludi, mentions that the media negatively depicts feminism. It is depicted as women's own enemy, which restrains women from enjoying the idiosyncrasies of their sex. The novel culture is accepting women in the public sphere upon its own conditions, encouraging women to revitalize their femininity, which was eschewed by earlier feminists. She calls this feminism "Pseudo" (Faludi 90) feminism.

Faludi adds beauty industry is now blended with medicine. Genuine doctors wearing lab coats are seen endorsing injections to gain youthful skin, chemical treatments, implants, and plastic surgeries giving the message that the appearance of professional women is suffering at the hands of their careers, while they have safe solutions for their dull skin and thin hair. The independent women are given a message that their liberation and progress are making them ailing and they are having negative consequences on their looks and health. Helping women reach the patriarchal standards of beauty provided the surgeons not only profitable businesses but also a role of "Pygmalion" (Faludi 149).

Faludi gives intense arguments regarding postfeminism. Her work is very helpful for my analysis because she has related consumerism and postfeminism in the setting of 1990s America. However, I am trying to find out links between the two, with the help of literature, a couple of decades later. Moreover, my compass for this analysis is wider than hers including American, British, and Pakistani cultures.

Imelda Whelehan's *The Feminist Bestseller* (2005) views postfeminism from an anti-feminist standpoint and terms it "retrosexism" (Whelehen 4). By agreeing with the idea of backlash given by Faludi, she argues that postfeminism has lost the essence of feminism given by second wave feminists. Whelehan notes that feminists in the 1970s consciously made an effort to encourage women to reflect on their lives, relationships, and upbringing which created the strong bifurcation of masculinity and femininity. These

activities drove women towards politicized awareness and they felt the gender confinement, for which they united and took a practical step in the form of organized feminism.

Postfeminism in her view is actually anti-feminist because it has diluted and twisted feminism and its core ideology, believing that the aims of feminism i.e. liberating women are already attained, therefore it is no more applicable to the new generation of women. The new generation of women of the 1990s requires new parameters of feminism that suit them. They rationalize women's objectification, by criticizing second wave feminists as puritans who are against all forms of pleasure. Thus, they repackage anti-feminist ideas as feminists.

In my dissertation, with the selected texts I am analyzing the portrayal of feminist and anti-feminist ideas as discussed by Whelehen. Whelehen's work is relevant to my project as she criticizes postfeminism and postfeminist novels. Besides many other novels, she gives passing reference to *Bridget Jones's Diary* as well, which is one of my primary texts for analysis. However, she talks about many novels in passing but I am doing an in-depth analysis of the selected novels. Moreover, her focus is only on Western novels, while I have included Eastern novels as well.

Nina Power in *One Dimensional Woman* (2009) notes that feminist achievements are now reduced to handbags and shoes or anything that makes a woman feels good. Even pornography is considered an expression of feminism. She criticizes capitalism, which she believes is behind all these industries, which are benefitting from the situation. Pornography has become an industry and is "generating 57\$ billion in annual revenue worldwide" (Power 56) which is more than the amount Hollywood is making. She labels this form of feminism as one dimensional feminism which is rather the emancipation of consumerism which considers a woman's body as her asset in the physical and economic sense.

Power's book, although small and concise, raises significant points about consumerism and feminism. It is germane to my project as I am trying to find out the impact of consumerism in the selected literary texts.

Lynne Segal in *Why Feminism? Gender, Psychology, Politics* (1990) rants at the new form of feminism considering that its emphasis is on individuality rather than on collective political stance as was supported by second wave feminists. He asserts that the focus on individuality is polluting the essence of the movement. Political seriousness

remained an important aspect of the feminist movement inciting collective political action for the oppressed women of the world, whereas, postfeminism promotes the idea of individualism. Moreover, the long and hard struggle of the feminists to liberate women from the slavery of femininity which restricted them in a limited culture is swapped by postfeminists who celebrate their femininity. They enjoy the power of their sexualities which strips feminism of its political seriousness.

She wishes postfeminists to have political seriousness like the feminists in the past. My critique of selected multiple contemporary novels finds out the reasons for the lack of seriousness depicted in novels written by females.

Genz and Brabon, in *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (2009) criticize the femininity reclaimed by postfeminists, against which the first and second wave feminists fought. The restrictive femininity has been reclaimed by postfeminists by embracing femininity under “Girl power”(Genz 76), which reappraises femininity propagated by the Spice Girls. Postfeminists believe femininity is not sexist in nature and therefore not oppressive. Though the second wave feminists considered femininity to be a man-made and socially constructed product, which had the connotations of powerlessness, postfeminists associate it with empowerment. They argue, that feminine acts such as using make-up and wearing revealing clothes, etc. are not signs of their oppression or their objectification in any way, but these are the ways to enjoy their femininity. However, Genz and Brabon note that, unlike Second wave feminists, postfeminists developed a congenial relationship with the agenda of media and thus they supported each other. The Media is bringing women into the foreground in every sort of advertisement for their personal reasons, whereas the women are enjoying the importance and fame they are being given. Genz and Brabon consider girl power to be a cover-up for exploitation.

Genz and Brabon’s critical position in this book is akin to my position in the analysis. My work is an extension of their ideas. It endeavours to find out the reasons for increased gender differences and how these differences are expressed in my primary texts.

Caroline Smith’s book titled *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit* (2008) falls very close to what I am doing in this study. It analyzes the relationship between consumerism and chick lit. She refers to various chick lit texts to analyze this relationship which include Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and Sophie Kinsella’s *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* (2000), Anna Maxted’s *Getting Over It* (2000), Melissa

Bank's *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing* (1999), etc. Her primary argument is that chick lit "questions the consume and achieve promise" given by the advice manuals and women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, and *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr Right*, etc. (Smith 5).

Smith observes the repeated mention of these magazines and self-help texts in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Bridget is portrayed as an admirer of self-help books, especially *Cosmopolitan*. She is depicted as an ideal reader who wholeheartedly follows the advice given in these manuals. She purchases the latest household goods advertised in these magazines, irrespective of how impractical they may be for her lifestyle. In Smith's view by showing this exaggerated consumer behavior, the author satirizes the advice provided by these books. She also finds a similar pattern used by Kinsella in her book *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*. She writes that Becky's exaggerated consumer behavior is used by Kinsella "to satirize publications like *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* that regularly encourage readers to replace their wardrobes with entirely new ones" (23). She uses humor consistently to criticize the "consumer ideologies of women's magazines, particularly the way in which they encourage excessive spending habits of female readers" (36). In this way, the writer gives a warning to the readers by showing how Becky suffers due to this excessive consumer behavior. Thus, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* present serious critiques of consumer culture mediums; particularly women's magazines.

In chapter three and four of this book, Smith analyzes the advice given in the self-help manuals. She observes that the advice given in these manuals is often contradictory in nature. Moreover, the advice keeps on changing with the passing time. Smith also discusses the search for romantic relationships of the protagonists in chick lit texts who often take help from Bernard Geis's self-help book entitled *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962). She analyzes the text of *The Cigarette Girl* (1999) by Carol Wolper, and *Sex and the City* (1996) by Candace Bushnell. Smith observes that these texts seem to be a critique of books that instruct women to "contain, control, and concentrate their sexuality upon one man" (Smith 100). The message given through these books is that women need to explore their sexuality and do what suits their lifestyle instead of blindly following the instructions of self-help books.

Although these novels challenge the consumer industry, they are received with bias. Smith elaborates that it is assumed that these novels “cannot challenge the consumer industries [because] of the deeply rooted, historical bias against popular fiction—a bias that exists against women’s fiction as well” (15). Thus, according to Smith these novels are considered frivolous and are “taken at face value” while ignoring the “ironic undercurrent” in these texts (Smith 43).

Smith’s work is important for my dissertation as my research project also deals with analyzing a link between consumerism and chick lit texts. However, when Smith focuses on the advice manuals/ self-help books and fashion magazines mentioned in these books which promote consumerism, she primarily asserts that chick lit authors under discussion are challenging these advice manuals by satirizing them and putting the protagonists in humorous and disastrous situations when they subscribe to the advice manuals. My position in this research is, however, different from Smith’s. I argue that the chick lit texts under discussion are, in a way, promoting consumerism and not challenging them completely. Secondly, the major bent of Smith’s discussion about the advice manuals forms only a part of my analysis. The trajectory of my discussion about the relationship between consumerism and chick lit incorporates multiple aspects, the discussion of which comes in my upcoming chapters of analysis.

This section represents the relationship between consumerism and postfeminism. Most of the works discussed in this section present real-life examples while in my research project, I explore the same relationship in literature with the help of my primary texts.

2.2.5 Globalization

This section of the chapter reviews the concept of globalization and its different schools of thought. Globalization as a concept has engaged theorists from all disciplines equally; including sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and linguists. They all employ it as a useful concept in their respective fields. Thereby, the literature we come across in this field is vast. In order to better review this immense body of literature, I have categorized it into different sections. This section is about the definitions and historical underpinnings of the concept.

Zygmunt Bauman’s *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (2005) reveals that globalization as a process has deeper effects than its surface manifestations on both

individuals and society. Globalization is a common word today; a craze quickly “turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries”(Bauman 1). The word has different connotations for different people; the concept has rather initiated a debate that divides everyone into two net slots. For one group, ‘globalization’ denotes the ensuring of happiness; they believe that embracing globalization ensures happiness. On the other side of this continuum are people who believe globalization is what marks the doom of everything happy: a gateway to eternal unhappiness. It divides the world in the same way as it unites i.e. by upholding uniformity of the globe.

Globalization is an irreversible fate the world has to face today. It seems it is affecting everyone in similar ways and to a similar extent. Therefore, today almost every society and everyone is being globalized, and being ‘globalized’ means that all the societies and individuals are becoming identical, with the cultures impinging upon each other and amalgamating. Though looking back at history, one can raise questions as to what degree the geophysical features, the natural and also the artificial boundaries of territories, isolated distinctive identities of culture and populations, in addition to the intact distinction between the inside and the outside, all the normal objects of the geographical science, were in their essence simply the fabricated artifices or sediments of “speed limits”(Bauman 12). Bauman, looking at massive globalization crashing every kind of boundary, wonders if the boundaries that existed in the past were true or just constructed to curtail the freedom of movement in the past.

He quotes Paul Virilio, who argues on the same lines as Bauman. Virilio comments that even though Francis Fukuyama’s pronouncement of the ‘end of history’ appears grossly premature, one can with growing certainty speak currently of the ‘end of geography’ (qtd. In Bauman 12) pointing to the fact that distances do not matter any longer, compared to the past. Thus, the concept of a geophysical border is getting more and more troublesome to sustain within the ‘real world’. It suddenly looks clear now that the divisions of continents and that of the world into borders were once made imposingly real through the hardships of travel through these different and distinct geographical territories separated by physical borders.

In this regard, financial limitations are the main constraints for the state economies in trying to overcome these physical restraints, along with the socially produced factors

such as; maintenance and keeping intact local collective identities; ensuring the enforcement of borders and cultural barriers. “The ‘inside’ vs. ‘outside’, ‘here’ vs. ‘out there’, ‘near’ vs. ‘far away’ opposition recorded the degree of taming, domestication and familiarity of various fragments” (Bauman 13), of both human and inhuman fragments of the encompassing world.

He also explains that due to globalization modern society is constantly in a fluid state. As a result, individuals feel the pressure to be adaptable and flexible which can be both a liberating and disorienting experience for humans. As he notes that due to globalization people are drifting away from their traditional social structures which are leading them to confusion.

Moreover, globalization has created more opportunities for one group of people who have resources and skills. They are being given a chance to thrive in their economies while it is leading to the exploitation of others who are without resources. Therefore, it is not equally beneficial for everyone.

Bauman’s view regarding polarized opinions about globalization is useful for my research as in my project, through the selected literary texts, I am trying to analyze the effects of globalization on literature. I am trying to find how the selected texts are reflecting global trends from writing styles to cultural representation.

George Ritzer defines globalization in his book *Globalization: A Basic Text* (2015) as:

It is a transplanetary *process* or set of *processes* involving increasing *liquidity* and the growing multidirectional *flows* of people, objects, places, and information as well as the *structures* they encounter and create that are *barriers* to, or *expedite*, those flows. (Ritzer 2)

The present era is called the global age, due to the complexity, enormity, and diversity of the process of globalization. The flow of people, objects, and information is interconnected and is easily flowing. Ritzer describes the process using metaphors termed as “solid, liquid and gas” (Ritzer 22). He explains before globalization people, information, and objects restricted to a certain area were liable to metaphorically harden and firmly get associated with places, over time. Thus, they were restricted to a particular place, even the food or products which were produced by them were actually consumed by them primarily. They were bound by natural and constructed boundaries.

With the development of technology, though the solid state of these objects persisted, “fluidity” (Ritzer 68) became a pronounced trait of the global age. People, ideas, and products are not bound by place and time and do not retain their shape or particular characteristics for a long time. They are constantly changing and their flow cannot be halted. Quoting Appadurai he discusses the concept of “flows” (qtd. in Ritzer 6) which is an important idea to understand globalization. Flows are defined as the free movement of people, ideas, and things due to levelling of barriers that stopped their flow earlier. The term flows is associated with liquidity, because liquids flow quickly and easily and are difficult to stop. The contemporary world is majorly in a liquid state metaphorically. At present, with the increased mobility the liquid is now transforming into gas. This entails the quality of lighter and faster movement and easy transportation of objects and people.

He also believes that there is no single point of origin to mark the beginning of globalization. It had been happening in the past in different phases. Quoting Nederveen Pieterse he mentions eight great epochs of globalization. Likewise, it can be seen as associated with various specific events such as the spread of Christianity after the fall of the Roman Empire or the spread of Islam in the seventeenth century. Like Bauman, he believes the liquids and gases are creating both positive and negative effects because conflicting flows and reverse flows often create a negative effect.

Ritzer, being a sociologist, gives a detailed picture of globalization with reference to real-world facts and discusses the fluidity of ideas, economy, and culture as witnessed in these times of globalization. In my research project, I am considering Ritzer’s concept of fluidity in terms of economy, culture, literary trends etc., as represented in literature.

Aart Scholte in *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (2005) has identified five broad definitions of globalization through his elaborate work. One everyday notion defines globalization in terms of group action. From this angle, the term global is solely another adjective to explain cross-border relations between countries whereas the term globalization is used to describe the increase in the speed of exchange and interdependency in the international system. He explains it in the same vein as Ritzer explained globalization in terms of a huge and increasing flow of resources and capital investments between different countries in the international system. A second usage of the word globalization views the economic process as relaxation. Here it refers to a method of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries to make it possible for

countries to open their borders to the world economy. Along these lines, many globalization analysts suggest that globalization has become an outstanding locution for describing the method described by Sander “international economic integration” (qtd.in Scholte 16).

The third concept of globalization, Scholte explains is associating it with universalization, just as when King Oliver Reiser and B. Davies linked globalization and universalization when they coined the verb “globalize” in the 1940s, along with foreseeing a planetary amalgamation of cultures during global humanism. Therefore, in this usage of the word, “global” refers to “worldwide” and thereby; globalization is that method that indicates the spreading of numerous objects and experiences of individuals to every corner of the planet.

The fourth definition is linking globalization with modernization, particularly in the “Americanized” (Scholte 16) way. Following this concept, the process of globalization may be considered dynamic because the social structures of modernity which include rationalism, economy, capitalism, etc. are unfolding the globe in new and different ways than historic ways. Therefore, they are associated with destroying pre-existent cultures and native self-determination. Thus, globalization in this sense is usually represented as an associate of imperialism of McDonald’s, Hollywood, and CNN. In this way, globalization is what we tend to refer to within the Third World, for many centuries, as colonization, even though it is manifested in slightly different ways than historic imperialism and colonization.

The fifth idea of globalization identifies globalization as deterritorialization or Scholte chooses to describe it as diffusion of “supra-territoriality”(Scholte 17). According to this analysis, globalization entails a reconfiguration of the geographic structure of the world, thus indicating that social area is no longer completely mapped in terms of territorial distances, places, and borders. To exemplify this notion, he uses David Held’s definition of globalization. He describes globalization as a process or a combination of processes that represent a metamorphosis within the special organization of social relations and transactions.

As two of my primary texts for analysis are Pakistani novels, therefore from these five comprehensive definitions of globalization given by Scholte, my study engages with the fourth definition in my analysis i.e. the one dealing with modernization drenched in Americanized ideas especially focusing on the third world countries.

Roland Robertson in *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (1992) gives a history of globalization. In order to understand the history of the concept of globalization two key points are pertinent. Firstly, because globalization as a concept has been closely tied to the shifting notion and perceptions of space and time, its importance is linked to a concept that is historically considered to be non-static and a continuous process. Therefore, a lot of attention is usually given to the historical analysis of globalization.

Secondly, significant attention is paid to the issue of whether or not globalization is a new phenomenon. According to Robertson, a theorist whose ideas conflict with postmodern theorists like David Harvey and Anthony Giddens, globalization as a concept and a process has a long history that goes far beyond modernity and evolves mostly since the fifteenth century. He identifies five different stages of globalization in this long history of the concept: “a germinal period, beginning from 1400 and lasting until 1750, an incipient phase, which runs from 1750 to 1875, a take-off phase; from 1875 to 1925, a struggle for hegemony from 1925 to 1969, and a stage he terms uncertainty, starting from 1969 to date.

Robertson shows that globalization is not a novel process and can be traced back to the fifteenth century. Being aware of the history of globalization is significant for my project so that, contextualizing the background of the concept, globalization represented in the literary form can be analyzed.

Thomas Friedman’s book *The World is Flat* (2007) classifies three main epochs of globalization. He demarcates the first era from 1492, with the expedition of Columbus, and ends in 1800; the period that opened up trade between the Old World and the New World. This is the period Friedman calls globalization 1.0 and according to him, this particular period reduced the world from a size large to a size medium. Globalization 1.0 was all about muscles power, and thereby, the key agent of change here that drove the process of global integration was measured in the forms of how much; brawn, “muscle,..horsepower,.. wind power,.. [and] steam power”(Friedman 9) a country could generate and its ability to deploy them creatively.

After the era of 1.0 of globalization, came the era of 2.0. This is a period Friedman identifies from 1800 to 2000, interrupted by World War I and II and the great depression. It minimized the world from “size medium to small”(Friedman 9). The key agent of change in globalization 2.0 was multinational companies. According to him, these multinational

companies went worldwide to acquire labor and markets, led by the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the Dutch and English joint-stock companies.

On the tail of globalization 2.0, came globalization 3.0 minimizing the world further from “size small to tiny”(Friedman 9) – flattening and leveling the global playing field along with reducing its size. The dynamic force becoming the agent of change for globalization 3.0 became the newly discovered strength for individuals to participate and compete globally. Further explaining the dynamic nature of this last period of globalization he argues:

Because it is flattening and shrinking the world, Globalization 3.0 is going to be more and more driven not only by individuals but also by a much more diverse - non-Western, non-white group of individuals. Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered. Globalization 3.0 makes it possible for so many more people to plug and play, and you are going to see every color of the human rainbow take part. (Friedman 10)

He asserts the world is flat now metaphorically because most of the barriers are now lifted and technology is playing a very significant role in flattening the world. Giving an example of his visit to Indian call centers, he explains there is a whole generation of Indians who are mimicking the English language like the natives. Friedman refers to this as a world that is so intermingled together by capitalism that one might not identify one place with another. Thus, there is no single master, but anyone can compete for economic gain including individuals and companies from anywhere in the world.

Friedman’s concept of a flat World is pivotal to the position I am taking in my dissertation. I am bringing into light the spread of culture and literary trends due to the metaphorically flat world specifically presented in literature.

Manfred Steger in his book *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (2009) gives four approaches to the historical background of globalization. For many theorists and historians, the historical scope of globalization resides in the last four decades of the post-industrial period. This view is important because of the remarkable expansion and growth of global connections, as the early 1970s present a huge leap in the history of globalization. The second approach highlights the striking developments of the nineteenth century and the close associations between contemporary forms of globalization and the Industrial Revolution. Explaining the importance of the *time-space* compression that happened in the sixteenth century, the promoters of the third approach believe that globalization actually

represents the extension and continuation of intricate processes that began with the appearance of modernity and the capitalist world system about five hundred years ago. A group of people supporting the fourth approach towards globalization is scholars who go beyond the time-based confines of decades or centuries and claim that a true and comprehensive description of globalization is incomplete without the incorporation of ancient progress and enduring dynamics into our earthly history. They stress that processes like globalization have been unfolding for thousands of years.

This section shows the views of various theorists considering the beginning of globalization and how it is evolving with time. It also presents definitions of globalization from different aspects and how it continues to make an impact on people and societies.

2.2.5 Financial Aspect of Globalization

This section of the literature review presents the financial aspect of globalization called neoliberalism with reference to various works. It is regarded as the most significant form of globalization by many theorists (Ritzer, Kotz) and is considered to be the primary factor that helped in the development of the global age. The problems it fashioned indeed had global implications. The concept is linked to the economics and politics of globalization; by curtailing and controlling the involvement of the nation-state over the market and trade.

David Harvey in his work *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) divides neoliberalism into four periods. The first stage was based on the concepts of Adam Smith's work *The Wealth of Nations*, written in 1776, soon after the Industrial Revolution. He examined the reasons for the accumulation, generation, and growth of capital of different nations while proposing the abrogation of state's interference in economic affairs, removing barriers to commerce, etc., and promoting free trade. He focused on "individualism" (Harvey 23) opposing the control of the state, which he believed would eventually benefit the state and society as a whole. His ideas were accepted and promoted till the great depression in the 1930s.

During the depression stage J. M. Keynes, challenging early liberalism, gave a new economic theory. He wanted state intervention in economic affairs in such a way that the common good of the public could be ensured. Keynes' concept of the economy had a shadow of Socialism which had tapered the profit rate of capitalists. Thus, corporate elites

in reaction to Keynes's theory revived the economic liberals and evolved the third stage of capitalism, called new or neoliberalism. A significant role was played by Milton Friedman who was teaching at Chicago University and promoted his ideas of neoliberalism through his students. His work *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) became an important guide for neoliberalism. Free market capitalism, privatization, and cutting down on social welfare programs were central to the doctrine. This system made capitalists the beneficiaries by helping them own the privatized industries and victimized the poor by curtailing the social welfare programs.

In the 1980s the administration of Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain further promoted neoliberalism and with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s left no other substitute for neoliberalism. The world had to accept neoliberalism. In this regard forces such as IMF and World Bank played a significant role. They coerced the countries to accept neoliberalism by using structural adjustments in their economies as a condition to receive financial aid. Thus, in the fourth stage, it was accepted on a global level.

Harvey provides a very comprehensive history of neoliberalism which forms the background for my position in the dissertation. However, his work is restricted to the economic aspect of neoliberalism only. I am attempting to study the influence of neoliberalism in literature.

Friedman in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (2000) identifies the causes that are globalizing the world at the end of the past century and their effects on the territorial makeup of the international system; economics, politics, and culture. He believes globalization is a process, which is the inevitable amalgamation of markets, nation-states, and technologies to an extent that was never witnessed before. It is a method that is enabling people, firms, and nation-states to reach around the world “farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper” (16) than ever before. Friedman, furthermore, emphasizes that the driving plan behind globalization is free-market capitalism; the more a country lets economic process rule and also the more it opens its economy to trade and competition, the more its economy thrives and flourishes. Globalization suggests the development of free-market capitalism to reach nearly every country in the world.

He points out that standardizing marketing forces and homogenizing them poses a threat to local culture and therefore suggests a balance between Lexus and Olive Tree.

Where Lexus symbolizes modernity and the Olive tree symbolizes traditions and the roots that anchor human beings. He criticizes the neoliberal policies that shrink the control of Nation states over the economy but he does not strongly criticize neoliberalism because being a proponent of neoliberalism, he sees more benefits of it than negative influence.

Friedman's work is important for my dissertation to form the background of my work. He occasionally sheds light on the threat to the local culture posed by neoliberalism. However, being an advocate of it, he goes no further in his criticism and does not elaborate it. I believe the threat is no more just an abstract idea but a practical reality with concrete manifestations which I am trying to show in my research project.

Marshall Sahlins gave a speech about anthropology which later became a book called *Waiting for Foucault, Still* (2002). He satirizes capitalism and finds links between capitalism and neoliberalism saying “Whatever happened to ‘Late Capitalism’? It became neoliberalism”(Sahlins 59). Neoliberalism supports economic liberalization, free trade, open market, privatization, and a decrease in the size of the public sector and an increase in the role of the private sector. He compares the definition of man given by Durkheim with his own definition of a modern man. Durkheim defined a man as a double and divided self, composed of moral and intellectual self which he receives from society. But a modern man, Sahlins writes, can be understood by his relation with society through imperialistic philosophy where either society is no more than the sum of relations between enterprising individuals or individuals are nothing more than personifications of the greater social and cultural order, just like certain progressive theories claim the death of the subject constructed by the subjectivity of power.

Sahlins’s ideas are very interesting, especially the idea regarding individuals as personifications of a greater social and cultural order. In my project, I am trying to see the aspect of individuality being expressed or under-expressed by the writers of the selected texts.

In “Globalization and Neoliberalism” (2000), David Kotz, defines neoliberalism as a policy stance and an economic theory. As a theory neoliberalism is an unfettered capitalist system. He asserts free market capitalism besides representing the ideal of free individual choice also attains the most favourable economic performance with regard to effectiveness, economic development and technological advancement. The state is assigned a very limited economic role i.e. defining property rights, enforcing contracts, and regulating the money

supply. State intervention to correct market failures is viewed with suspicion, on the ground that such intervention is likely to create more problems than solutions.

Neoliberalism as a policy, recommends dismantling the remains of Keynesian's welfare state. In the national sphere, the proponents of neoliberalism endorse the privatization of public assets and activities, elimination or reduction of social welfare programs; a decrease of taxes on businesses. Whereas, in the international sphere, neoliberalism promotes the free maneuvering of goods, services and capital across national boundaries. That is, corporations, banks, and individual investors or multinational companies should be free to move and acquire their property across national boundaries. He explains, in many of the countries, the US is dictating neoliberal policies, either with direct pressure or with the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

Kotz ideas regarding neoliberalism as a policy especially concerning its effects in the international sphere are very significant for my research. My topic also deals with the movement of ideas and style of writing in literature going across national boundaries.

This section presents a review of literature discussing the economic aspect of globalization. It shows the economic policies of countries to be a major force bringing globalization. It also shows how the financial aspect of globalization is related to its cultural aspect.

2.2.6 Cultural Aspect of Globalization

With the flow of people, objects and information, the culture of different nations is transmitted globally. Though political, economic and cultural flows are linked to each other and one cannot be ignored while discussing the other, as my research deals with cultural analysis majorly, therefore it is important to include literature written separately on culture. Thus, this section shares works of theorists writing about culture in the age of globalization.

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, in his article "Globalis[z]ation and Culture: Three Paradigms" (1996) gives three categories of cultural globalization. These include "differentialism,..convergence,..[and] hybridization"(Pieterse 1389). He writes that though the world is getting interconnected, at the same time conflicting conceptions of cultural differences are originating. He defines cultural differentialism as when cultures retain their particular qualities largely despite globalizatation.

Convergence and hybridity are two other categories of cultures described by Pieterse. They are interrelated and one leads to another. Both convergence and hybridity are opposite to the perspective of cultural differentiation and they both subvert nationalism. He claims, from this perspective, the barriers among nations are getting weak. There is a free flow of people with migration or exiles and an exchange of information with technology. Culture from various parts of the world flows strongly and blends with the local culture, creating a new culture, which is a combination of both cultures. Hybridity especially represents a postmodern trend of blending. Thus, at present the cultures are becoming similar to each other, adopting characteristics from each other. Many theorists have discussed this homogeneity of culture in their works.

All three concepts of culture differentialism, convergence, and hybridity discussed by Pieterse are very basic to my dissertation as I am analyzing all three of them in my research project using the selected texts of literature.

Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1997), is a seminal work on cultural differentialism. He gave predictions about the post-cold war period. With the change of power dynamics after the end of the cold war; from "bipolar" (Huttington 21) to a "multipolar" (Huttington 20) world, there is an imbalance of power and a transformation of the social situation of the world. After the end of the cold war, culture became very much significant. Thus, the next war according to him would not be due to ideological differences as it was in the past, but it will be due to cultural conflicts among different civilizations.

He gives an inventory of eight civilizations which are different from each other on the bases of their values, customs, philosophical beliefs and religion. Moreover, a civilization may comprise many nation-states. He explains earlier civilizations had limited contact with each other. Later when they developed contact due to the development of technology, especially in the era between 1500 to World War II the Western Civilization united and dominated the world as a single civilization. Moreover, after the war till 1990, the clashes were based on religions and cultures. Huntington foresees the complete decline of western civilization and the rise of Asian societies, with the ascending economy of China and the increase in population rate among Muslims. He looks at this scenario with disdain and shows the insecure future of Western civilization because he believes Muslims are

inclined towards “violence”(Huttington 217) and they glorify it, they will spread bloodshed once in power. He is criticized by Muslims on this ground.

He is against multiculturalism and wants the West to come out as a western civilization instead of multi civilization. Because he believes that even under globalization civilizations will not be able to amalgamate completely into one another, due to cultural differentialism. Thus, they will move parallel to each other keeping their particular cultures intact.

Clash of Civilizations is an important work to provide insight into differences in culture. But I do not agree with the declining influence of Western culture. It is still highly influencing and not only in terms of culture but also beyond it such as literature, which I am trying to address in my research.

Rabindranath Tagore in his collection of essays shares his views regarding nationalism, which are compiled in a book titled *Nationalism* (1918, 2012). He observes the quest for decolonization usually ends in a nation-state which is universally believed to be the aim of freedom of the colonized world. Though Tagore was involved in the politics of anti-colonialism and was a proponent of nationalism initially, he soon came out of the disillusion of it. He was against this general consensus, and strongly criticized the idea of a nation-state, considering it to be a great menace, which is the cause of India’s trouble. He defined a nation as a perspective in which the “whole nation” (Tagore 9) believes in, for a special purpose. Considering nation and nation-state as a single concept, in his view, the word nation does not only deal with a sense of community or brotherhood, but it also refers to the power structure of a state, which the community seeks to attain for itself. Thus, for him, nation means community, economic, and political structure of a state.

Furthermore, the political and economic structure of a nation-state is seen as inherently linked to the capitalist mode of economy. He criticizes it because he believes; nation-state is organized for this mechanical purpose to serve the economic interest of the colonizers. This process affects human beings, influencing their natural human emotions by substituting greed and jealousy, instead of altruism and self-sacrifice etc.

Tagore’s essay gives an insight into nationalism in a postcolonial state with respect to the economic aspect mainly. Therefore, his work is quite importantly related to my research project. He wants to attain the freedom of mind that a country can achieve by

disconnecting from colonizers, becoming independent, and refusing to serve the colonizer's economic interests. In my analysis, I am trying to critique the literature which is being produced by national authors and I am also trying to consider the economic beneficiaries of these writings.

Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* (2004) also criticized the concept of nation-state. Compared to Tagore, his economic criticism is more pronounced. He observes the process of colonization was guided by the requirement of the industrial revolution. The African colonies were used as sites of raw materials to feed the industries in the colonial mother country. Colonizers used the periphery as a source of procuring raw materials for themselves. Fanon believes this form of exploitation does not stop even after the birth of an independent nation-state. In this regard, he criticizes the role of the middle class.

Though the middle class plays a significant role in the anti-colonial movement, it ceases to be revolutionary, soon after the independence of the country. Rather, than heading towards economic independence by reorganizing the means of production of the country, they act like the agents of colonizers, after their departure, by providing them with the raw material. They individually get benefitted by being the middlemen for channelizing the economic exploitation, rather than ending the dependency on colonizers. Thus, the middle class fails to provide a truly independent national economy.

Fanon believes in the strong role the middle class can play after the departure of colonizers to improve the economy of the country. His work is relevant to my project; because my position in the research project is similar to his position regarding the role of the middle class, as, through the texts under study, I am analyzing the role being played by the middle class in the literary landscape.

Homi K. Bhabha in *Location of Culture* (1994) discusses the concept of hybrid culture in the age of globalization. He introduces the notion of “beyond”, where he argues that in our era of the postmodern globalized world, we tend to locate the questions of culture in the sphere of the beyond. “The realm of the beyond” (Bhabha 1) for him is a space that is neither the leaving behind of the past, nor is it a new horizon. Thus, beyond for Bhabha resides somewhere on the borderlines of the present where we do not have a proper name for present, other than a “controversial..prefix ‘post’” (Bhabha 1) as in postcolonialism, postmodernism, and postfeminsim etc. Further, explaining his concept he attaches a sense of disturbance and disorientation of direction, “here and there,..back and forth” (Bhabha 1),

and also ambiguity of orientation. He explains we are in a situation of transit where time and space intersect to create “figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha 1).

It is amidst these uncertainties of the beyond that Bhabha identifies a change in the meaning and the way people associate with culture, and thereby the regeneration of identity, in the postmodern era. To him these in-between spaces or “interstices” (Bhabha 2) provided by the beyond give cultivating grounds, for developing new strategies of selfhood, individual or communal, creating new understandings of identity and the basis of the idea of society. The intersection of different cultures, overlapping of varied domains, and exposure to alternative ways produce a new set of cultural values and along with it different associations of “nationness”(Bhabha 2). Therefore, as we move away from the singularities of how we define the conceptions of gender, class, and race due to the blurring of different boundaries and the disorientation of time and space in the modern world, we tend to attach new meanings to preconceptions of self, nationness, community, and culture.

According to Bhabha the illustration of the distinction between cultures should not be hurriedly considered as an expression of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set within the mounted pill of tradition. From the perspective of the minority, the social articulation of distinction may be a complicated, continuous negotiation that tries to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The position that tradition presents is a partial type of identification. In restaging the past, it introduces alternative, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This method thus distances direct access to the original identity or a received tradition. The borderline meetings of cultural distinction may be by consensus or conflictual. Thus, they confuse our definitions of tradition and modernity; adjust the usual boundaries between the personal and the public, low and high. They defy normative prospects of development and progress. Social variations do not seem to be merely given to represent already authenticated genuine cultural traditions, rather they are the signs of the surfacing of community envisaged as a project, which is both a vision and a construction at the same time, which takes one ‘beyond’ oneself in order to come back, as an example Bhabha refers to Frantz Fanon’s perception of his identity and where he belongs. He felt the desire to be recognized instead of negating his own identity. He also craved for recognition, the need for “somewhere else and for something else” (qtd. In Bhabha 9) that takes the expertise of history beyond the instrumental hypothesis. The space of intervention between the

crossroads of intersecting cultures provides fertile ground for creative invention. And it is this uncertain and moving space between resettlements of immigrant communities, the constant travel and new ideals of borders that generate new debates around the conception of identity and self.

He considers culture as a fluid entity, which is perpetually transforming and thus cannot be fixed in time and space. Giving an example of Serbia, he argues, nationalism can be kept untainted only by effacing the links of history and the culturally dependent borderlines of modern nationhood. Therefore, uncontaminated culture or “pure” (Bhabha 7) culture is a myth, because it is dynamic and ever-changing. His ideas crumble the superior and inferior binary constructed by the West. Considering it true, it crumples the whole idea of the civilizing mission, which had the pretext of difference of culture. The civilizing mission had the aim of educating the subjugated crude native, to alleviate him to the same level of civilization as the colonizer.

The blurring of the boundaries which Bhabha discusses using the concept of hybridity and beyond is present in literature as well. This is the point I am trying to drive home in my research. Moreover, I am trying to show that culture, despite being fluid, shows its dominance through one over another.

Salman Rushdie, in his collection of essays called *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) ruminates on his existence, being a minority in India and as an immigrant in the United States. Like Bhabha, he also refers to the concept of time, though he discusses it with reference to a specific period in history. According to him, the upheavals of 1989 and 1990 changed everything, resulting in an entirely transformed international scene; with new uncertainties, possibilities, and dangers. Further, elaborating on the notion of this uncertainty he argues that his present seems foreign to him while the past seems to be home. But he is not at home even with his past, when he actually visits a place present in a photograph he took in the past. Thus, the past which he considered home, “is a lost home” (Rushdie 9), which is created by the immigrants and exiles, etc through their imagination, which he terms “Imaginary Homelands”(Rushdie 9). With his imagery, Rushdie creates a sense of deprivation and disconnects from his own past and simultaneously informs us of the fact that Bhabha’s ‘beyond’ is not a place that can be avoided.

It is this beyond that Rushdie wishes to escape. He wishes “to unlock the gates of lost time so that the past reappears as it actually had been, unaffected by the distortions of

memory” (Rushdie 10). However, in postmodern times avoiding such coalitions, intersections, and crossroads of cultural upheavals is not possible. He claims the condition of exile is increasingly becoming common, due to changing world conditions, and even if people are not spatially displaced, they are definitely temporally displaced, from the glorious national past, which they might want to move back to, but this wish never gets fulfilled, making them lost eternally.

Rushdie’s work is important for my research project because his concept of a lost home and the lack of complete association with a home or an identity created as a result of it, is what is akin to my position in the dissertation. I am considering this aspect in my study, especially with regard to the Pakistani novelists and their characters in the novels under study.

Appadurai in his essay, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” (2010), discusses five different ways of global cultural flows. These include (a) “ethnoscapes”; which comprise people who are on the move like tourists and refugees (b) “mediascapes”; electronic production and transmission of information around the world (c) “technoscapes”; spread of information through technology (d) “finanscapes”; currency exchange and transfer of a huge amount of capital and (e) “ideoscapes”(Appadurai 6); flow of images which are political in nature. These scapes he believes are disjunctive, unpredictable, and fluid in nature which makes his position shift from the traditional Marxist approach towards culture, which gives entire importance to finanscape. In his view, these scapes are the building units of “Imagined worlds” (Appadurai 7) which are formed by the “historically situated imaginations”(Appadurai 7) of a group of people, scattered around the world. Thus, a very significant fact of today’s world is that a lot of people in the world live in such imagined and unreal worlds.

Appadurai believes there is a tension between homogenization and heterogenization in the present global world. He asserts that there is no single model of cultural domination, and disregards “center-periphery models”(Appadurai 6) which he believes are not applicable now because of the movement and intermixing of cultures. Thus, he overthrows the previous notions of pure capitalism because the five scapes of global cultural flow are creating “disorganized capitalism”(Appadurai 6) and in this way, global flows characterize cultures and their relationships, not autonomous nations. These diasporic cultural products

need to be studied profoundly to understand the global economy because the cultural economy at present is multifaceted, disjunctive, and overlapping.

Appadurai believes, the global cultural flow in the form of scapes work independently and are sometimes in conflict with one another therefore they spread heterogeneous culture more than a homogeneous one. Appadurai's work gives an important insight into the spread of culture through scapes therefore it cannot be ignored while doing a cultural analysis that I am doing in my project. Yet, his belief in the road towards heterogeneous culture is what I am critically analyzing in my project.

Roland Robertson in his essay "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity" considers the concept of glocalization. He believes that it is a misunderstanding that cultures in globalized worlds are reduced to single culture because the local cultures get absorbed by a dominant global culture and create a new culture. Globalization is not against local rather local is an aspect of globalization as it "involves the linking of localities" (Robertson 35). In his view, culture in a globalized world is an integration of the global and the local which he terms glocal, results in heterogeneous cultures or multiculturalism.

His primary motive behind giving a new term is that the global and the local cultures are not conflicting forces as the term globalization might suggest but, in his view, they work mutually. Therefore, he believes glocal is an appropriate term to be used instead of global. He borrowed the term from the Japanese business world which is used for the process of adopting international products to satisfy the needs of the local market. Thus, in the process of glocalization products are adapted to cater for the local needs and tastes.

I have used the term glocal in the title of my dissertation as I am analyzing the global trends followed locally in literature, especially with regard to the genre of chick literature. However, I do not completely agree with Robertson's views regarding glocalization as giving birth to new cultures, as, the literary cultures being portrayed by Pakistani novelists are not new but they show the influence of Western culture.

George Ritzer in "McDonalization of society into the Digital Age" (380), explains the homogeneity of culture in a globalized world clearly. The expression "McDonalization" explains the spread and penetration of American culture all over the world in the 1960s, with the influx of multinational corporations. It is becoming a synonym for universalism

as used in the past. Ritzer describes it as a "process whereby the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world" (380). With the help of the metaphor of McDonald's, Ritzer explains the homogeneous culture which the international food chains are creating.

I am trying to analyze the depiction of culture in the selected texts. Therefore, Ritzer's work is significant for background study as his point of view is very significant to study the characteristics of homogeneous cultures.

This section shows different aspects of cultural globalization. It presents discussions of theorists of different schools of thought which include both theorists supporting the idea of cultural differentialism and cultural convergence, and the reasons behind the promotion of these ideas.

2.2.7 Review of Literature on Primary Texts

This section presents a review of the literature available on all four of my primary texts, in order to contextualize my work.

Whelehen in her book *The Feminist Bestseller* (2005) analyzes the genre of chick literature and considers *Bridget Jones's Diary* as a significant book of the genre. Therefore, besides other books, she discusses the novel. She believes the novel became successful because of its loving tribute to Jane Austen during the time when the television and film adaptations of Austen's works were being paid great attention. Fielding utilized the "tried and tested plot" (Whelehen 181) of *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen for her work.

She shows that Bridget tries to make sense of romantic relationships and looks for rules that govern these relationships. However, she dismisses all the rules when true love comes to her life. This proves that true love comes to the life of every individual in a different way subverting the ideas of true love given in "classical romance" (Whelehen 179). However, I argue that the *BJD* does not offer a radically different ending than classical romance.

Muntadher Ali Mohammed in his article "The Allusion of Women's Emancipation in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*", through the character of Bridget Jones points out the limited "choices" (Mohammed 15) women have in society, due to social pressure. He shows how unprogressive and restricting practices of a society are endorsed on the

pretext of “normality”(Mohammed 15). Mohammed appreciates Fielding for crafting a character like Bridget who is empowered enough to struggle against society’s set patterns for women, discover herself, and marry upon her own terms. However, in my research project, I question some aspects of this empowerment with reference to the character of Bridget.

Harpreet Kaur in her article titled “Obsessions with the Myth of Beauty in Chick Lit: A Study of Bridget Jones’s Diary” (2019) analyzes the obsession with beauty in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. With the help of the text, the researcher shows the social pressure that women have to go through to achieve targeted standards of beauty. Kaur uses Naomi Woolf’s idea of the beauty myth to discuss this idea in her paper. The paper highlights how Bridget suffers from self-esteem issues due to a lack of confidence in her appearance. Bridget goes through anxiety and makes a concerted effort to improve her looks. The researcher with the help of a number of examples of textual references shows the expectations placed on women regarding beauty. She also shows that the beauty rituals followed by Bridget to attain beauty are absurd. Kaur appreciates Bridget for standing up against the beauty standards eventually and not letting her appearance affect her relationships and career. In my research project, I also analyze the pressure women have to go through due to the standards of beauty, however I do not fully agree with the portrayal of Bridget standing up against the demands of society the way she does at times.

Hannah Engler in her dissertation titled “Poptimist Feminism: Contemporary Women Reading Bridget Jones’s Diary” (2017) analyzes the relationship between the female readership of chick lit novels in general and *Bridget Jones’s Diary* in particular. She explains that this novel is the most misunderstood novel among other novels. Critics criticize the novel for its frivolous content. As a result, not only the novel is considered shallow but the readers of the novel, that are mainly females, are also considered shallow.

The researcher asserts that *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is a “social critique, with cutting observations about dating, femininity, feminism, diet culture, ageing, and marriage” (Engler 47.) The writer celebrates women’s flaws and foregrounds their perspectives on their relationships and careers. Therefore, while underscoring a list of significant aspects of a woman’s life the novel cannot be frivolous. The researcher claims that the critics fail to look at the ironical tone of the writer.

With the help of interviews from female readers, the researcher backs her argument that the female readers are able to “relate” with the character of Bridget but they do not “identify” as Bridget, cognizant of the ironic tone of the novel (48-49). However, in my research project, I argue the novel is a satire but the satire in the novel is depreciating women.

Most of the novels of Sophie Kinsella have similar themes and mostly the protagonists of these novels have similar characteristics. Yingru Lu in her article “Shopping and Female Identity in *Confessions of a Shopaholic* and *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan*” studies two novels of Kinsella, from the perspective of consumerism. She believes Kinsella through these novels is celebrating the fact that the modern woman is able to construct her female identity, unlike a woman in the past. She gives credit to shopping for helping her construct this identity. She points out that shopping is fulfilling the world of a woman making it “Adamless”(Lu 145) but a happy world, where she can unburden herself from her everyday anxieties by doing shopping as therapy. Shopping in her view is not only giving relief to the protagonist, Rebecca Bloomwood, but it is also contributing to exploring and realizing her financial power and “her female self”(Lu 150).

Danielle Todd, while giving the analysis of the film adaptation of Kinsella’s novel *Confessions of a Shopaholic* asserts that this work is different from all other chick literature because here the problem of protagonist is neither a man nor weight control or a drinking habit, but shopping. However, he criticizes the fact that the ending of the film adaptation is different from the novel as the protagonist in the novel, to deal with her financial troubles stands up for herself, whereas in the film version, the protagonist depends upon her lover to help her deal with her shopping “addiction” (Todd 57).

Faiza Virani in an article in *Dawn* newspaper describes the novel as a story of a young woman who besides managing the demanding job of a journalist is looking for a suitable man for dating. The fast-paced narrative gives a slice of life exploring the inner life of Karachi for a common man referring to different idiosyncrasies inherent in life in Karachi and the reader travels along “with the protagonist through the underbelly of Karachi”(Virani). She especially praises the newspaper headlines present at the beginning of every chapter of the novel and describes each of them to be “more laughable than the other”(Virani).

Khamsa Qasim in her article titled “It’s Karachi, Its, Where Life and Love Come to Die Representing Gender, Space and Identity in Karachi You are Killing Me” (2022) studies the relationship between urban spaces and female bodies. Through this work, she shows how a woman as a “spectator and spectacle” perceives and creates her identity within patriarchal urban spaces. For this, she uses Elizabeth Grosz’s concept of bodies and cities where Grosz considers the opposition between the inside that is the body and the outside that is a city while promoting the idea of looking outside with the assistance of inner eyes.

Qasim analyzes the spatial politics in the text with the representation of Karachi through the gaze of a female central character, Ayesha. Imtiaz’s feminist gaze on Karachi reveals the crude realities of the city and exposes its pretentiousness, its shallow moral standards and patriarchal culture. She also highlights a kind of harassment that only a female journalist has to face in the city. She mentions the violence practised in the city which seems to be so prevalent in the city; that it seems that the people have learned to adjust to it and it has become an everyday part of their lives. In this way, she shows how the city-body relationship is mutually co-defining. In my research, I am somewhat skeptical about her angle of looking at the description of the city and women.

Imrana Khawaja in a review of *Beautiful from this Angle* describes the novel as a satire on different sections of Pakistani society, including the elite, “media wannabees, drug barons and feudal landlord-politicians”(Khwaja). The humour in the novel originates from Western perceptions of Pakistan. In this regard, she criticizes the media’s obsession with the depiction of the country in relation to terrorism and Pakistani women as oppressed. The author of the article appreciates the fact that the novel has been published in France as well as by Penguin India.

Both *KYKM* and *BFTA* have been analyzed together in an article titled “Islamic Postfeminism and Muslim Chick-Lit: Coexistence of Conflicting Discourses” (2017) by Muhammad Abdullah and Safeer Awan. The researchers are celebrating the portrayal of Pakistani women in these novels asserting that these novels are challenging the stereotypes of “Asian-Islamic-femaleness through unconventional, yet realistic” depiction of contemporary Pakistani females (93). They assert that there is a transformation in Pakistani society from segregated spaces for men and women to more blended public spaces in contemporary times. Compared to the past, men and women interact more freely in society

due to co-education etc. The researchers notice “sex and relationships outside marriage as an important theme” in the texts under discussion (96). Thus, these novels are presenting a closer depiction of the contemporary Pakistani women while challenging the “planted perceptions” of the West regarding “Muslim women” (102).

The researchers are celebrating the diversity being brought in the genre of chick lit by the non-western traditions particularly being written by Pakistani authors as these texts are adding a new tinge to this literature. They believe that by including “local sensibilities and religio-cultural experiences” Imtiaz and Philips are diversifying chick lit tradition and enriching it.

I discuss both *KYKM* and *BFTA* in the fifth chapter of this dissertation. While the researchers are celebrating the depiction of a contemporary Pakistani modern woman and provide substantial evidence for their arguments, I am critically analyzing this representation. I examine the aspects of influence of the West in this particular form of representation of women in these texts.

As some of my primary texts are relatively new, not much material for review could be procured on them, especially on the Pakistani texts. However, the above review of the literature available on my primary texts helps me to form the context of my analysis.

2.3 Conclusion

Not a lot of work has been extensively done from my vantage point; as my niche in this research is a *mélange* of consumerism, postfeminism, and globalization. Studying these topics in combination where they are intersecting each other in general, and in literature in particular through the selected texts, is what makes my dissertation unique. My research from this intersectional perspective will also add a new dimension to the reading of these primary texts. My analysis chapters plug this gap, to a considerable extent. Though there might be important works in the fields of consumerism, postfeminism, and globalization that I have not included in my literature review, the sources I have discussed contextualize my research project as they present major debates in the existing scholarship concerned with consumerism, postfeminism and glocalism. This review of literature has given me clarity for methodology and theoretical lens. Therefore, now I am in a position to select a suitable theoretical lens for my analysis.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The Literature Review discussed in the previous chapter provides me with a lucid vision of what theoretical perspectives may be adapted to study my primary texts. I can also identify the framework, research methodology, and methods suitable for this investigation. As the gaps in the area of study, I am exploring in my research are already identified in the literature review, therefore in this chapter, I intend to discuss in detail the theoretical framework that I am using to analyze the selected chick lit texts. Moreover, this chapter also presents a detailed discussion of the research methodology and methods I am utilizing for this study. Thus, this chapter is divided into three main sections with their sub-sections as given below:

- Theoretical Framework
 - Gill’s conception of Postfeminism
 - Jameson’s critique of Postmodern literature
 - Robertson and Dirlik’s views about Glocalism
- Research Methodology
 - Textual analysis
- My Position as Researcher

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Research questions of the present study mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation are helping to analyze the selected works of Helen Fielding, Sophie Kinsella, Saba Imtiaz, and Maha Khan Philips from three different perspectives. Therefore, a multipronged lens is suitable for analysis in this project. This bricolage of the theoretical lens includes postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism. The lens is consolidated mainly using the works of Rosalind Gill, Fredric Jameson, Roland Robertson, and Arif Dirlik.

3.2.1 Gill's Conception of Postfeminism

Gill has written several works on the topic of postfeminism, analyzing it from different angles. Her article "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility" (2007), selected as one of the frameworks for this research project, studies the representation of women in different forms of media, including literature. She considers postfeminism to be responsible for a new form of representation of women in media than in the past. She defines postfeminism as a unique "sensibility made up of interrelated themes" (Gill 147). Though postfeminism is a contested term because it is aporetic in nature, using various contradictory senses combining "feminist and anti-feminist themes within" (Gill 149) it, there are a few signifying characteristics and interrelated themes associated with postfeminism which are central to the postfeminist sensibility that are discussed shortly.

Gill asserts that postfeminist media culture is obsessed with "women's bodies" (149). Unlike the representational practices of the past femininity in the postfeminist media culture is "defined as a bodily property rather than social structural or psychological one" (Gill 149). Therefore, there is a profound focus on a woman's body, and owning "a sexy body is presented as her key source of identity" (Gill 149).

The focus on woman's bodies in all forms of media at present indicates the "sexualization of contemporary culture" (Gill 150) which is evident through the "propagation of discourses about sex and sexuality... [with] frequent erotic presentation of girls' [and] women's [bodies]" (Gill 150) in media. These media discourses are "blurring the boundaries between pornography and other genres" (Gill 150) by including salacious content in mainstream literature. Moreover, in the past, women were sexualized with their representation as passive beings but presently, women are not directly objectified, rather, they are portrayed as active subjects who prefer to present themselves in an "objectified manner because it suits their liberated interests" (Gill 151). Sexualization of culture is also done through magazines designed especially for young women. In these magazines a woman's body is described as "something requiring constant attention, self-surveillance and discipline" (Gill 151). Thus, with a huge focus on a woman's body in the media, women in society are being put under pressure to subscribe to these standards.

It is interesting to note that in mainstream media "there is a shift from an external, male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze" among women, which Gill considers as a form of exploitation much more profound "than objectification"(152), because the objectification, in this case, is internalized by women. This leads to the representation of

women as figures “closely resembling the heterosexual male fantasy that is found in pornography” (Gill 152). They practice beauty regimes and subscribe to beauty standards in the name of “being oneself,” and “pleasing oneself” showing their “empowerment,” “personal choice,” and “self-determination”. They are portrayed as “autonomous agents”; however, the ones who subscribe to this ostensible projection, tend to ignore “how socially constructed, mass-mediated ideals of beauty are [being] internalized” (Gill 153) by women.

As mentioned above, besides emphasis upon personal choice, self-surveillance and self-discipline are given a lot of importance in postfeminist media discourses. Though women had been instructed in the past as well to emulate ways to appear feminine, now there is an increased “intensity of self-surveillance” and “extensiveness of surveillance over entirely new spheres of life” (Gill 155) is being practised. There is an increased emphasis on the necessity to transform oneself and remodel one’s interior life termed as “the makeover paradigm.” It encourages women to believe that their life is flawed in a certain way, but the problem can be addressed “by following the advice of relationship, design or lifestyle experts” (Gill 156).

Another important characteristic of Postfeminist discourses is the revival of believing in “natural sexual difference” (Gill 158). Besides media discourses, the idea is also backed by psychology books which reiterate the notion that “men and women are fundamentally different” (Gill 158). People are made to believe that the difference between men and women is not only physical but psychological as well and thus through these discourses male privilege is propagated. In this regard, Gill points out John Gray’s work *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus* (1992) which became an important text of the postfeminist discourses. However, in Gill’s view the problem with these discourses is, that they “freeze in place existing inequalities by representing them as inevitable” (Gill 150) difference between men and women.

Surprisingly, feminist ideas are very much part of the postfeminist discourses and they form “part of the cultural field,” rape issues, domestic violence, increasing beauty pressures on women etc. as discussed and promoted in the media. However, Gill finds a contradiction in these discourses. Feminist ideas are at the same time incorporated and attacked in these discourses. Thus, there is an “entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas” (Gill 161) in postfeminist discourses. In this way, postfeminist ideas vary from “both prefeminist constructions of gender or feminist ones” (Gill 163). As she writes:

On the one hand, young women are hailed through a discourse of 'can-do' girl power, yet on the other, their bodies are powerfully re-inscribed as sexual objects;

on the one hand, women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, yet on the other, they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile [self] surveillance that has no historical precedent. (Gill 163)

Thus, according to Gill the feminist and anti-feminist ideas are convoluted by postfeminists because they do not take clear positions regarding their stance.

Considering the postfeminist sensibility, Gill figures out, that in the postfeminist discourses “there is a striking degree of fit between the autonomous postfeminist subject and the psychological subject demanded by neoliberalism” as the notions of postfeminist sensibility are “also central to neoliberalism” (Gill 163). Both postfeminism and neoliberalism are working hand in hand because they “both appear to be structured by a current of individualism” (Gill 164). Moreover, “the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism” (Gill 164). Thus, Gill believes postfeminism and neoliberalism are controlling different forms of media as they both have the same agenda.

I am using Gill as a theorist to analyze selected primary texts for this study, which include both Western and Eastern texts. The ideology of postfeminism, in the Western context, is quite established because of clearly defined and widely discussed waves of feminist movements. Though there is no clear history of feminism and its waves in Pakistan, I am using Gill to analyze my Pakistani texts also, as, like the West, it is seen that the characteristics of postfeminism seem to be increasingly practised in Pakistan’s current glocal culture as well.

3.2.2 Jameson’s Critique of Postmodern Literature

Gill points out characteristics of postfeminism and various ways in which the presence of consumerism is found in postfeminist discourses. I, therefore, want to analyze the presence of different aspects of consumerism present in my primary texts, and overall, in the whole genre of chick literature. Frederick Jameson’s critique of postmodern literature for its links with consumerism complements Gill’s ideas and other theoretical perspectives used in this research project. For this purpose, Jameson’s ideas are used as a secondary lens in the framework. I am discussing some selected theoretical aspects of Jameson which constitute a secondary lens of inquiry for this project.

In his essay “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” (1998) Jameson discusses the influence of consumerism on literature and considers postmodernism responsible for linking consumerism and literature. After World War II in the 1940s, a set of new societal

traits started emerging in the United States called as “modernization, post-industrial or consumer society, the society of media or the spectacle or multinational capitalism” (Jameson 3). He asserts that “postmodernism expresses the inner truth of that newly emergent social order of late capitalism” (Jameson 3). He believes that an important feature of

postmodernism is the effacement of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture. This is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch. (2)

This set of ideas that there is no distinction between good literature and bad literature emerged to serve a particular stage of the history of capitalism. Thus, blurring the boundary between low and high culture, made “low-brow commercial culture” (Jameson 3) stand equal in value to other cultural products. Many of the postmodernist writers influenced by postindustrial trends are fascinated by the advertisement landscape and they incorporate this culture in their writings to a point “where the line between high art and commercial form seems difficult to draw” (Jameson 2). Thus, Postmodernism is not just another word for the description of a particular style but an ideology which became prevalent in postindustrial society.

Jameson is of the opinion that “the great modern writers have all been defined by the invention or production of rather unique styles” (4). The individuality and unique styles of creativity which emerged with capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie social class ended with corporate capitalism and organizations. Thus, individuality which was an important feature of modernism was replaced by the “end of individualism” (Jameson 2) in postmodern times. Keeping this fact in mind that modern writers wrote in unique and personal styles whereas there is an end to this individuality in postmodern times, Jameson asks a rhetorical question from the readers if there are no personal and unique styles followed in writing at present, then what are the new writers writing. His answer is, that writers and artists are no longer able to invent new styles because they have “already been invented; [and] only a limited number of combinations [of these styles] are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already” (Jameson 7). The style of writing then left for these writers to follow is “pastiche” or imitation of “dead styles” (Jameson 7). He criticizes the practice of pastiche because it lacks creativity and is only an imitation of

writing but unlike parody, it is without satirical impulse. Moreover, Jameson asserts that “radical breaks among different periods generally do not involve a complete change of content but rather the restructuring of a certain number of elements already given” (Jameson 18). Thus, the features which were secondary, minor, or marginal in modernist art in the past are central in postmodern art, and so, we have new forms of art with new forms of cultural production (Jameson 18). Jameson could sense the lack of originality and innovative ideas in postmodern art and highly criticized it.

Interestingly the response to modern art and postmodern art given by the general society is vastly different. For Jameson, there is a relationship between cultural production and social life. Classical or modern art was an oppositional art as many features of it were offensive to the middle class for being unconventional and sexually shocking. They were not acceptable to Victorian moral taboos. He believes that “whatever the explicit political content of the great high modernisms, the latter was always in some mostly implicit ways dangerous and explosive, subversive within the established order” (Jameson 18) though, at present, the works of such writers of the modern era like Woolf and Joyce etc. are considered classics. However, neither the form nor the content of contemporary art is considered repulsive by contemporary society. As he observes that “even the most offensive forms of this art ... what is called as sexually explicit - are all taken in stride by the society and they are commercially successful, unlike the productions of older high modernism (Jameson 19).

Jameson is of the opinion here that there is a shift within the culture which no longer considers modern art repulsive and there is hardly any counter-narrative levelled against such a form of art. The reason he states for bringing this change in culture is that “they are now part of the so-called canon and are taught in schools and universities- which at once empties them of any of their older subversive power” (Jameson 19). Thus, this is a tactic to make new literature part of the academy from where it becomes acceptable to the new generation and society does not resist such literature.

Jameson finds links between capitalism and the production of literature and its acceptance in society. As my subject of research is also literature, therefore his work, a critique of consumerism, is important to incorporate into the theoretical framework.

3.2.3 Robertson and Dirlik's Views of Glocalism

While Gill and Jameson's ideas are used in this framework to analyze postfeminist features and consumerism in the primary texts, Roland Robertson and Dirlik's ideas are employed to analyze glocal elements of the primary texts.

Roland Robertson in his article "Globalisation or Glocalisation" prefers the use of the term "glocalization" instead of "globalization". He asserts that globalization is generally understood as a "cultural homogenization...[or] as a process involving the increasing domination of one societal or regional culture over all others" (33). He is of the view that the homogenization of cultures under globalization is a misunderstanding. He does not agree with the prevalent perception of the globalized world as a single culture with the assumption that the local cultures get absorbed by a dominant global culture, giving a perception that globalization is against local cultures. He believes globalization is not against local cultures rather local is an aspect of globalization as it "involves the linking of localities" (Robertson 35). In his view, culture in a globalized world is an integration of the global and the local. Therefore, he prefers the use of the term glocal, which in his view is more apt a depiction of the local realities with global elements. Under this definition global and local are not in conflict with each other rather they move mutually and "what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global" (Robertson 35).

The other theorist that my work engages with is Arif Dirlik. As two of my selected primary texts for analysis are of Pakistani origin, therefore, to cater to the aspect of consumerism in these texts, I require an additional theoretical lens besides a couple of lenses mentioned above. As already mentioned in Chapter One, I am borrowing the term, glocal, from Roland Robertson, as Dirlik does not use it in his work. However, Dirlik's use of this concept in his book *Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (1997) addresses the concerns of the global and the local. He writes:

[T]he term local appears in considerations of the present and the future of the society globally. In this theorizing the local retains the concrete associations of the local community ... but more as a reference than as a specific description (or prescription); the meaning (the very scope) of the local is subject otherwise to negotiation in accordance with those considerations.(Dirlik 85)

Dirlik views the importance given to local in the global scenario suspiciously. He analyzes the links between the "emergence of a Global Capitalism and the emergence of concern with the local as a site of resistance and liberation"(85). For him, both, global capitalism and local concerns became prominent during the same time period, whereas, before this

localism had been “suppressed or, marginalized in various ideologies of modernity” (Dirlik 86). Thus, localism always existed ontologically but he questions the sudden importance given to localism.

Dirlik refers to Ella Shohat’s work, “Notes on Post-Colonial” (1992) and writes quoting her “[W]hen exactly ... does the “postcolonial begin?”. He then further quotes her answer to this question and writes “When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe” (Dirlik 52). He expands this argument by explaining that postcolonialism began because the writers from the third world write about hegemony, domination, and binaries illuminating the long-silenced stance of the periphery. The voices of the postcolonial writers helped to balance out the discourses between center and periphery and create a new relationship among the first, second, and third worlds based on globalism. However, this reason does not suffice for Dirlik. Just as Jameson finds a relationship between postmodernism and late capitalism, Dirlik finds a relationship between postcolonialism and “Global capitalism, flexible production, [or] Late capitalism.” He asserts capitalism has its influence on the relationships between different parts of the so-called globalized world just like it had been defining the relationships in the past especially “binarisms as colonizer/ colonized, First/Third Worlds, or the “West and the Rest” (Dirlik 53).

He believes the intelligentsia raising the issue of the postcolonial situation is influenced by global capitalism. Thus, he questions this intelligentsia which is supported by global capitalism that cannot “generate a thoroughgoing criticism of its own ideology and formulate practices of resistance against the system of which it is a product”(Dirlik 77).

He further considers the structure of the new global capitalism which features an “international division of labor” or “transnationatization of production” (Dirlik 90) where the process of production even of the same commodity is globalized which leads to “decentering of capitalism” (Dirlik 91). Decentering of capitalism makes it difficult to point out any nation as the center of global capitalism, but due to transnational corporations, organizations or individuals from different parts of the world form stronger links with each other. He says that transnational corporations have “taken over from national markets as the locus of economic activity; not just as a passive medium for the transmission of capital, commodities and production, but as a determinant of the transmission, and its direction”(91). As a result, of transnational corporation, no single nation can be held responsible for the production of global capitalism and capitalist mode of production

appears as a global notion, detached “from its historically specific origins in Europe”(Dirlik 92).

Dirlik further argues that “the apparent end of Eurocentrism is an illusion because capitalist culture as it has taken shape has Eurocentrism built into the very structure of its narrative.” This may explain that for Europe and the United States despite losing “their domination of the capitalist world economy, culturally European and American values retain their domination” (Dirlik 92). Consequently, even if non-European nations consider themselves part of global capitalism, Eurocentrism has its domination over them in one way or the other.

His discussion concludes with a remark on the definition of local which cannot be defined “too strictly... but the boundaries of the local need to be kept open (or porous) if the local is to serve as a critical concept” (Dirlik 102). As a result, in this way local is not originally local in its pure form but is influenced by global trends and thus local becomes an amalgamation of global and local. Considering this aspect of local he points out in “its promise of liberation, localism may also serve to disguise oppression and parochialism” (Dirlik 85). Dirlik, therefore, criticizes the attention being given to local, globally at present, and considers the capitalist motives behind its endorsement. He believes local in its impure form poses a threat to local communities.

To conclude this section, it may be seen that the three theories presented in this section have a common aspect of consumerism discussed in them, which is a unifying factor of the three theories. The added dimension which complements this theoretical bricolage is Roberson’s idea of glocalism. Thus, this bricoleur serves as the basic theoretical tenets used in this research. With this thorough discussion about the triple aspects of my research project i.e. postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism, which I am utilizing for analysis of the selected primary texts, I now move towards the discussion about research methods and methodology suitable for analyzing data.

3.3 Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. Jonathan Grix in his book *Foundations of Research* (2004) describes qualitative research as “concerned with interpreting subjective experiences” (32) favoring discursivity, interpretations, exploration and evasion of fixtures of meanings. This approach is more suitable for the nature of my research. Thus, I am using a qualitative method of investigation which particularly includes textual analysis.

3.4 Research Methods

Gabrielle Griffin's book titled *Research Methods for English Studies* (2005, 2013) is a significant contribution to the field of research. She asserts that using varied and novel research methods for qualitative research can reap an "impact on the research findings we generate" (G. Griffin 4). As my theoretical framework is multipronged, therefore, there is no closure, fixity, or finality and there would be multiple interpretations of the primary texts. To analyze primary texts textual analysis is used for inquiry which is explained below.

3.4.1 Textual Analysis

Accounting for the qualitative nature of my research, textual analysis is the most suitable method for the interpretation of texts. Textual analysis is said to be a "staple of English studies research" (12) by Griffin. In this regard, Griffin has included Catherine Belsey's essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" in her compiled book of methodologies.

Belsey, in her essay, is of the view that the researcher does not think in a void, but rather gives innovative original ideas in research. She perceives every study as assembling already known ideas in a way which is not been done before (Belsey 160). Likewise, my study gives a textual analysis of the selected texts using the lens of postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism and thus the study gives new and innovative interpretations of the selected primary texts. The links between postfeminism and consumerism have been explored by other writers and researchers, but my research is unique because it is combining not only postfeminism and consumerism but glocalism as well and thereby identifying new areas at their point of intersection in literature. Thus, the combination of these theories is exploring a new area in the theories as well as a new way of interpreting the selected texts.

The perspectives of postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism that I am employing to explore my primary texts are not a free association of ideas, but are an endorsement of Belsey's idea that text provides material for analysis and is involved "in the process of signification" (164). Text invokes intertexts from different genres and "research involves tracing these intertexts" (Belsey 164). In my study, I am making an attempt to trace hidden elements of consumerism in the primary texts.

Furthermore, Belsey emphasizes that the "ideas do not come first and cast around for means of expression, on the contrary ... expanded vocabulary permits us to think with greater clarity to make finer distinctions" (163). Thus, the knowledge provided by the secondary resources and the refined jargon of my theoretical frameworks develop my

critical eye and helps me locate, study, and express those ideas in the interpretation of the selected texts.

However, any particular interpretation of the text is not a closure, because I am looking at the texts at this specific time and according to my specific cultural standpoint. A text can have many interpretations because “any specific textual analysis is made at a particular historical moment and from within a specific culture” (Belsey 166) never lets text get exhausted of interpretations.

Social sciences are generally criticized considering “knowledge is socially constructed and provisional” (Sprague 32) and therefore, true knowledge cannot be attained. Sprague disagrees with the belief that knowledge cannot be attained and emphasizes that despite knowledge being socially constructed; it is attainable through epistemological standpoint theory (32). In standpoint epistemology “all knowledge is constructed in a specific matrix of physical location, history, culture...and that these matrices change in configuration from one location to another” (Sprague 41).

Thus, I am developing my understanding of the selected texts and giving a critique of them using several resources available, located at specific time and place. I, being a researcher, have a particular vantage point from which I am analyzing the selected texts. For this purpose, I am using different articles, books, interviews etc. to interpret my selected texts.

Moreover, Positivists usually level criticism against subjectivity in textual analysis. They consider subjectivity to be an obstacle to knowledge because they believe truth can only be reached if subjective interpretations are eliminated from research. However, As Joey Sprague in his book *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers* (2005) asserts, research cannot be entirely objective as even a positivist researcher begins “observations with the acceptance of background assumptions” (34). They are subjective assumptions, that a researcher receives from his culture, such as research to consider a difference in intellect between men and women studied through the size of the brain. In this case, the research is initiated on a cultural assumption that there is a difference in the intellectual level of men and women. Thus, my subjective knowledge based on evidence is as valuable as the knowledge given by positivist research.

3.4.4 My Position as a Researcher

To clarify my epistemological position for the study, I need to clarify my ontological position. Ontology is a group of “assumptions concerned with what we believe

constitutes social reality” (qtd in Grix 59). Thus, my ontological position in this research is anti-foundational, as anti-foundationalists believe that reality is socially and indirectly constructed by humans. Moreover, there are no fundamental values that can be rationally and universally grounded (Grix 61). I am taking an anti-foundational ontological position as I want to explore an episteme on the ontology of whether the independence of women in postfeminist culture is a socially constructed reality or a smoke screen.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, no knowledge can be universally grounded because, as Sprague writes, “all knowledge develops out of specific social context” and caters to political interests and becomes mainstream knowledge, which naturalizes the position of the privileged groups in society. Thus, to generate knowledge that is less “biased towards elite views...we need to ground each view of the social world in the standpoint from which it is created” (2). To make my research authentic and useful for the progressive social change, which it can bring, I am making an attempt to objectively give a subjective analysis without any closure or political inclination towards anything.

3.5. Conclusion

The selected theoretical framework assists me in analyzing the primary texts minutely to bring forth the relationship between postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism in these texts. The framework is consolidated using three theories where one theory segues to another as the common thread joining the three discussions is consumerism. On the other hand, the research methods complement the theoretical framework selected for this investigation. To analyze the texts, I am utilizing the textual analysis method which is informed by all the different aspects that the selected texts support (as will be seen in the next chapters). In order to produce an objective research product, the selected theoretical perspectives and methods assist me in data analysis in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Postfeminism, Consumerism, and Glocalism: A Textual Analysis of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the first two novels selected for this study and explores how Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*^{vi} are presenting postfeminist concerns. The chapter weighs the achievements of women in these novels and how they are in conflict with the aim, long journey, and struggle of feminists. The positions Fielding and Kinsella are taking as postfeminist women are also identified. In order to provide context, it would be helpful to restate the definition of postfeminism here, in the light of which this chapter is discussed. Gill explains that postfeminism is an amalgamation of "feminist and anti-feminist" (149) ideas. I am examining the entanglement of these ideas in the analysis and see how consumerism is utilizing women's aims of becoming feminine and feminist. Besides their engagement with consumerism in general, the consequences of following the consumerized versions of these notions are also discussed. Moreover, the discussion also underscores how the selected texts engage with consumerist concerns in general, and the impact of consumerism on the selected women's writings, in particular. The glocal nature of these texts is also analyzed.

To address these aspects, Gill's theorizing about postfeminism, Jameson's ideas about the fusion of literature and consumerism, and Roberson's idea of glocalism are used. The chapter is divided into different sections for the sake of clarity; however, a few ideas may overlap in these sections as the ideas are interconnected.

4.2 Analyzing the Portrayal of Modern Empowered Women

According to the long-established ideology of separate spheres, women for centuries had been restricted to their biological function by both traditions and laws. Women had imbibed the practice of sacrifice, obedience, and submissiveness to men in

society, while feminists raised their voices against these restrictions, under an organized movement or individually. This section of the analysis presents a discussion on women's achievements in the public sphere and their representation in the novels.

4.2.1 Analyzing women's achievements in the public sphere

Rosalind Gill asserts that postfeminist texts present an "epistemological break" (147) from the feminist ideas by reemphasizing natural sexual differences which existed in the past as promoted by patriarchy; namely the difference between men and women based on their mental inclinations and capabilities. This practice is visible in the novels under discussion as well as discussed below.

Patriarchy remained against women's education since antiquity as Rousseau in the eighteenth century stressed on the development of a male child and gave peripheral importance to a female child with the help of fictional characters Emile and Sophia. Rousseau's ideal female, Sophia dabbled in music, art, fiction, and domestic skills, while Emile's analytical skills were developed to prepare him for self-development in life. Rousseau endorsed this subjugated status of a woman because he believed that a "woman is made to please" (132) a man; hence her education must be designed to make a man's life comfortable as he has to transcend in life. However, even before the formal inauguration of the debate of feminism, proto-feminists such as Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century stands up against the education system which denies the "logical accomplishments" (Wollstonecraft 81) to women. She criticizes this type of education system because it focused only on domestic education for women and all other forms of knowledge were considered useless for them. She wants women to get equal opportunities for education as men in society and not remain restricted to domestic education only. Wollstonecraft stresses the development of rational abilities for women so that this form of education helps them gain knowledge and explore their "full human potential" (6).

However, the protagonists of both *BJD* and *SA* do not show any interest in excelling in education. Bridget and Becky represent twentieth and twenty-first-century women, respectively, who have the right to get an education, but they do not show any visible interest in gaining knowledge. For example, on the one hand, Luke, who is Becky's boyfriend, reads not only British newspapers but American newspapers as well (Kinsella 152) to be well-informed about the world through different sources. On the other hand, Becky is interested in reading only the horoscope section from all the newspapers except for Financial Times. She reads the Financial Times only because being a financial adviser,

it is the demand of her job to know about the current economic ups and downs. Similarly, Becky does not have knowledge about history or art, etc. nor does she have a taste to appreciate it. Therefore, she describes an art piece at a gallery as “some painted wooden thing” (Kinsella 70). This shows that Becky is uncultured and philistine, lacking taste and knowledge of art and history. Likewise, Bridget even lacks general knowledge about the world. She acts stupid and naive in a long discussion with her boyfriend Daniel, about the war between Bosnia and Serbia (Fielding 157-158). She does not even have the foggiest idea regarding their geographical location or the reasons for war. Thus, both the authors of the novels under discussion are reinforcing the age-old rubric of natural sexual differences between men and women, showing males have intellectual pursuits and females have frivolous pursuits in life.

The second-wave feminist such as Friedan considers the domestic sphere a “concentration camp” (329) for women because it denies an identity to a woman except for a wife and a mother. It confines women to their biological roles by curtailing their intellectual abilities. She believes a positive social change could be witnessed with women’s involvement in the public sphere (Friedan 11-12). Both Bridget and Becky have come out of the entrapment of the domestic spheres by being working women, but where the positive social change lies is questionable, as both of them do not have any intellectual achievement or any other accomplishment in life.

Becky gets a job in a TV show called “Morning Coffee” just by chance, as she says, she “just kind of fell into it” (Kinsella 173), without any effort or desire to do the job. She refuses to attend the Annual Conference of “Financiers” (Kinsella 179) and hence rejects career growth. She cannot even write a book on financial advice or go beyond five words for the book she is writing due to a lack of knowledge and interest in the field (Kinsella 25). Thus, she is not even good at it, like other jobs she is doing. Even at the end of the novel, when Becky’s situation forces her to go for a new job, she does not choose a job that requires her mental abilities but chooses a job of a “personal shopper” (Kinsella 342). The same is true for Bridget who is not happy with her job and her boss, but she is not even found looking for a new job, let alone making an effort for one. While her boyfriend is busy with productive activities to the extent that even on a holiday, he plans meetings (Fielding 51). Though Bridget and Becky have taken a few steps away from “pink collar jobs” (Denfeld 1) such as jobs of governesses and nurses, which were the only job options available for women in the past. Likewise, they, in the modern era, are still opting for limited options of jobs. Women at present are entering into the fields which they were

not allowed to enter before, but despite the available opportunities, Fielding and Kinsella are showing that women do not want to make full progress. These examples underscore that even when the women of these texts are free and independent, they are neither developing nor fully using their intellectual abilities. They are not productive in the public sphere. This reinforces the idea that women themselves want to be static and do not wish to develop their intellectual skills.

Woolf, in the early twentieth century, exhibited her faith in the matrilineal tradition and asserted that if the mothers in the past knew the art of minting money, their daughters would have landed in honorable professions and excelled in it as well, as women “think back through... mothers” (Woolf 83). But Kinsella is proving Woolf wrong as she shows that Becky, despite being a twenty-first-century woman and a daughter of a generation of working mothers, is still not excelling in her career. Becky realizes her “professional stagnation” (Kinsella 78) but is not doing any special effort to improve it. Details of her thoughts written in a diary do not show even once that career growth is important for her.

The female characters that Fielding and Kinsella are presenting are not interested in using their mental skills. They are neither interested in education nor in jobs despite being part of the public sphere. They are working women, but they are not interested in career growth. The jobs which they are doing, they are not really satisfied with them, yet they are not looking for new jobs which they can get using their mental capabilities. However, being in the public sphere, they are represented as empowered.

4.2.2 Objectification of empowered women and sexualization of culture

Gill criticizes the emphasis on the “sexualization of culture” (150) in contemporary media where women’s bodies are brought into focus and are objectified. Fielding and Kinsella, through their female protagonists, are also objectifying the bodies of women in different ways as discussed below. They are presenting women in the public sphere as modern women, but they do not refrain from objectifying them and giving them degrading portrayals.

In *BJD*, Bridget is often referred to by her boss as “breasts” (Fielding 65) which is a clear sign of objectification because it reduces a person “to a body part” (MacKinnon 176). Bridget is used by several men as an “instrument” (Nussbaum 257) to gratify their sexual desires and hence used as an object. For example, her neighbor tries to have a physical relationship with her just because he helps her clean her house after water flooded

her house (Fielding 110), and her boss also comes to her for sexual gratification when he wishes, taking her for granted.

Another prominent feminist theorist considers the denial of “subjectivity” (Nussbaum 257) to a person as an important characteristic of objectification as the feelings and opinions of such a person are ignored. Fielding ignores feelings of Bridget in an incident where, just before leaving Bridget, her boyfriend i.e. Daniel makes her admit that she misses him. He enjoys this moment and quickly takes a serious tone to announce that he is getting married to another lady (Fielding 185). Moreover, along with Bridget, other women in the novel are also objectified and denied subjectivity as both girlfriends of Daniel are deceived at the same time. However, their emotions are not expressed in the text. Fielding has totally denied a voice to the nameless girlfriend of Daniel, who is dictated like a child, to hide on the terrace from Bridget due to the fear of being caught for cheating on Bridget. The emotions of the unnamed girlfriend of Daniel seeing Bridget with him are also not articulated (Fielding 47). Thus, besides Bridget, even she is degraded in this situation where Daniel is openly deceiving both women. He is treating them as “fungible” (Nussbaum 257) objects as one woman is substituting the other woman, according to his wishes.

Kant considers a relationship based on inequality as an extreme form of objectification and condemns a sexual relationship between a man and more than one woman. As he considers the body and mind inseparable from each other in a makeup of a “person”, therefore he views that when a woman surrenders her body to a man, she gives her entire being to her partner, allowing him to possess her. He criticizes a man who, while involved with one woman, has other women at his disposal, and does not yield his person to any of these women. However, this phenomenon disempowers a woman from possessing him. Consequently, such a relationship makes a woman lose her entire being and become “a thing” (Kant 166). Thus, as per this conception, Daniel is treating both Bridget and his nameless girlfriend as objects by refraining from surrendering his person to any one of the women.

On the other hand, both Bridget and Daniel’s girlfriend, despite knowing that Daniel is cheating on them are ready to marry him (Fielding 173-178) because they have given him their persons completely. Bridget is even ready to accept him when he reverts back to her five months later, after rejecting his girlfriend on physical features (Fielding 298). Therefore, just like the literature written in the past, it is the man who chooses which woman he wants to marry, the woman’s will in this regard is secondary or not significant at all.

Fielding gives the right of decision-making to a man, who substitutes one woman for another based on physical appearance, while she keeps a blind eye towards the feelings of women in this situation.

Wollstonecraft criticizing eighteenth-century culture writes that man wants a woman to “jingle in his ears whenever dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused” (Wollstonecraft 34). Fielding gives a similar description of the relationship between men and women in the novel. As Daniel watches cricket, reads, attends meetings (Fielding 172), even cancels a date (Fielding 31), and ignores Bridget and her needs, but comes to her only when he wants entertainment. Fielding has presented women as objects of sex without self-respect and emotions.

Women in *BJD* and *SA* are objectified in other ways as well, besides the ones discussed above. A famous feminist, Sandra Bartky explicates that usually, objectification engages two people, one who is objectified and the other who is the objectifier. However, in some situations, the objectifier and the objectified represent the same person as the prisoners of the Panopticon.^{vii} Women in such a situation internalize the male gaze and become objectifiers and objectified at the same time. Bartky explains that women look at themselves through the eyes of a man and this leads them to objectify their selves (50). In *BJD* Bridget seems to be objectifying herself in the same way. She is not only objectified by others, but she objectifies herself as well by making a new year’s resolution that she will try to be decent at home and will “imagine others are watching” (Fielding 2) her. She cannot be herself even in the comfort of her own home when she is alone. She is under her own surveillance. It seems that Bridget has internalized the objectification and wants to maintain that appearance that pleases others. Likewise, in *SA* Becky is also under her own surveillance, for what she wears even in the US (Kinsella 59) where nobody knows her, but she imagines people may be interested in knowing her; therefore, she should be well-dressed all the time, and look at herself from the perspective of others. Gill considers this form of exploitation of women more severe than objectification because, in this case, it is not an external factor like the male gaze to judge a woman but an internalization of a self-policing gaze (151). Thus, this form of disciplinary regime is negatively affecting the subjectivity of women.

Another aspect of the sexualization of culture besides the objectification of women, which Gill discusses in her article, is the undue mention of salacious discourses about sex. She asserts that there is a sexualization of culture in these discourses by extraordinary propagation of discussion on sex (151). A feminist scholar Andrea Dworkin, along with

another feminist legal scholar Catherine Mackinnon, fight for the violation of women's rights regarding pornography considering pornography as a violation of "civil rights" (23). She defines pornography as a sexually explicit depiction of women through pictures or words which might include a few other aspects such as talk about woman's body parts and presenting women as "whores by nature" (Dworkin 36), sexual objects, or commodities. They explain that the purpose of this industry is to create "sexually arousing" (Dworkin 37) content. Though men and children may also be presented as pornographic tools, women are mostly used for this purpose. Analyzing the mechanism of the sex industry, they assert that pornography is an offense because while it harms one party the other not only enjoys it by consuming it but also gets monetary benefit which makes it a lucrative industry. However, men have been promoting pornography in the name of the "right of speech" (Dworkin 37), while feminists like Dworkin and Mackinnon fight against it.

BJD and *SA* also seem to be depicting pornography. Details of sexual scenes from both of these novels are described explicitly in vivid detail. Sex scenes in *BJD* are not just limited to two people but a sex scene between Bridget and Daniel (Fielding 60), Daniel and his girlfriend (Fielding 77), and Bridget's mother and her boyfriend (Fielding 54) are also mentioned in detail with visual imagery constructed through words. Although romantic novels or novels based on relationships between men and women, such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), were always part of literature even in the past, they never engaged in any sort of pornographic content. However, *BJD* and *SA*, through the portrayal of the relationships in the novels under discussion, as indicated above, predominantly focus on sexual relationships. With extensive details of sex scenes in both novels, the authors are presenting soft porn. By narrating repeated stories of sex, Fielding and Kinsella seem to be celebrating pornography.

As mentioned above not only sex scenes but women's body parts are also referred to in pornography to arouse the interest of readers. There is a lot of focus on a woman's body parts in both of the novels under discussion and they are referred to in a humiliating manner. For example, Daniel causally comments in a derogatory manner on a random woman's breasts calling them "tits" (Fielding 157). He also talks about the ideal size of the "bottom" (Fielding 159) using gross imagery. Similarly, Becky refers to a girl as "Elisa long legs" (Kinsella 69) in a belittling manner. The reference made to the body parts of women is criticized by a feminist critic who explains women's body parts are now referred to as "suitcases and doughnuts" (Power 25). Though feminists such as Kate Millet criticized male authors for writing literature objectifying a woman's body in pornographic style

according to their “classic masculine fantasy” (Millet 5), both Fielding and Kinsella are not being any different from male writers by writing pornographic imagery using female bodies. They are creating pornographic content without even feeling that being a woman they are degrading their own sex, which clearly makes them a part of the prevailing raunch culture.^{viii}

A radical feminist, Robin Morgan explains, that “about 85 to 90 percent of the feminist movement is involved in one way or another against pornography” (qtd. in Denfeld 91). This shows that fight against pornography is a core ideology for feminists. However, considering the examples from *BJD* and *SA*, Fielding and Kinsella are moving against the tide of feminism. They are presenting women’s bodies according to the standards of “heterosexual male fantasy” (Gill 152) as it is found in other pornographic content.

Both Fielding and Kinsella do not seem to be concerned about pornography promoted through the imagery of a woman’s body and presenting it in their works. They are enjoying talking about the bodies of their own counterparts using imagery of a woman’s body. Their indifference towards pornography aligns with Naomi Woolf’s belief that pornography is now deeply rooted in the culture (5) and the general public casually talks about it. Fielding and Kinsella are boldly discussing this topic, exercising their autonomy and freedom to choose. However, they are not realizing this kind of bold expression is exactly what patriarchy and neoliberalism want from women; as Gill mentions patriarchy has changed the packaging of oppression in the form of “choice biography” (154) and has designated power to women to do what it had been promoting itself. Neoliberalism, also using the same jargon of empowerment, is manipulating the empowerment and independence of women because including a topic like pornography in literature means more readership. However, considering their shallowness, we may say they cannot be self-generated ideas but there are other factors that make up this constitution as mentioned above and shall discuss shortly also.

Fielding and Kinsella are contributing to the convolution of pornography with literature. Jameson asserts that a prominent feature of postmodernism is the blurring of the boundaries specified in the past, between high culture and low-brow culture (2). Power in the same vein emphasizes that in the latter half of the twentieth century with the rise of consumerism, media rules were relaxed, especially regarding pornography (51). Jameson and Power’s criticism is reflected in *BJD* and *SA*. By crafting sexually explicit content the authors are influencing the minds of the readers and making them accept pornographic

content rather than challenge it. This is also tapering off literary classiness prevalent in novels before the postmodern era.

Moreover, despite giving subject positions to women in both *BJD* and *SA*, serious concerns of women are not highlighted properly in the novels as Bridget is harassed several times by different men during the course of the novel. For example, Daniel harasses her, at her workplace (Fielding 104) before starting a relationship with her. She is also harassed by her boss at her new job (Fielding 210) and by her neighbor, only because he helped her clean her house after the incident of water overflow in her apartment (Fielding 110). However, Bridget acts like a passive person, who lacks a voice, as she does not take any action against harassment. She is not even shown slightly protesting against harassment and standing up for herself, which is in her locus of control. Even though she is presented as a twentieth-century independent woman, neither her retaliation nor her feelings are expressed regarding it. Fielding's character portrayal of Bridget is hardly any different from the eighteenth-century Henry Fielding's character of Lady Booby in his novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742). If Lady Booby was a woman who took pleasure in harassment and invited it to get benefitted through it in other ways, we can trace similar tendencies in the twentieth-century character of Bridget.

Gill writes that for postfeminist women, all their practices are freely chosen by themselves and are not imposed on them by anyone. They believe one of the ways to show the empowerment of a woman over a man is to distract him from his aims by using her sexuality (154). Like other girl power narratives, this is what can be witnessed in *SA*. Kinsella is presenting a woman's body as her source of power as Becky and her friend Suze both dress up specially to seduce the bank manager and flirt with him to convince him (Kinsella 272) to give her time to pay her high debts. They seem to be proponents of the ideas of sex-positive feminists, who consider "sexually provocative appearance and behavior" (Genz 91) as female empowerment. Sex-positive feminists believe that contemporary women have the right to decide on their own about the use of their bodies. However, the belief that a woman's body is her source of power is not a new idea as anti-feminists such as Rousseau assert the same idea back in the eighteenth century. Rousseau also believes that a woman's strength lies in her charm and her physical beauty (532).

Therefore, it seems that giving the subject position to women in *BJD* and *SA* is not benefitting women in any constructive way as women are presented in the literature in a similar way even in the past. Women have been given subject positions and active status in the novels under discussion, but they are still shown to be using their bodies to get what

they want in life. If it is an agency then it is a distorted agency because agency is defined as the capability to take individualized action and decisions (Ashcroft 6), however, Suze and Becky's act of using their bodies to convince the bank manager, instead of using rational argument shows that their actions are not autonomously generated but they are ready to "sell" (Kinsella 23). They seem to be selling to society, what society wants to buy from women.

Like Kinsella, Fielding is giving a subject position to Bridget in the novel, and she is given active status as well, as she takes several initiatives in a relationship with Daniel (Fielding 29). However, she is still not assigned agency and autonomy by Fielding. Bridget lacks the agency to confront Daniel about deceiving her, nor she has the (agency of) autonomy to leave him. Likewise, Fielding is denying agency to the mistress of Daniel, who is submissive enough to hide, on the order of her boyfriend, from her rival. Even after knowing about Daniel's deceiving nature and repeatedly being deceived by him they are not depicted as confronting him.

However, society's attitude towards women seems to be improving with the passing of time as depicted by Fielding and Kinsella. There is a difference of five years gap between the publication of *BJD* and *SA* but comparatively, we see Bridget being ill-treated by most of the men around her. She is assaulted by four different men, even twice at the workplace, and is also deceived by her boyfriend. Her friend Jude is also deceived by her boyfriend who keeps taking favors from her and keeps her hooked but does not give her the status of more than a "friend" (Fielding 125). He is shown to selfishly manipulate her under the name of friendship. Compared to the situation of women depicted in *BJD*, Becky in *SA* seems to be in a better position. She does not reveal any such story rather she is supported by her boyfriend and his friend as well who helps her get a new job.

Similarly, in *BJD* women are seen as adapting themselves to male expectations to be acceptable to men. Bridget confesses that "[t]here is nothing more unattractive to a man as strident feminism" (Fielding 20). Bridget and her friends are aware of the rhetoric of feminism, but they disown it because it sounds unattractive to men. Therefore, women in the text are not seen to be standing up for themselves to seek the approval of men. Their relationship with feminism seems to be confused.

On the other hand, Kinsella's heroine Becky confidently discusses her faith in feminism. She candidly talks about her wishes to her boyfriend saying, she is "never going to stay at home and cook supper for you [him] in million years" (Kinsella 49) like typical women. It is important to note the transformation in the attitude of men towards women in

the five years span difference between *BJD* and *SA*. Becky says that people of the young generation which include women and men both “realize the rights of women” (Kinsella 4). We see that Becky’s boyfriend Luke gives a lot of importance to her feelings unlike Bridget’s boyfriend. In an incident where Becky is not informed by Luke about migrating to the US in time, she straightforwardly says to Luke “all you care about is your own success, and I always come second” (Kinsella 255). She has the agency to speak for herself unlike the women in the past or even Bridget. Luke respects her feelings and therefore does everything to please her. He even finds out jobs and lines up prospective employers who can give her a job in the US. He also repudiates the degradation that she brings upon herself by saying that she is “tagging along” (Kinsella 256) with him forcefully, and yet, he gives her respect. Another male character in the novel i.e., Michael also gives her respect when she is all alone in the US and tries to solve her problem of being exposed by a newspaper for getting bankrupt (Kinsella 256), unlike Bridget’s situation where everyone wants a favor from her, even her neighbor. However, despite all the positivity provided by men around, Becky is using the power of her body to seduce a bank manager to get a favor considering it her empowerment.

Fielding is using sexist attitudes of the past in an ironic way, by using retrosexism. She creates humor out of serious sexist situations such as a discussion about the thinness of her blouse (Fielding 104) or a reference to her skirt (Fielding 23) which is discussed in a page-long discussion, but Fielding creates humor out of the harassment. Likewise, a teenage boy’s body shaming of Bridget and a demeaning comment about her body, calling her “all squashy” (Fielding 57) and showing repulsive behavior towards Bridget’s overweight body are discussed in a humorous way. Bridget is silenced over this disgrace. Although the novel is written in first person and is expressing other feelings of Bridget, the self-dignity of the protagonist is not expressed anywhere.

Fielding does not make her protagonist stand up for herself, but she makes a subtle attack on women who had been asking for their rights in the past. She creates humor out of the ideas put forward in second-wave feminism, through the characters of the parents of Bridget. Bridget’s mother is found ranting like victim feminists of the second wave. She complains about her daily mundane life like the stories of women expressed in the seminal second-wave text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Friedan. Friedan in this book expresses “the problem that has no name” (Friedan 48) that refers to the consequences of enslavement to the demands of femininity. Bridget’s mother, Pamela Jones, like the Suburban housewives mentioned in Friedan’s book asserts, that she had been wasting a major part of

her life by being “a slave of the family” (Fielding 14) and demands payment for everything she had been doing to run the house.

Pamela is shown taking a full circle of the demands of the second-wave feminist movement along with their consequences. We find out in the novel that she leaves her duties aside and gets freedom from the “housewife trap” (Friedan 35) and seems to be enjoying it as well, just like the second-wave feminists demanded, however, her affair with a criminal is described in a derogatory way which brings her back to square one i.e., her home. Fielding has pointed out the deficiencies of second-wave feminists, such as the guilty pleasure, of having a relationship with men while being against men in a movement. On the other hand, like a woman in a ‘mad housewife’^{ix} kind of novel written during second-wave feminism, Bridget’s father is found crying with tears (Fielding 220). In this way, she is ridiculing the motives of the second wave of feminism.

Moreover, not only Bridget moves in the opposite direction of the feminist novels which directed the heroine out of marriage to singlehood to develop themselves, but she also verbally expresses her fears that if she remains single throughout her life, she may one day perish “all alone, half-eaten by an Alsatian” (Fielding 6). Her pleasure is dependent upon men as she says every occasion such as Christmas is designed for families, warmth, and emotions, but if one does not have a boyfriend, she cannot enjoy any of these occasions (Fielding 76). The novel, in this way, is moving against the feminist discourse because the feminists forbid women from depending upon men for happiness (Mellor 48).

Chick lit novels are generally described as presenting “self-deprecating humor that not only entertains but also leads readers to believe they are fallible-like them” (Ferriss 4). Ferriss and Young assert that the humorous situation created out of Bridget’s life not only entertains a reader but also helps the reader to associate with the character. Though the character’s humor makes the reader relate to the character of Bridget, the novel promotes stereotypical female qualities associated with her gender in the past, such as aiming to get romantic attention from a man. It reinforces the gender norms upon the reader, against which feminists fought. Similarly, the idea of an independent woman is ridiculed in the novel. Though Bridget is presented as an independent woman, the idea of an independent woman is mocked by the shallow humor created by her search for a man, which arouses a reader's sympathy for an independent woman without a man.

Bridget Jones is considered to be “a direct literary descendant of Austen's Elizabeth Bennet” (Ferriss 5), because both characters reveal the “psychological development of female characters searching for self-esteem and security” (Ferriss 16). However, I believe

there are similarities to some extent in the two characters, but Elizabeth clearly had a lot of self-respect and it is because of this that she rejected Mr. Darcy's proposal, as she could not tolerate his humiliating attitude towards her. Austen did not present her as desperate for men, unlike Bridget. Moreover, Elizabeth had the autonomy and assertiveness to speak to Mr. Darcy about his misconduct. Thus, there is no comparison between the two women in my view.

This section shows the fusion of feminist and anti-feminist ideas in *BJD* and *SA*. Previously society sandpapered women to be pleasing objects. However, despite being empowered, Bridget and Becky are adapting themselves to Society's demands, putting all the efforts of feminists aside, including the feminists' efforts for the right of education for women, entering the public sphere, their fight against pornography, and objectification of women. Fielding and Kinsella seem to be celebrating the physical description of women considering it empowerment to choose a bold topic. However, this version of empowerment does not seem autonomously generated by women, as it benefits patriarchy and consumerism. This discussion shows how the writings of these female authors are getting influenced by the latest patriarchal and consumerist trends in society and reflect them in their works.

4.3 Commodified Feminism

As in the previous section, the amalgamation of feminist and anti-feminist ideas are discussed, showing contradictory positions the authors are taking at the same time. This section presents a discussion on how consumerism is assisting women in expressing their positions as they reveal their feminist ideas. The use of the word commodified in the heading of the title of this section refers to the monetary gain associated with feminism.

4.3.1 Consumerism and ostensible empowerment

Gill identifies the rhetoric of empowerment as a striking feature of postfeminist media culture (153). Female characters are showing their empowerment with the help of consumerism. For example, the cover photo of *BJD* shows a woman holding a cigarette, expressing her freedom because, according to the decorum expected from women in the past, women were not allowed to smoke. A historian, Georgina Grant, referring to the Victorian era, explains that "Feminine smoking was openly criticized by respectable society in the mid-Victorian era" and was "associated with loose morals and prostitution"

(18). Thus, a woman holding a cigarette in her hand on the cover of *BJD* shows an empowered woman breaking taboos.

Mercantile culture is making use of the idea of women's empowerment and is using the language of liberation as a tactic to make the liberation of women synonymous with buying different products. The woman holding a cigarette on the cover photo of *BJD* shows a strong woman breaking taboos and may also be perceived as an advertisement promoting cigarette smoking among women. Similarly, the cover photo of *SA* shows a financially independent woman wearing high heel shoes and holding a number of bags, enforcing the idea that she is spending her money the way she wants to spend it. In the past feminists like Woolf (1929) had been fighting for the financial freedom of women. Bridget and Becky seem to be financially independent. However, capitalism is showing them a way to express their financial independence by consuming different products.

Commercialized feminism is promoting consumer feminism to reap the benefits of a woman's transforming situation, from meek and passive to independent and empowered women, under the guise of feminism. "Consumer feminism" (27), as Power calls it, is making everything a symbol of emancipation, associating different products with the emancipation of women. Thus, consumer culture is using the rhetoric of feminism to promote business while women are expressing their financial autonomy by shopping.

4.3.2 The American Dream and women's empowerment

A cultural historian, Lawrence Samuel, tracing the cultural history of America, asserts that in the early twentieth century, the American public was trained to be a shopaholic and was taught to spend money on unnecessary things and go into debt, considering these practices as keys to a thriving marketplace. Lawrence further explains that to boost the economy of the country, "the federal government and business put a number of policies into place after the war to encourage consumerism and, as a by-product, long-term debt" (Samuel xii). Consumer consciousness impelled Americans to spend money, selling the message that doing so was beneficial for the individual and the nation (Samuel 222). Moreover, the consumerism associated with the American dream became a global phenomenon and "a vision of global social progress" (Rosenburg 23) writes a historian, Rosenburg. Other countries replicated "America's developmental experience" and followed the pattern of "mass production" and "mass marketing" (Rosenburg 22). As a result, during this period general public was encouraged to do more shopping and multiple

techniques were used to lure customers of different ages and genders. The shopping patterns of characters in *BJD* and *SA* seem to be influenced by the tactics of capitalists.

Becky, described as a shopaholic by Kinsella herself, pragmatically expresses the consequence of the government agenda as her house is always full of shopping bags. Many of the packages she has bought are even packed and she can barely even tell what is in any of the packed packages as there are boxes and shopping bags in her room, which she had not even opened (Kinsella 302). She describes them as “[I]t’s juststuff, piles and piles of stuff” (Kinsella 256). Similarly, some of the clothes she possesses also had their price tags, showing that she never used them. Due to the great number of such garments present in her room, she could not recollect where she bought them from and for what occasion (Kinsella 322). Thus, Becky is hoarding stuff like Americans as explained by the cultural historian Samuel as discussed in the previous paragraph.

Moreover, Becky’s dream of going to America can be interpreted as a realization of “The American Dream” (Samuel x) which was and is still a dream of many other people, in the contemporary world. The American dream targeted middle-class people from all over the world, by enforcing upon them that, every person has a birthright to achieve success, realize prosperity, and enjoy the fruits of consumer culture, without barriers. Becky goes to America with this dream of achieving “a standard consumer package” (Samuel xi) which included a family, a car, and a home full of modern appliances at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, with passing time, we may include in the standard package, possession of all the products from famous brands like Ralph Lauren, Gucci, Chanel, etc. which Becky wants to buy in America.

Becky is so obsessed with shopping that even to acclimatize herself in New York all she can think of is shopping over there. She is completely overwhelmed in New York, exploring new shops, and new brands and learning new concepts of shopping such as that of “sample sale” (Kinsella 166). Rather than having any constructive aim, experiencing a sample sale event is “a dream come true” for her (Kinsella 169). She is following the “acquisition-based lifestyle” (Samuel xii) under the influence of consumer culture, by hoarding things she does not need. Her room is entirely cluttered with shoes, boots, T-shirts, and magazines (Kinsella 13), which she keeps on buying. Moreover, shopping is the medium through which she is able to connect with people. As looking at the enthusiasm of the girls doing shopping during sample sales in America, she at once connects with them and admits by saying that “these are my people. This is where I belong. I’ve found my

homeland” (Kinsella 169). Although she is a Britisher, she is able to connect with Americans due to the shared passion for shopping. This shows that she is totally obsessed with shopping.

Becky is under the spell of consumerism and is mesmerized by it, even on the premises of her own home through online shopping. She is tempted to buy things through websites like the “Daily candy website” (Kinsella 173) which personally sends emails to customers after subscription on their website, about openings of new brands and sale deals to excite people to do online shopping or visit stores. On one of these occasions, Becky starts shopping with the aim to make her office comfortable however she buys all useless things one after the other. She surfs around on the net and finds “cool” (Kinsella 55) office supplies as she describes them, which include a comfortable chair, a paper shredder, and some stationary items. Although she does not need these things, she justifies buying these products with reasons.

A consumer culture critic, Stuart Ewens, quoting a famous industrialist Edward Filene, writes that in consumer culture, people are not taught “what to think, but how to think” (qtd.in Ewens 55). Ewens points out that in the advertising era, people are patronized and manipulated by advertising agencies. This is reflected in *SA* where Becky justifies her shopping with useless reasons as she says she bought a comfortable chair because she will be sitting all day long to write her book and she will require a paper shredder to shred her first draft of the book for which she had recently written a single sentence. She rationalizes her shopping by believing she is “investing” (Kinsella 94) in her career by making herself comfortable and self-sufficient to excel in it. Thus, Becky’s justifying her shopping of useless things by believing that she is investing in her career shows that her mind is also trained for shopping by consumer ideology.

Another tactic of consumer culture is the use of plastic money to encourage shopping among customers. Jaishu Antony, an economic researcher, views the pros and cons of plastic money, including credit and debit cards. He comments that although customers prefer plastic money over paper money because plastic money is more convenient and accessible for a customer, however, it has drawbacks as well. It highly influences customers’ spending patterns and often leads to overspending and financial burdens. He observes the “emotional pain” (Antony 29) associated with spending paper money is absent in a transaction using plastic money. Paper money is tangible and visible, and the customer concretely knows that he has lost some money that he is not aware of while swiping plastic money in a machine. Thus, the swipe and spend practice for shopping

makes one lose control over spending, just as Becky usually “signs the credit slip without even looking at it” (Kinsella 187). She is not bothered to know how much she is being charged.

Besides using plastic money to encourage shopping among customers, sales, and deals are another gimmick to numb a consumer's senses and stimulate a desire to buy products. Packard mentions an experiment of a shop that increased its sale up to thirty percent by offering a double of that particular product at a price higher than the original price, in the name of sale (Packard 40). Thus, the deals are offered as a scam to consumers who buy products, considering them being sold at lower prices than usual.

Becky, throughout the novel, is overwhelmed by different sales and deals at a beauty retailer called Sephora. To encourage customers to do shopping above 50 dollars, a goody bag, and free mascara are offered to them (Kinsella 173) as an incentive by Sephora. Becky, a shopaholic, of course, cannot resist this offer and keeps a blind eye towards the value of the incentive. She is also swayed sometimes to spend more money right at the checkout counter as she is offered to spend two more dollars to make her total amount 50 dollars so that she can get a free “scented candle” (Kinsella 36), as an incentive. Thus, stores usually offer her worthless items as an incentive. Research studies show that companies make a huge amount of money by offering small incentives to people in this way. An economist quotes a study in his research paper revealing that a certain company earned 4.2 billion dollars in a year by giving these worthless items, such as candies and magazines to customers in the deals (Ehsani 1053). This shows that Becky’s shopping sprees are impacting her and that such shopping practices help corporations enormously.

Moreover, what Becky buys from sales reveals that sales mean buying products that are not needed but are bought only because their selling price is lower than the usual price. Just as she buys a “coat” (Kinsella 169) and a “skirt” (Kinsella 300) from the sale, which does not fit her, she justifies that she will lose weight soon and then will be able to use them. However, the shop might not offer a sale at that time. Therefore, she could not miss a chance to get these items. Similarly, she buys skiing boots, and though she does not go skiing at all, she buys them considering they were on sale, and maybe one day, if she wishes to go skiing, she might have to buy them at full price (Kinsella 301). The idea of sales is depicted as enthralling because Becky witnesses a “tidal wave of girls” (Kinsella 168) rushing in the direction of a new entrance to a shop offering a sale as soon as the shop attendant announces it. Girls are depicted as losing their sanity and rushing into the shop for shopping to gather as many products as they can buy.

Not only sales but salespersons also practice hypnotizing customers. They trap customers by informing them about the latest products in their stores and encouraging them to try them, even if they do not want to buy them. They are sure that once the customer looks at a new product, the person gets hooked and buys the product. Just like Becky looks at “Clementine sandals” (Kinsella 27) shown by the salesperson and cannot stop thinking about them until she buys them. In this regard, the concept of “personal shoppers” (Kinsella 227-232) seems very influential because the personal shopper, though the agent of a shop, is considered reliable enough to decide for the consumer what suits a person.

A social critic, Packard asserts the placement of items in a shop is also done cleverly and skillfully by placing the “splurge items” (115) at eye level. These products have more profit margin than other products. Therefore, it gets difficult for Becky to avoid looking at other products even when she had made up her mind of doing “controlled shopping” (Kinsella 26). On different shopping sprees, she impulsively buys just by having a look at products. She purchases the products she does not require such as letters for a “godson” (Kinsella 36) who does not exist. Similarly, in *BJD* Bridget finds herself buying things she does not need. She spends 119 pounds on four things she buys from a shop, though all of them are “unsuitable and unflattering” (Fielding 122) for her, which she only realizes when she is back at home. It seems as if these characters get under some magical spell looking at products in a shop, which bounds them to buy these products whether they require them or not.

Impulsive buying is considered to be “more emotional than rational” (1054) by economic researchers such as Ehsani. It is considered to be emotional because, in impulsive buying, an individual buys a product without pre-shopping plans and is not actively looking for the product. Just as Becky goes shopping, leaving the “city tour” (Kinsella 186) mid-way, and does shopping for 500 dollars by buying a coat, shoes, and a bag without intending to buy them. Packard asserts that the trend of making a “list” (Packard 112) of items needed from the market is declining, whereas the practice of impulse buying is increasing. Consequently, this is making people buy more items than they desire. As can be seen in the case of Becky, even when she forms a motto for herself before going shopping, “buy only what you need?” (Kinsella 26), deceives her own self by buying the sandals she does not need.

Her confessions like “I find myself adding a really cool steel claw which holds up notes while typing” (Kinsella 94) show that her senses get numbed while shopping as if she is possessed. The use of the word “find” in her confession shows, she is surprised by her

own behavior and is forced by some external force to buy this item. Packard discusses this hypnotizing tactic of capitalists called “hypnoidal trance” (113), in which a person follows a light waved in front of the eyes as a first step of the hypnosis. Perhaps it is because of this hypnosis that, waiting for a taxi on the pavement, Becky suddenly “without quite meaning to” (Kinsella 187) starts following the “glow[] of a shop called Kate’s Paperie” and under the same spell of hypnosis, buys a number of greeting cards “on adopting twins”, “remodeled home” or “Happy Hanukkah” (Kinsella 188), etc. which she does not need at present or in near future but she convinces herself that she might need them one day, but would not have an opportunity to buy them.

Becky is clearly suffering from compulsive buying disorder, also called “oniomania” (Vasiliu 134) which is a serious psychological problem. Compulsive buying disorder is an extreme and addictive form of impulsive buying. Its symptoms are similar to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). A patient suffering from OCD has a strong urge to repeat certain patterns of action again and again as a compulsion and a patient suffering from compulsive buying disorder does the same. Symptoms of compulsive buying disorder are also similar to drug-related disorders. Like other psychological disorders, it is treated with “cognitive behavior therapy and antidepressants” (Vasiliu 137). The consequences of the disease often lead to “credit card debt” (Fenton 175), just as it happens in the case of Becky.

Extensive studies have been done on impulsive buying and its consequences. Researchers are divided into two camps regarding its effects. On the one hand, consumer welfare researchers view it as having negative consequences on consumers, such as debts from credit cards. These researchers believe that people who practice impulsive buying are the ones who usually lack “self-regulation in relation to long-term goals” (Fenton 175) and they usually only have temporary “hedonic goals” (Fenton 176). This can be observed in the case of Becky, who does not have any long-term goal in life rather she enjoys short moments of pleasure through her shopping sprees.

On the other hand, there are researchers in consumer and retail marketing, who view impulsive buying as positive and harmless to humans. Shopping is therefore called as “retail therapy” (Selin 638) by this group of researchers. They define retail therapy as a concept to make oneself happy by giving “self-treats” (Selin 638) and they consider it a successful strategy to lift a mood or to retain a positive mood, by providing oneself with a distraction from a negative situation. They negate the idea of buyer’s remorse because in a

conflict between buyer's remorse and mood repair, the latter wins (Selin 640-641), as they consider human happiness more significant than the short-lived guilt after shopping.

Thus, we find that when Bridget is unable to deal with her emotions and is depressed, she goes out shopping (Fielding 31,122). She cannot think of any other way of regulating her emotions and thus opts for shopping, like Becky. This shows that both Becky and Bridget are unable to deal with their anxieties and problems. They are practicing impulsive buying than practicing self-control, hence taking refuge from their problems in shopping. Though shopping is eclipsing their long-term goals, it is providing momentary pleasure to them. As a well-known feminist, Faludi asserts contemporary women prefer self-gratification over self-determination (Faludi 90), which they can easily get through shopping. This can be observed in the behavior of the protagonists of *BJD* and *SA* as discussed above.

As a result, previously woman's happiness relied on men, now it relies on shopping. They lack any other aim in their lives such as to excel in their career as mentioned in the previous section as well because they gratify themselves by indulging in shopping and "pleasing" (Gill 153). With all the tricks used by capitalists to lure customers, no wonder Bridget and Becky get "carried away" (Kinsella 232) while shopping. Although a famous postfeminist Denfeld asserts, the younger generation of women is educated and smart enough to escape the traps of advertisements (4), the traps of consumerism are so secretive and influential that it is hard to identify and escape them, as can be seen in the cases of Bridget and Becky.

As in the genre of "mad housewife" (Whelehen 67) novels written in the past, the central characters at times seem in danger of losing their hold on rationality in the face of the domestic duties which threatened to rob them of all sense of self. In a similar way, both protagonists of the selected texts seem to lose their rationality when they start shopping. Thus, if in novels written in the past, women could not get rationality due to the taxing domestic duties, women in *BJD* and *SA* are not having rationality caught in the fetishism of consumerism.

Bridget and Becky can be compared to the concept of an absurd hero discussed by Albert Camus in *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Both Bridget and Becky are aware that they are buying useless things and spending huge amounts of money, but they are trying to give justifications for their acts and create meaning out of it, just like Sisyphus gave meaning to a futile activity of rolling a boulder on a mountain. As Sisyphus knew that the absurdity of his situation was not in his control, but he accepted it and took pleasure in that absurd

activity. Likewise, both of the protagonists of the novels under discussion realize that they get overwhelmed by consumer culture and buy useless things. But they are also aware of it that they are unable to free themselves from the clench of consumerism. Thus, they are happy in this situation like Sisyphus, by finding their happiness in the futile activity of shopping.

As postfeminists stress on empowerment and independence, they entertain such ideas as “pleasing oneself” and “being oneself” (Gill 153). Gill states that every aspect of the life of a contemporary woman is based on the idea of personal choice and free will to show her independence. Women in *BJD* and *SA* are making themselves happy by shopping. In these novels, women are showing their empowerment and determination by doing the shopping of their choice. Gill emphasizes that in the postfeminist sensibility, the idea of personal is political is messed up. In the second wave of feminism, the problem of women is considered to be based on political and social structure, but because of the belief in individualism in Postfeminism, the ideas of pleasing oneself and being oneself have been substituted (Gill 153). Consequently, under the guise of sales, deals, discounts, retail therapy, and self-gifting, women are landing themselves into trouble, though there may be some degree of generating positive emotions that are argued in retail therapy. Commercial interests that are underpinning these problems are ignored because these are an individual’s choices which they are doing in the name of pleasing themselves. Therefore, these Postfeminist characters of the selected texts do not give any importance to the slogan of second-wave feminists narrative of ‘personal is political’.

All liberal feminists wanted women in the public realm. They came out of the domestic sphere because domestic identity could not give them “creativity” or a “sense of self” (Whelehen 93). They rejected the association of women and housework and wanted to construct the authentic female self beyond the domestic sphere (Whelehen 67). However, it seems as if the women have failed to create a sense of self because they are trapped in something else. Friedan believed that by adjusting to domestic duties, a woman stunts her intelligence to become “childlike” (63), an underdeveloped human, and is preyed upon by outside pressures to subscribe to her duties. But as it may be seen in the narratives of the texts, a woman’s intelligence is stunted by consumerism because women like Becky are heading for shopping sprees landing themselves in debt. Faludi is right in saying that the women were near the finish line to achieving a sense of self, after getting themselves free from the clenches of patriarchy, but they were distracted by consumer culture (Faludi xiv). Thus, the “human identity” (Friedan 103) is compromised and the answers to the questions

of “who am I?” and “what do I want” (Friedan 329), that feminists sought to explore by getting themselves free from patriarchy, have perhaps got lost, as they are reduced to being consumers and their purpose, shopping. Nina Power is right in commenting about a postfeminist woman that “contemporary female achievement would culminate in the ownership of expensive handbags” (Power 1). They have no other serious purpose in life than shopping, which is distracting them from having constructive aims in life and numbing their senses.

The aims of feminism seem to have been realized in commercial terms. The feminist ethic of economic empowerment is practiced through buying power with the free use of a credit card to do unlimited shopping. The lack of agency of female characters to speak for their rights mentioned in section 4.2.2 is identified in their shopping practices. Genz also writes in this regard that “the notions of emancipation and agency [of a woman] are often tied to consumer culture and the ability to purchase [is considered] as a woman’s agentive power” (79) in postfeminist culture. Thus, the success and empowerment of a woman are an illusion.

This discussion shows that women depicted in the texts under discussion are empowered. Like feminists, they are strong enough to challenge the norms of society. They are questioning society's taboos, displaying their economic empowerment, and pleasing themselves by doing what they like to do in life. However, the definition of their empowerment is not autonomously generated by them. A blind eye is kept towards the tactics of consumerism which is mesmerizing them and creating chains for them like patriarchy using a different set of tools and rhetoric.

4.4 Glamorous Femininity and Enticing Consumerism

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter in postfeminist discourses feminist and anti-feminist ideas are presented in combination. In the previous section, it is explained how consumerism is utilizing the feminist motives of women in their favor. This section presents a discussion on how the female characters in *BJD* and *SA* are subscribing to the attributes of femininity. Feminists fought against femininity, as femininity is a socially constructed set of attributes associated with the female sex. Feminists fought against femininity, considering it constraining women. This section of the discussion shows how consumerism is assisting women to display their femininity, making it glamorous. The reasons behind promoting the idea of femininity are also included in this discussion.

Women had been associated with femininity for a long time and were told there was glory in their femininity. Feminists fought against it and considered it a trap constraining women (Friedan 44). However, chick lit author Marian Keyes says in her interview that she, being from a postfeminist generation feared being forbidden from enjoying traditional femininity (Keyes n.p.), because of the pressure of feminist views against it. This shows the polarity of opinion between traditional feminists and postfeminists regarding femininity. But this debate began when women started entering the public sphere. It was considered unfeminine for women, to opt for careers and higher education (Friedan 44). When women started entering the public sphere for their careers, their femininity was considered to be at stake by society, because they had to be strong like men and would not have enough time to take care of their selves to appear feminine. Thus, on the one hand, modern women had to climb career ladders, but on the other hand, their femininity was at stake, which they wanted to retain.

In this regard discourses of “natural sexual difference” (Gill 158) were revived and disseminated. Gill affirms resurgence of natural sexual differences between men and women appeared on a both physical and psychological level in postfeminist media culture. To highlight the difference on a psychological level, Gray’s book *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus* (1992) became an important part of postfeminist media culture (Gill 159), illuminating the psychological difference between men and women using the metaphor of planets. Bridget, being a postfeminist woman is aware of this discourse, therefore when asked by her boyfriend Darcy about a recent book that she has read, she can think of the same book (Fielding 14). Bridget is under the influence of this book which can be noted in her behavior on different occasions. She is returning to the formal etiquettes prescribed for woman’s behavior in the past, as Bridget at the end of the novel confesses that she learnt that the “secret of happiness with men” is “don’t say ‘what’, say ‘pardon’” (Fielding 307) and be more polite. She wants to impress men with her polite behavior. Moreover, as Gill emphasizes, discourses of sexual difference also serve to re-emphasize “power relations” (159) between men and women as in the past, thus, it can be noted that Bridget accepts she likes Daniel’s authoritative position (Fielding 164) towards her. She is taking a submissive position in her relationship with men, like the women in the past. Thus, women in the postfeminist era are re-convinced about the difference between men and women through psychological discourses to maintain patriarchal suzerainty, even after entering the public sphere.

Consumer culture cashed the idea of the physical difference between men and women fully (Gill 158). As women were already convinced about the difference between men and women and their femininity being at stake by entering the public sphere, critics write that fashion merchants realized this problem (Faludi 185); (Power 21), and came up with solutions to offer women. Consumerism offered women a solution through “fashion, lifestyle, and beauty” (Whelehen 177) products specially designed for women. It is important to note the difference between sex which is natural and gender which is a socially created difference between man and woman. Revival of natural sexual differences through gender-specific products opened floodgates for consumerism to flourish.

Although women have started working in the public sphere, capitalism does not forget their gender and their gender roles, so it provides a way for women to express their femininity, especially through the promotion of “pink-colored” (Genz 5) commodities. These commodities are specially designed for women, giving a message that women can compete successfully alongside their male counterparts and attain equality in society without sacrificing their femininity, by using pink-colored products to represent their femininity. Becky and Bridget also make excessive use of pink colored accessories to show their femininity such as a “pink cardigan” (Kinsella 273), “pink velvet skirt” (Kinsella 95), pink dress (Fielding 42), “shocking pink dress” (Kinsella 105), “pink sparkly” (Kinsella 16) vest, “pink envelope” (Fielding 15), and white envelope with “pink feathers” (Kinsella 275) to give a feminine touch to the envelope. Besides using pink-colored commodities to show femininity, Bridget and Becky are shown to be very much concerned about their dressing, especially Becky who packs three types of jackets and three types of vests, only for a three (Kinsella 17) days trip to the US.

Fielding and Kinsella through their novels are exploring the difference between sex through consumer culture commodities. However, feminists like Helene Cixous want women to explore their bodily difference and celebrate by writing about the differences (880). In this regard, she describes a character from Greek mythology called Medusa, who is portrayed as an evil figure with snakes instead of hair. She redefines her figure by claiming that the snakes do not represent evil for her, unlike the common belief, but they represent multiple penises that she possesses. Therefore, by laughing, she is celebrating her empowerment (Cixous 885). Thus, Cixous wants women to explore their bodily strengths and pleasures which are restricted to them only, and express them candidly without feeling guilty about them (Cixous 880). She believes a woman can use her body as a source of inspiration and by writing about it can claim and articulate the beauty of female identity

which is different from patriarchal discourses. However, female writers like Fielding and Kinsella are not exploring the strengths of women in their novels; rather they are celebrating the difference through the use of products.

Another feminist Elaine Showalter in her essay “Towards a Feminist Poetics” (1979) also encourages women to express their female selves, leaving feminist and socially dictated femininity aside. She explains the initial writings of women had primarily been feminine, where the women were writing according to the perceptions of men about them. They imitated them in the description of women, as they could not challenge patriarchy and express themselves openly. While in the second phase of writing, women as feminists raise their voices and protest against the supremacy of men. However, she has faith in the third stage of female writings which can portray the true nature of women, because a woman has come past the two extreme stages of suppression and extreme political position. She believes these female authors or “gynocritics” (Showalter 217) as she calls them, in this stage will construct a framework to study the female experience. The use of the word “I” has come down to women after a long struggle and feminists like Showalter and Cixous wanted women to write about the experiences which are unique to them having a female body. However, rather than doing this, Fielding and Kinsella, in their novels, are exploring the difference in products designed for their gender to show the difference between men and women.

Bridget and Becky are aware of their sexual difference from men. They have entered the public sphere like men, but they are retaining this difference with the help of their femininity. Consumerism is apparently helping them in this regard to express their femininity through the use of gender-specific products but at the same time, it is getting economically benefitting by enlarging the sexual gap between men and women and by creating discourses and products for gender differences.

4.4.1 Woman’s body and femininity

Gill critiques postmodern femininity which is considered a bodily property (147), as it was considered in the past. It has already been explained in section 4.2.2, that the looks of women are considered as their empowerment to be used against men under the idea of girl power. However, this section of the discussion considers the pressure women have to go through to subscribe to society's beauty standards to maintain their femininity.

An appearance of a woman is considered important for all aspects of a woman's life. Good looks are important for relationships and for jobs as well. Bridget is told by her mother that if she does not improve her appearance, she would never get a new job (Fielding 192). This shows that securing a job for a woman is dependent upon her looks and does not require skills.

In the eighteenth century, Wollstonecraft believes that women were taught from their infancy that beauty is a woman's asset (113), yet Gill notes that the appearance of a woman even at present is considered to be her asset. Gill argues that there is a lot of focus on woman's bodies, and it is under observation in all forms of media (Gill 149). Compared to the past, the issue of reaching the beauty standard seems to have been amplified now as women are always at risk of failing to reach this standard. It can be observed in *BJD* that Bridget is concerned about her looks and believes that her confidence is dependent upon her looks (Fielding 30). She also confesses to her friend Tom that ninety percent of women who go for plastic surgery, are not happy with their looks and are not appreciated by others (Fielding 185). This shows that women have associated their worth with their appearance.

Compared to Bridget, Becky seems to be more confident about her physical appearance and does not show an inferiority complex like Bridget; however, she is also very much concerned about her dressing-up. In this regard, Faludi points out that "high femininity" (183) was introduced among career women by bringing their attention to their dressing-up. Thus, it can be observed from a number of examples that Becky's dressing sense is an obsession. For instance, she takes huge luggage for three nights trip (Kinsella 18), which includes different dresses to wear in the sun, at night, for swimming, and for sports along with matching shoes and accessories. Becky looks at herself in the mirror and is "pleased" with her appearance, wearing a "Pucci-esque top, Gucci shades, and Denny and George scarf" (Kinsella 48). She is more confident than Bridget. But as there is more commercialism involved in *SA* than *BJD* therefore, Becky is not suffering from low self-esteem because she is using different products to feel beautiful, and she takes pride in her dressing sense. Her dressing sense is very much developed, yet she gets deceived by market tricks. For example, she buys a dress that she finds weird, but a salesperson convinces her that the same dress is also worn by a famous star Madonna (Kinsella 50). Thus, she buys it. This shows that her confidence in her looks stems from the dresses she wears; therefore, she is obsessed with shopping to enhance her looks.

Naomi Wolf emphasizes that the image of standard female beauty is being used in postfeminist discourses, as a political weapon against women's advancement, by creating

a “beauty myth” (Wolf 10). She considers the beauty standards set for women to be a myth because they cannot be reached and there is no end to the definition of beauty. Beauty standards are like a mirage and the more one tries to reach them, the far they go, as a never-ending process. Wolf asserts that this myth is created to make the women keep moving in a labyrinth.

Gill points out another type of feminine trait that the postfeminist sensibility promotes and that is an obsession with age (155). Under its influence, women want to look young eternally. Bridget acts hysteric when she gets a comment about the presence of laugh lines and feels the urge to ask everyone sitting in the restaurant to judge her age (Fielding 147-148). She plans of spending more time on her looks and considers the option of doing a “facelift” (Fielding 148) as well to give a lift to sagging cheeks and look younger. She takes help from makeup and makes use of concealer to hide the flaws of her face and blush to define the “fading features” of her face (Fielding 148). This shows that Bridget fears getting old and takes it as a problem rather than accepting it as a natural phenomenon.

Women’s anxieties about age are because of two reasons found in *BJD*. First, as Bridget says men want younger partners, as they “don’t find their contemporaries attractive” (Fielding 148). This notion is hammered to women by society, that “men get more attractive when they get older and women get less attractive” (Fielding 213) as they age. It endorses the idea that women have sell-and-buy dates and they are attractive only in a specific time window which is associated with their age. Therefore, women want to appear young, so that they do not lose their importance and acceptance in society.

Secondly, not only men but consumerism also wants women to be young. As a journalist, Myra Macdonald in her book *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (1995) analyzes the different media forms and notes that aged, fat, and women with wrinkles are scorned and not assigned subject positions in the media. The criterion of female attractiveness is narrow because femininity is associated with youth and set standards of beauty, which excludes the majority of women from fitting into it. The media keeps a blind eye to the diversity among women. However, women are forced to imbibe the socially constructed myth because of its promotion in both visual and print media. Media in this way is a double-edged weapon, on the one hand, including women in media is a liberating experience, but on the other hand with a selected representation of women, the standard of femininity is set for women in general. Macdonald observes that through the use of this technique, media creates low self-esteem among women and then provides them with a solution such as makeup products and surgeries, which benefits the

makeup industry. Therefore, we see that Bridget also considers media representation of women and takes inspiration from aged actresses and models who are able to conceal their age successfully (Fielding 78) with the help of makeup and surgeries.

Moreover, age is considered a problem or disease for women and not a natural law of Nature, as Bridget is reminded repeatedly about her age with “Tick-tock-tick-tock” (Fielding 11,172, 208), throughout the novel. Faludi comments that from New York Times to Vanity Fair, Hollywood films, media, economists, politics, and psychologists all remind women that their biological clock is ticking. Women were made to believe that after a certain age, women have no significance at all. Thus, Faludi writes that females became obsessed with retaining and reclaiming their youth (Faludi xv-3) through whatever means so that they can be accepted by society.

Besides the aging complex, women are made conscious about their weight (Gill 163) as well, because of the presence of “powerful sexual imagery” (Wolf 4) circulated in the media. This image relates femininity with slim women, which pressurizes women to subscribe to a certain weight. Bridget also wants to attain this standard weight. She spends a whole day checking her weight even at 4 am at night (Fielding 74) and scrupulously keeps track of her calorie consumption. The calorie count of eggs, bananas, olives, etc. is on her fingertips, she knows about it as “one knows one’s alphabet or timetables” (Fielding 258). Asking about each other’s diet plan is a must-ask question among her friends when they meet after some time (Fielding 147). One of her New Year resolutions on the opening page of the novel is to “reduce the circumference of thighs by 3 inches” (Fielding 3). This shows that Bridget is obsessed with body weight.

Bartky explaining the obsession of contemporary women regarding weight writes that Freud used the term of “narcissism”^x, to explain an obsession of a person with one's body. This obsession makes one appreciate his or her body as an entity to be gazed at by others. However, she explains, because of the contemporary high beauty standards, now feminine narcissism is an obsession with “an inferiorized body” (Bartky 54). Women are obsessed with their bodies, yet they attach negative attributes to their bodies and feel inferior. Self under the influence of this form of narcissism becomes double with an addition of an Other, who is an “anonymous patriarchal Other” (Bartky 88), or a beauty complex that is given by the beauty industry. These complexes are fueled by the glorification of a female body with that underlying narrative that they will always be prey to an inferiority complex for their actual body. Thus, we observe that Bridget’s New Year resolutions majorly focus on her body (Fielding 2), because she is obsessed with her body.

She is not happy and satisfied, therefore wants to transform it. Her obsession with her body is giving her “repressive satisfaction”, and repressive satisfaction, according to Bartky, fastens us to the established order of domination (Bartky 56), just as Bridget believes that “dry skin brushing” (Fielding 183-184), detoxification program, and attaining an ideal weight can solve all her problems in life.

Bridget even believes attaining an ideal weight can bring Daniel back to her (Fielding 183). This is because she knows men like slim women (Fielding 57) and therefore to be accepted by men she wants to be thin. Even after getting deceived by her boyfriend, she still tries to improve her appearance so that she can be accepted by Daniel, which shows that man is still a center for a woman as in the past and it is his views through which a woman defines her worth. This shows that both consumerism and patriarchy want women to have an ideal weight.

However, even after achieving the desired weight of eight stones after eighteen years-long struggle, Bridget is not happy; because people tell her she looked better before losing weight (Fielding 105-107). She reaches the ideal weight only to know that she looked better when she was fat. This re-emphasizes the notion that ideal weight and beauty are illusions that women cannot reach.

Femininity in both *BJD* and *SA* is depicted as contingent for which an effort is to be made to achieve it. For example, for a woman to develop her culinary skills and influence others with it is one of the tactics to show femininity (Gill 157). Bridget wants to host an elaborate dinner party and wants to impress everyone with her cooking skills by making the best “shepherd’s pie” besides French and Spanish cuisines because she wants to gain the title of “brilliant cook and hostess” (Fielding 82-83) who can cook food of other localities of the world besides making local dishes. Bridget believes people will get impressed by her culinary skills and “will flock” (Fielding 256) for her dinner parties.

Bridget is also careful about her choices of entertainment. She does not want to choose a television program which if men find out about her, they might find her uninteresting (Fielding 17). Even in the privacy of her own house, she wants to act in a feminine manner to be accepted by society.

Another way of showing femininity among women is through the association of certain food items with women. For instance, eating chocolate is associated with being “naughty” (Power 36) and “girlishness” (Power 37). Thus, in *SA* we find Becky and her friend Suze, eating KitKat several times in the novel when they are having a girly chit-chat

with each other (Kinsella 15,26,32). This repeated action of eating chocolates is associated with their gender.

This discussion shows that Bridget tries her best to show her femininity, but it seems she has low self-esteem. However, Becky has high self-esteem, because she is following all the tricks to maintain her femininity, which Bridget is not able to follow. Postfeminist culture is saturated with discourses in women's magazines such as *Vogue* and *Elle*, appreciating and idealizing beautiful and young women. There is no alternate narrative provided to women, based on intellectual and successful professionals to foil the narrative of beautiful, young, and shopaholic women. They are not given any attention by the press. Women under this pressure are made to get worried about their age, weight, skin issues, etc. However, consumerism then provides them with the solution to enhance their looks and increase their attraction through makeup products and branded accessories. In this way, both patriarchy and consumerism are working together to make women conscious of their looks, while consumerism is providing them with pseudo-solutions for this problem.

4.5 Growth of the Self and Consumerism

With all the distractions for women in reaching false femininity and commodity feminism discussed in the previous sections, the growth of the psychological self of the protagonists cannot be witnessed in the texts under discussion. Both Bridget and Becky do not realize that they are being dictated by society. They are unable to reflect upon their lives and themselves as a human as they are repeatedly making mistakes and not learning from them.

Both Bridget and Becky are not connected with their selves. They lack a sense of self that can guide them to have autonomously generated desires. Bridget is trying to achieve the ideal weight to make herself accepted by her own self, which she is unable to do even after achieving the desired weight. She is dependent upon external validation for her appearance and existence. Likewise, Becky is continuously shopping to make herself complete, however, like Bridget, she is also failing to reach a mental consensus.

The situation of Bridget and Becky is similar to the description of language as given by poststructuralists, who describe language as fluid. They describe the fluidity of language by explaining that the signs in a language float free of signified and they are subject to continuous "slippage" (Barry 50). The signified and the signs move perpetually to be connected with each other, however, they remain in flux. Thus, meaning in a language is

always slippery and fluid according to poststructuralists. Likewise, both Bridget and Becky are unable to have a strong sense of self, because their sense of self is slippery like a language, tainted by the ever-changing social standards which are trying to describe them. To reach a self-closure, they keep on running after looks, ideal weight, and unlimited accessories. However, even after attaining their desires they do not seem to be happy.

Considering themselves as incomplete, they are running after external means to gratify themselves but are alienated from their bodies and selves. Tong explains Marx's concept of alienation, which is a fragmenting experience. Fragmentation is stronger under capitalism. Tong explains the different types of alienation experienced by people under capitalism (Tong 101) and one of the experiences she shares fits Becky and Bridget's situation. Both Becky and Bridget are suffering from alienation. Becky is alienated from the job she is doing. She is dictated about what, how, and when she has to speak on a television show because what she is saying in the show is something she does not practice. She just mechanically expresses her thoughts on the show. For example: "Look after your money and your money will look after you" (Kinsella 47) is the statement she gives in her show, but she does not practice it herself. This job is a dehumanizing experience for Becky because she is not saying what she feels and practices, but like a machine or a robot, she speaks out what she is told to say in a reality show. Thus, she is alienated from herself.

Tong further explains that the alienated person feels his or her emotions and feelings only when he or she is detached from others, just as Becky feels her inner goodness when she loses her job and stays at home. She helps out her ex-admirer and her friend's cousin in his relationship (Kinsella 146). She realizes that even if he is not good enough for her, he deserves to be loved and thus helps him out.

Bridget is also alienated from herself and her body. She wants to lose weight to align her weight with the expectations of society regarding the ideal weight of a woman. She also wants a boyfriend for the sake of her family and neighborhood to show them that she is attractive enough to lure a guy. She has also attached her worth to her job as she feels worthless (Fielding 59) when she does not have a job (Fielding 59).

Tong asserts that alienation for women is more oppressive than for men because men seek relief from it through their relationships with women because they have subject positions in relationships in a patriarchal culture. However, for women even these intimate relationships are oppressive (Tong 102). For example, Daniel calms himself down from tension by having a relationship with Bridget (Fielding 298), but Bridget gets deceived in that very relationship. These relationships are oppressive for women because women in

such relationships experience themselves not as themselves but as others. The sense of self for women in these relationships is dependent on the appreciation from their family and friends. Though feminists want women to be happy, integrated, and whole on their own, Bridget's sense of self depends upon the happiness of her family and the neighborhood. She wants to get married and lose weight to make them happy.

Becky also does not know her own worth but needs shopping brands to define it for her. Becky's discovery of a rack in a shop labeled "treat yourself- you're worth it" (Kinsella 185), is a slogan not entirely self-created by the author, but it is a slogan of L'Oréal cosmetics. Critics describe such slogans as "self-esteem-boosting messages" (Passariello) for women. Women give value to themselves with the help of the products and slogans attached to these products. Likewise, "Sephora's promise", about their products that they "bring us together and impart a sweet scent to life" (Kinsella 184) is true for original Sephora cosmetics. Their website does not describe themselves differently from this statement. They describe themselves on their website <https://www.sephora.com/about-us>, as "we share our client's love for the confidence that our products, services, and expertise bring to their lives every day". They believe the use of their products gives confidence to women. Becky responds to these brands as "I am worth it" and "I deserve" (Kinsella 185), these products. Rather than the products catering for her needs, she is convinced that she is worth the products. She believes in the power of makeup products and is able to connect with them on a personal level. As she confesses, it seems the nail paints are telling her if just the right shade is painted on her nails, her life will be in order (Kinsella 185).

Bridget's sense of self is suppressed as explained in section 4.2.2 as well. She tolerates body shaming and does not object to being called "cow" (Fielding 52) by Daniel, instead, she feels excited for his response which he gives after a long time. She is ditched by Daniel, but she still wants to be with him. She lacks the courage to break up with him because she is so desperate to have a boyfriend to complete her. Bridget feels incomplete without a boyfriend and is therefore desperate to have one. Although she writes in her diary as a reminder to herself that she will form relationships based on an assessment of character, she does not develop this sense (Fielding 2) but rather forms a relationship with anyone who shows a slight interest in her, because of her desperation. Although she is an independent woman, her life centers upon men, because she admits rejections from men are the biggest problems of her life (Fielding 20-21). She wants to become "a woman of substance" (Fielding 2), who is complete without a boyfriend, but she actually just wants to pretend to be a woman of substance as a trick to attract a boyfriend.

Similarly, Bridget is not confident about her appearance and looks at herself from the standards of society. As mentioned before, she is not happy with her looks and wants to improve her physical appearance. She believes with an overall reduction in weight, reduction in the circumference of her thighs, dry skin brushing, and following a detoxification program (Fielding 183-184) can give her confidence. She does not look for a source of confidence within herself rather she depends on outward appearance.

On the other hand, Becky is strong and bold enough to take control of her life. Even after her secret of getting bankrupt is disclosed in the newspaper, she sheds some tears and decides to stand on her “own two feet” (Kinsella 272) and pay off her debts and show the world that she can deal with her problems (Kinsella 278). She believes in herself. Becky does not become a damsel in distress. She does what she can to convince the bank manager to extend her time to pay the debt but decides that she will not cry in front of him or anyone else in the world (Kinsella 278). She is ready to do an extra job as a waitress but is determined that she is not going to have the sympathy of the world by making them feel sorry for her (Kinsella 279). She is playing the “power feminism” (Wolf 180) card while Bridget is still playing the “victim feminism” (Wolf 180) card. The author is presenting Bridget as a victim even after presenting her as an independent woman. While Kinsella is showing her protagonist as an empowered woman but both Bridget and Becky are similar in a way that they require something external to fix their lives, ideal weight for Bridget and commodities for Becky.

Karl Marx in his theory of Economics discusses that capitalism is not a system of exchange relations but a system of power relations because the employer has the power to dictate. The employer uses his superior status to take “advantage of a worker in a number of ways” (Tong 98). Just like in *SA* Becky is asked to give an interview about an incident for which she is not happy. She is asked to cry in it and get money. This shows that employers are not paying workers for the energy and the intelligence they are putting into doing their work but they are paid only for their labor, whereas the employer enjoys the surplus value^{xi} in the form of high ratings of his show (Kinsella 154). Thus, workers have to choose between being exploited and losing their job (Tong 99) while the employer has a monopoly over the means of production. Likewise, Bridget is invited to a program “Suddenly Single” (Fielding 134), which humiliates and introduces her by saying “no partner on the horizon and that biological clock ticking away” (Fielding 136). Bridget is considered as a commodity to earn money by being presented as entertainment in the show for viewers.

Moreover, in both *BJD* and *SA*, morning shows have female hosts and female guests only and the looks of the host of the show hold a lot of significance. Just as Bridget says that her mother appeared as a movie star on the show (Fielding 53). This observation points out another interesting idea in light of Marxism. Though liberals see prostitution as a form of exchange relations and do not consider it exploitation, but even this is a system of power relations because poor and unskilled prostitutes choose to sell their sexual or reproductive services. Tong asserts that chances are that a choice made by prostitutes is more coerced than free (Tong 99). This shows that female characters such as Bridget's mother do not have any other skill to sell, and therefore, the only thing that remains to be sold is glamour. Moreover, despite being harassed at job Bridget does not think of switching her job because, she perhaps believes in this status quo as the best possibility she can have to do a job. Nowhere in the novel she acknowledges that she does not like her job.

Likewise, when Becky gets bankrupt, she is used by the television channel to increase the ratings of their program. She is asked to come to her own Morning Coffee show and explain how shopping wrecked her life and shed some tears to make the program hit and take advice on it from their new financial advisor (Kinsella 329). This shows that capitalists mold every situation to favor themselves and women accept harassment as status quo and do not challenge it which is hindering their growth as humans.

Bridget and Becky are like puppets moving in the direction of the discourses, which are giving them a smokescreen, beyond which they are unable to move. Women are being exploited at the hand of consumer culture which makes them proletariats in Marx's terms. In Marx's theory of politics, he discusses that once people recognize *haves and have-nots*, they will form a class and *class struggle* will begin. He believed the politically enlightened group of people or vanguard as he called them, will emerge among the working class and will lead proletariats towards freedom (Tong 116). But, despite the exploitation, there is an absence of class struggle among the women to topple capitalism, which Marx was hopeful to witness. This did not happen because class revolt is getting delayed by capitalists' gimmicks. Frankfurt School was among the first ones to analyze the new configurations of the economy in contemporary society to criticize the key role of mass culture. A prominent scholar from this school of thought, Marcuse analyzes the situation and believes proletariats are not starting class struggle because they have stopped reflecting upon themselves and their lives. He uses the term "*One Dimensional Man*" (Marcuse xviii-xix) for such people. He critiques new modes of social control sabotaging the rationality of an individual and making the audience comply with capitalism. Marcuse criticizes the role of media in

controlling the mind of the proletariat and not allowing him to reflect on his life by providing him with food for thought. Thus, the clutches of capitalism have become so strong that they have reached the minds of the people because of their numbing ability.

With the efforts of feminists, women came out of their houses to register their existence, because by conforming to their domestic duties for a longer period of time, they did not feel their existence (Friedan 328), however, it seems that when they came to register their existence in the world they got distracted. Gill asserts that women were supposed to be nurturing mothers to be feminine (149) but it seems that instead of enjoying femininity through motherhood, female characters are achieving an ostensible sexual appeal and making shopping the aim of their lives. They are associating femininity with sexual appeal. Consumerism is not letting these women recognize their true natures.

4.6 Print Media and Consumerism

Gill is of the opinion that there is a lot of focus on self-surveillance in postfeminist media culture, as identified in section 4.2.2 as well. Although surveillance had been there in the past, regarding a woman's grooming, dressing, manners, etc., now the surveillance has moved past the outward appearance, and it now includes habits and interests as well. Gill considers the influential and pervasive role of magazines in this regard and finds them highly influential. The magazines provide advice to women on body shape, size, attire, sexual practice, career, home, and finances (Gill 155). They provide a standard for each of these aspects to which women must subscribe. They dictate fashion through media and magazines. Gill asserts that these discourses in print media provide women with "quasi-therapeutic" (156) ideas that advise them to a makeover of their lives and appearance. Magazines first make readers believe that they or their lives are lacking or flawed in some way, and then inform them that their lives can be transformed by following the advice of relationship, design, or lifestyle experts from a magazine (Gill 156).

We find that both Bridget and Becky are in the habit of following the advice offered in magazines and self-help books. From different magazines, Bridget gets information regarding the benefits of doing Zen (Fielding 94) and she also learns ways to discover a "Goddess in every woman" (Fielding 195). Likewise, she reads an article about Feng Shui covered in *Cosmopolitan* that claims that Feng Shui can help a person get everything one "wants in life" (Fielding 254). She not only reads these articles but also tries to implement the information given in them and can witness the effectiveness of this information, such

as using Feng Shui to find her lost friend (Fielding 262-263). She also takes help from a magazine to improve her social skills and confidence by reading tips given in this regard by an actress in the *New Yorker* magazine. She learns how to introduce people to each other at a party and how to begin a conversation. Then she tries to practice these, in the tone of the actress who gave these tips (Fielding 96). Moreover, there is a whole section of *BJD*, dedicated to “inner poise” (Fielding 87) about the benefits of which women are guided through magazines. Bridget tries to practice inner poise, especially in social gatherings where she keeps repeating the mantra “inner poise, inner poise” (Fielding 99) to herself. Thus, she takes these pieces of advice given in magazines and self-help books seriously and implements them as well.

Similarly, Becky takes the advice given in magazines and self-help books sincerely. For example, she makes a mental note of relationship advice she reads in a magazine that “couples should try to sort out their problems” (Kinsella 80) on their own. Like Bridget, Becky and her friend Suze also believe in Feng Shui and try to practice the rule that “you have to let things out of your life to allow the new good things in” (Kinsella 300) your life. Moreover, *SA* even begins with a reference to a self-help book’s guidance about packing. Becky refers to magazine articles on organizing a cupboard and tips for packing luggage for a holiday (Kinsella 13). She abides by the rules which fashion magazines deem appropriate for any occasion. Just as a magazine informs her, “your best negotiating weapon is your appearance” in any situation, therefore, she chooses her outfit carefully; when she has to meet the bank manager to fight her case at the bank (Kinsella 272). For this occasion, just according to the advice given to her in a magazine, she chooses a black and grey dress to symbolize, she is serious and frugal. Becky also takes beauty advice from magazines, such as about attaining beautiful legs through fencing (Kinsella 14). She is truly inspired by these magazines and self-help books and she dreams about being featured in a magazine (Kinsella 14) and intends to write her own self-help book as well, about saving money (Kinsella 24). Thus, magazines and self-help books are part of both Bridget and Becky’s lives. These books make them realize that something is missing in their lives and point towards a problem, then provide a solution.

Gill emphasizes that magazines and self-help books also advise women about things such as, how to “text” (155) a guy and deal with men. In *BJD* we find that Bridget and her friends repeatedly refer to self-help books to take guidance for their relationships. They offer tips and tricks to follow and interpret men’s feelings, such as to interpret what it means, when a man ignores a woman at a party or when he does not give her a call (Fielding

21-27). Magazines and self-help books Becky and Bridget read keep men at the center of discussions, telling women their mistakes in relationships such as loving “too much” (Fielding 21) and losing the attention of a man as a consequence. They justify a man’s behavior of ignoring a woman, by comparing a man with a rubber band, which only stretches away from a relationship, in order to get back to the woman. However, this advice given to a modern woman is similar to advice given by Donne to his wife, in the seventeenth century. Before leaving for a trip and leaving his pregnant wife at home, Donne in his poem “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (1633) gives a piece of advice to his wife. He forbids her from mourning and instructs her to rise to the spiritual level of love, ignoring her desires and wishes. Using a metaphor of a compass, she is convinced to believe that she is the fixed point of the compass, and he is the needle, who has to explore the world, but has to come back to her after exploring because the two legs of the compass are connected. Thus, there is not much difference between the advice given to a modern woman and a seventeenth-century woman, as man is at the center of both of these pieces of advice. A woman in both of these pieces of advice is told to tolerate a man’s behavior if he ignores her because he will come back to her after sorting out his personal issues in life.

Friedan observed the role of media in the past, in shaping the minds of women in different eras according to the need of patriarchy. She writes in 1939, during the war era, the protagonists of women’s magazines were career women. They were of the same age group as women who were presented in these magazines a decade later but in a different light. Women during the period of the war were depicted in magazines as happy, proud women. A new identity for females as career women (Friedan 65) was created through magazines because women were needed in the public sphere in the absence of men at that time. However, during the post-war era in 1949, this narrative was changed for women of the same age group. During this time, accomplished women in American culture had only one definition and that was a “housewife and mother” (Friedan 70) because the war had ended and the women were convinced to go back to the domestic sphere. Thus, the magazines started presenting happy housewives replacing happy career women.

Another example in this regard is quoted by a feminist theorist Naomi Wolf. She explains because of powerful sexual imagery given in the media in the 1990s, women were not happy with their body shapes, thus silicone breast implants were done by millions of women suddenly. This anxiety continued among them until a new beauty myth came. A decade later, the consequences of silicon breasts were documented in books giving health warnings. Wolf writes that it is surprising to see that now women are not found worried

about breast size, because the market got closed due to legal action taken against silicon breast enhancement companies. The anxiety about standard breast sizes is not covered in magazines after that although if it was a real problem for women, it should have been there in the magazines even now (Wolf 4-5). She adds that the industries such as the cosmetic industry, diet industry, cosmetic surgery industry, and pornography industry, manipulate the market through magazines and their capital has arisen from the unconscious anxieties generated among women through mass media (Wolf 17).

Hence the media's power of changing the mindset of people in general and women, in particular, is an established fact. Every aspect of a woman's life from dressing, manners, weight, relationships, cooking, and diet is dictated to women. This dictation is similar to a totalitarian form of government where there is total control of society. A totalitarian form of government controls all the activities of an individual and people have little role in decision-making. People just become subject to the rules imposed upon them by rulers. Thus, Bridget and Becky go through unconscious anxieties looking at these magazines which opens their eyes towards the things they might not have considered problems such as reaching the ideal weight for Bridget and accumulating commodities to abide by fashion trends for Becky.

Just as radical cultural feminists believe femininity is a trap constructed by men to serve their purpose and if women want to be liberated, they must give femininity an entirely new meaning which would be different from the patriarchal definition of femininity. They believe that the characteristics of women should not be defined as those that diverge from masculinity, but their characteristics need to be defined as those that need "no reference point external to" (Tong 3) women. Like this idea of radical cultural feminists, magazines, and self-help books, if they want to give knowledge to women, they need to define women without any external reference to men or society, etc., and refrain from dictating to women about their femininity inspired by patriarchal or consumer concerns.

4.7 Effects of Consumerism on *Ecriture Feminine*

As in the consciousness-raising journey of second-wave feminism, women write fictional novels, besides nonfiction works to reach more audiences and spread the message of feminism. These novels are written to tap into more readers because they could be easily understood by laywomen, and as a result, women are convinced about feminist aims unconsciously because the pill of feminism was sugar-coated (Whelehen 102) in the form of a story. Likewise, it seems that the novels under discussion are part of the "consumerism

endorsing journey” which I would like to term them. These novels are promoting consumerism in a sugar-coated way, convincing the readers to consume unconsciously. Fielding and Kinsella are doing this by providing a list of famous brands in their novels and normalizing the behavior of being a shopaholic. However, the heroines of consciousness-raising novels have constructive aims in their lives as Whelehen describes. The writers of these novels want to awaken common women and encourage them to fight for their rights (175), whereas the heroines of ‘consumerism-endorsing novels’ have no aim in life except to indulge in consumerism.

The literature Fielding and Kinsella are producing is used as a vehicle to advertise products. We do not witness any advertisements in a novel before the 1990s, but Fielding introduces them in literature. For example, Bridget not only explains steps about how to record a video through a device called “FV 67 HV” (Fielding 152) video recorder, but she also adds an adjective clause to her explanation of video programming calling it “easy as making a phone call” (Fielding 152). It seems as if Fielding is convincing the readers to use this device for recording. Likewise, Kinsella’s novel shows signs of commercialism as it includes the names of several brands. It can be clearly noticed that the focus on the brands has increased in Kinsella’s novel which is written after five years of *BJD* as even on the very first page of *SA* there is a list of brands including the Body Shop and Oasis (Kinsella 13). *BJD* and *SA* are dropping plugs for readers to promote brands. Although by selecting a novel to read, a reader chooses to read a story, instead of choosing other options for reading such as fashion magazines or catalogs of products. But *BJD* and *SA* offer a blend of different types of content including product catalogues in their novels.

Observing the current culture Samuel asserts the cultural dynamics of leisure and the cultural dynamics of consumerism have now combined (xvi). Thus, in *BJD* and *SA* advertisement and entertainment are mixed just as Samuel mentioned. Moreover, because of this concoction in literature, it shows that Fielding and Kinsella are not writing literature to represent women, but they are writing to represent consumerism as the novels seem to be similar to catalogs, by naming and describing different products. As a result, the feminist aim of empowering women to be able to write is being manipulated by consumer culture.

Woolf asserts in the early twentieth century that women in the past could not write “books of travel” (128) because they had not traveled enough of the world, due to financial and cultural constraints women had in the past. Consequently, with the lack of exploration and experience of the world, women had no experience to share with the readers. She

further argues that in the absence of experience, a writer usually makes use of imagination to write literature. However, the problem with women is that their imagination is hampered by a lack of education and extreme patriarchal conventions that stop women from expressing themselves. Woolf still has hope that women can write after putting aside feminine conventions and patriarchal expectations expected from women, which get translated in her famous phrase about women, “angels in the house.” In her view, the “true nature” (Woolf 6) of women can only be realized when this expectation is lifted. She wants women to write literature to represent the true nature of women, which is not tainted by the conventions of society and different from the perception of men about the nature of women because men had been representing women in literature according to their perceptions about women.

Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1970) also criticized this patriarchal bias present in literary writings produced by men, which were considered universal most of the time. For example, *Sexus* (1950) by Henry Miller and *An American Dream* (1965) by Norman Mailer describe a subjugated status of women in their novels as per their perception. Thus, because of the misrepresentation or underrepresentation of women in literature, both Woolf and Millet believe women themselves can represent their true nature.

The life of a contemporary woman is different from that of “Judith Shakespeare” (Woolf 56), a fictional sister of Shakespeare in Woolf’s essay, who could not write and get fame due to the constraints of a patriarchal society. Contemporary society is comparatively less patriarchal than in the past. This situation makes the conditions more amiable for women to express their feelings and experiences freely. Being modern women, Fielding and Kinsella have what Woolf metaphorically meant by a room of one’s own. They are educated enough to write being modern women. Thus, all hindrances for women to write pointed out by Woolf are solved. But, it seems as if Kinsella took Woolf’s advice given to the women literally, that is “to write for your good and for the world at large” (Woolf 129) and to “loiter at street corners” (128) to explore and write, as Kinsella is voicing the concerns of the consumer world in her novel and giving benefit to it. The protagonist of her novel seems literally “loiter[ing on] the streets” (Kinsella 117) of New York but her travel diary does not narrate experiences of exploring the historical and cultural background of the city like a usual travelogue. Rather it only narrates the stories of visiting the shops of ‘Christian Dior’, ‘Hermes’, and ‘Chanel’ (Kinsella 159), from which she cannot get her eyes off experiencing anything else in the city. For Becky “acclimatizing” (Kinsella 163) herself with the city is by shopping like New Yorkers. Unlike Woolf’s opinion, Becky’s line

of thought could not go any deeper than the shopping brands. Power is right in saying that the emancipation of a modern woman overlaps with consumerism and the rhetoric of consumerism and feminism in combination hinders genuine thinking (1-2). Therefore, Fielding and Kinsella are not giving autonomously generated ideas to describe women, as being influenced by consumerism, they are promoting consumerism.

Besides promoting consumerism by mentioning brands and stereotyping women as shopaholics; Fielding and Kinsella are also objectifying women as discussed in section 4.2.2. They are creating sexual imagery by discussing female body parts, which is similar to the way men had been writing about women in various bodies of writing. Presence of these feature in the novels under discussion show links between these novels with consumerism, as pornography is a “massive industry” (Power 45). *BJD* and *SA* are contributing to this industry.

Marx explained that the dynamics of society are based upon the economic structure of the society, called as “base” (Collier 48). He asserted that the mode of production controls the “superstructure” (Collier 48) which includes ideology, politics, religion, law, and morality. Thus, changes in the mode of production slowly transform the superstructure as well. Therefore, the change in the means of production which came with the advent of industrialization is now more visible in the superstructure as *BJD* and *SA* are aligned with the present means of production and promote the ideology of consumerism.

As the focus of *BJD* and *SA* is on consumerism, the quality of novels seems to be declining. At times Kinsella gives such childish jokes as if her book is written for children. For example, Becky lies to her interviewers that after the interview ends she is going to visit a museum. She wants to impress them with her love for history, however, she actually wants to go to Sephora for shopping but does not want to tell the interviewers. Sephora and the museum are in two opposite directions, and she wants to escape the interviewers' sight who are standing in the middle of the road. Kinsella stretches the explanation of this incident too long and creates a humorous scene of Becky escaping her interviewers. However, the constructed scene seems totally unrealistic as Becky moves the taxi three times in the direction of Sephora, each time stopped by the interviewers who show her the direction of the museum (Kinsella 182). In addition to this, there are other incidents as well in the novel which give a similar feeling of shallowness. For example, Becky lies in her interview and makes things up in a silly way, telling interviewers about the self-created traditions of her country, which they are ready to buy as well (Kinsella 177-181). Similarly, at her neighbor's wedding, she tells the bride that she is waving at her boyfriend Luke, and

he is waving back at her, although nobody else can see him (Kinsella 118). The writer is unable to create a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’^{xii} effect, and a reader gets irritated with such jokes.

Moreover, Walter Benjamin’s assertion that a work of art which is produced in the time of industrialization is “designed for reproducibility” (6) seems to be true for these novels as well. Both *BJD* and *SA* have similar kinds of plots, stories, and events. The stories are of single girls from the same age bracket. There is a wedding of a neighbor at both of the protagonists’ parents’ places (Kinsella 28). The entire neighborhood wishes to see their boyfriends and the boys in a similar way miss the occasion. Thus, the two novels are like what Jameson calls “pastiche” (7). Jameson illuminates a difference between pastiche and parody which are generally confused because both of them are actually mimicry and imitation. “Parody mocks original” (Jameson 16), involving humor whereas pastiche is a parody that is devoid of humor. The novelists under discussion are thus unapologetically producing similar works.

Benjamin explaining the quality of art produced during the time of industrialization, further adds that when the authenticity of the product ceases to be the criterion, the function of art gets reversed. It begins to be based on politics. In a similar way, *BJD* and *SA* with a clear mention of brands seem to be based on consumerism. This shows that the form of art has changed with the advent of technology.

The work of art remained reproducible even in the past for different purposes however its mechanical reproduction in contemporary times is different. With the invention of cameras, paintings and photographs of paintings are juxtaposed, and though there was an absence of aura in photography, it is accepted as an art form. Art has lost its quality of creativity and eternal value when the “authenticity” of a piece of art ceases to be the criteria of art. Thus, according to Benjamin the art, which is being produced now, it is being produced with the aim of reproducibility. This shows that art seems to be a commodity in the present times, governed by the principle of profit and sale and not with creativity. Besides bringing financial benefits this form of production of art brings limitations. As a result, it can be observed that writers are not free to show creativity in their works. As Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay “Self-Reliance” writes that “imitation is suicide” (146), this form of literature is destroying the creativity of the authors who are imitating each other.

Marx is of the view that we are what we are, because of what we do particularly, to fulfill our basic needs through productive tasks. Tong interprets Marx’s point by clarifying that Marx does not mean individual men and women, but men and women

collectively create society through production and this in turn shapes them (Tong 97). Thus, a capitalist mode of production makes people think in a certain way. Fielding and Kinsella also seem to be affected by the capitalist mode of production, as the representation of women in the novels under discussion is touching all the factors significant from the selling point of view.

Moreover, the magazines and novels seem to be coming from the same source as they are promoting each other. The direct references to the magazines discussed in the previous section show that these novels are endorsing fashion magazines. The characters are shown following the tips given in these magazines which are leading them towards success.

Socialist feminists believe that in contemporary times capitalism is responsible for women's oppression. They explain that women's oppression began with the practice of private property. Private ownership of the means of production by a few men mainly initiated a class system and the contemporary manifestation of this system is corporate capitalism. Thus, in Tong's words, the two-headed beast of "capitalist patriarchy" (4) must be killed to give emancipation to women. Corporate patriarchy channelizes our unthinking habits, our purchasing decisions, and our thought processes for its benefit. Typically, these efforts take place beneath our level of awareness; so that the appeals which move us for these behavior patterns are often latent. The result is that many of us are being influenced and manipulated, far more than we realize, in the patterns of our everyday lives. Some of the manipulating being attempted "is simply amusing" (Packard 31), because our choices might be different if we could depend on our own selves without the influence of any external force. Perhaps that is why Fielding and Kinsella are writing novels, without being aware of working for consumerism. On the other hand, this may also be a possibility that perhaps these writers are producing commercially successful novels by working on a formula for success. They might have misinterpreted the advice of feminists such as Woolf's advice for women to write "all kinds of books hesitating at no subject however trivial or however vast" (Woolf 128). Thus, Fielding and Kinsella are enjoying the opportunity of being writers and are not concerned about the subject matter or style of writing.

The selected works of Fielding and Kinsella show signs of consumerism. Consumerism is there in these novels, which can be observed through naming brands, explaining the use and benefits of different products, and using products of different brands

as style statements. The representation of women is also done from perspectives of both consumerism and patriarchal culture. Women are objectified, and problems of women related to age, weight, dressing, and skin care are discussed.

4.7 Global and Local

This section presents a discussion on how *BJD* and *SA* are glocal in nature. The word glocal is a global and local portmanteau combining global and local tenets. Robertson defines glocal as “linking ...[different] localities” (Robertson 35).

Fielding and Kinsella are British writers who predominantly represent their local culture in their respective texts. Both *BJD* and *SA* are set in Britain. However, the characters in both novels are shown to be remotely working for American companies (Fielding 55) (Kinsella 52, 332). Therefore, we can trace glocal and global strands in both novels. The characters in *SA* frequently keep shuttling between Britain and America. Becky explores and learns about the American culture and “etiquettes” (Kinsella 174) and gets completely overwhelmed in New York. She discovers new shops and shopping centers in America, such as SoHo (Kinsella 194), and gets surprised by innovative ideas for shopping in the US, such as a “sample sale” (Kinsella 166).

Bridget is well acquainted with “Oriental” (Fielding 66) culture as well as she has developed a taste for “Indian” (Fielding 31) food. Upon her friend’s suggestion, Bridget also tries to create balance and harmony in her life with the ancient Chinese art of “Feng Shui” (Fielding 66), which works well for her to some extent. At times she compares her life to the life of Turkish women (81) when she feels oppressed. These and many other examples validate the glocal elements that we find in both these texts.

4.8 Conclusion

Both *BJD* and *SA* are in many ways in conflict with the first and second-wave feminist ideologies. Postfeminism is considered a backlash against feminism by feminists such as Faludi, but the portrayal of Postfeminism in the novels under discussion exhibits a fusion of feminist and anti-feminist principles. However, both feminism and anti-feminism are not depicted in their traditional sense and, for this reason, are not very easily identifiable with a bird's eye view. Therefore, I identified feminist and anti-feminist trends in the analysis using textual evidence.

Besides the demand for women's independence and equal rights, the proponents of both waves of feminism demanded education, logical accomplishments, and liberation

from dictation given to women from a source outside themselves. Traditional feminism was about the independence and empowerment of women. They wanted women to be empowered through mental capabilities and to enter the public sphere to stand beside men. But, both Bridget and Becky, despite entering public spheres, have neither any logical accomplishments nor are they interested in indulging in such activities. They are allowed to enter the public sphere, unlike the women in the past, but their careers are stagnant. Bridget is not striving for a better job despite being harassed at her workplace, and Becky is also doing a job of a personal shopper in which no mental capabilities are required. The bifurcation of separate spheres for men and women still seems true in this way. The protagonists of both *BJD* and *SA* are reverting back to the notions of naivety and ignorance expected from women in the past. By following this trend, Bridget and Becky are being presented as pleasing objects like the women in the past during patriarchal times, showing tendencies that are anti-feminist.

Moreover, Postfeminism paired with consumerism is taking advantage of the postfeminist situation where the gender difference on both physical and psychological levels is reemphasized. There is a lot of focus on femininity in these discourses. For women to reveal their femininity, consumerism provides gendered discourses through different forms of media like magazines and self-help books. The protagonists of the novels under discussion are seen to be fond of taking guidance from these magazines. The magazines provide ideal figures to which the women are expected to subscribe. Gyms and special kinds of diets are shared as a business. Besides these discourses, consumerism also provides women with products to show their femininity. Not only pink packaged commodities are designed for them, but also specific attires along with accessories are prescribed for every occasion. There are elements of consumerism present in *BJD*. However, there is a visible increase in engagement with consumerism in *SA*. Thus, despite presenting independent and autonomous women, Bridget and Becky are shown to be taking dictation from magazines and books, finding ways to enhance their femininity with the help of consumerism.

Besides femininity, the notions of feminism are also commercialized in *BJD* and *SA*. The protagonists of these novels, like strong women, express their confidence and choice of biography by taking initiative in sexual relationships with men while considering girl power as their empowerment. Though they consider it their girl power to charm men using their bodies and get what they want, actually their bodies are being used as sexual objects. Moreover, feminists wanted women to be economically independent, and Bridget and Becky revealed their economic independence through shopping. This version of

women's empowerment is aligned with the aims of patriarchy and consumerism because it benefits both. Patriarchy wanted women to take care of their looks so that men could enjoy their sight, and consumerism wanted women to look pretty to sell beauty products. Thus, Fielding and Kinsella present feminist discourses which are appropriated and represent empowerment sponsored by consumerism.

Feminists expect women to explore their true nature and depict it in literature after gaining independence from patriarchal baggage. But Fielding and Kinsella, despite enjoying the privileges of independent women of the twentieth and twenty-first century, respectively, are still not independent in the true sense. They are presenting puppets in the form of Bridget and Becky, whose strings are pulled by capitalists and patriarchy. Thus, even when given a chance to gain knowledge and fully participate in the public sphere, which feminists like Virginia Woolf and Wollstonecraft demand from society for women, the women are not participating in the public sphere as expected from them.

Women became empowered to write after a long and extensive struggle. They were entirely ignored in history books, and men described them in fictional works according to their perceptions. Owing to the efforts of the feminists, Fielding and Kinsella, are enjoying a room of their own in both senses, geographical freedom and financial freedom. Still, they are not exploring their own selves as women. Instead, they seem to be agents of consumerism. By clearly naming brands and discussing their benefits, *BJD* and *SA* are advertisements in the form of stories.

Fielding and Kinsella are not exploring their bodies and writing about their experience as women; instead, they are writing just like some male authors who have been representing women as pornographic tools to gain more readerships. The writers are not accepting their own bodies and are trying to subscribe to the sexual imagery circulated around them by Big Brother.^{xiii} Though they had to write about their own bodies, they are taking dictation about their bodies from the outside, eventually being alienated from their own bodies. Postfeminism is commodifying beauty and women; therefore, Bridget and Becky are being represented as objects as in the phallogocentric tradition in the past.

Likewise, Fielding and Kinsella present women as fond of shopping. The protagonists of the novels under discussion go for unlimited and unchecked shopping sprees, putting themselves in debt. They are not in control of themselves. The dilemma is that the authors are celebrating this situation instead of revolting against it because they believe being independent women, it is their choice to follow what they want to follow. However, what they intend to follow is totally in sync with what consumerism demands

from them. Thus, Fielding and Kinsella are victims of a hegemonic system that is creating a smokescreen of freedom for them.

Moreover, by representing characters like Bridget and Becky, they are normalizing shopaholic tendencies in women, which is gender stereotyping. They are also ignoring that this is a disease and should not be normalized. Rather, those sources which are encouraging women to become shopaholics need to be figured out and addressed. But, being believers of individuality, postfeminist women are against the notion of ‘personal is political,’ and therefore they are not considering it as an issue. Thus, previously patriarchal culture was subjugating the identity of women; now, consumer culture is playing the same role.

As Karl Marx writes, the superstructure promotes the ideas of the base; therefore, patriarchy and consumerism are subjugating women through different media forms and programming their minds to be exploited by them. Writing is a tool women must use to advocate for themselves in order to acquire the freedom women have historically been denied, but Fielding and Kinsella are using this tool in service of consumerism. As a result, it is hindering the literary acumen of the writers.

Even if *BJD* and *SA* were written as satire, repeating the same formula for their stories shows that they are also getting benefitted from the satire they are creating. There is no individuality in these novels. They are repeating the same formula with different settings and names.

Moreover, with the interplay of various cultures in *BJD* and *SA*, the texts are glocal as they are “linking ..[different] localities” (Robertson 35). Although Fielding and Kinsella are British writers who primarily depict their local cultures in their novels, using local settings and characters, they also refer to cultures from other parts of the world, such as India, China, America, and Turkey. The impact of the writings of *BJD* and *SA* on writers from other parts of the world, discussed in the next chapter, further builds the argument upon the glocal aspects of the selected works for this research.

End Notes

^{vi} As mentioned in the Introduction, the acronyms of the titles of these novels will be used henceforth. *Bridget Jones's Diary* is mentioned as *BJD* and *Shopaholic Abroad* as *SA*, for the sake of convenience.

^{vii} The concept of Panopticon was given by eighteenth century Philosopher Jeremy Bentham. He discussed it as way of monitoring and controlling a number of people in a building, with a single security guard. As it is impossible for a single person to keep an eye on every individual, the people are controlled with a fear that at any point in time the guard may be watching them. In other words, it means controlling subjects through the fear of surveillance. Other philosophers have also incorporated this idea in their works. Michael Foucault has used this concept in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Sandra Bartky has also discussed this concept

in her work *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (1990), with reference to feminism.

iv The term “raunch culture” has been explained by Genz and Benjamin in their book titled *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (2009). Chapter named “Do-Me Feminism and Raunch Culture” explains power feminists consider sexual freedom of women as their empowerment. They believe in highly sexualized version of women representation.

ix Imelda Whelehen in her book titled *Feminist Best Seller* (2005) presents an overview of women’s writings written in the second half of the twentieth century. She puts these writings in different groups. One of the categories is named after Sue Kaufman’s work, *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (1967). The novels in this group depict characters that are fed up of their social roles. They feel weak, helpless and do not find meaning in their lives.

x The term narcissism is explained in an essay “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” (1914) by Freud. He describes narcissism as a behavior in which a person treats his or her body in the same way as he treats a sexual object.

xi Marx discusses surplus value in his book called *Das Kapital* (1867). He explains surplus value as a profit which is increased with the hard work of a laborer.

xii S.T. Coleridge explained the nature of his poetry as incorporating imagination but presenting it in a way that it would appear natural to his readers. He believed the readers would willingly suspend logic and critical thinking to grasp the imaginative scene.

xiii The idea of Big Brother is discussed in the seminal work of George Orwell called as *1984* (1949). Big Brother refers to totalitarian form of government with profound surveillance of subjects.

CHAPTER 5

Disguised Oppression and Parochialism: A Reading of Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips's *Beautiful from this Angle*

5.1 Introduction

Moving forward with our discussion about the chick lit novels from the previous chapter, this chapter is an analysis of the selected Pakistani novels of the same genre. It presents a discussion on how Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips's *Beautiful from this Angle*^{xiv} are concerned with the ideology of Postfeminism. This chapter discusses Postfeminism and its links with consumerism and globalization in the Pakistani context.

It also considers how the novels discussed in the previous chapter are similar yet different from those discussed in this chapter. Thus, the similarities and differences are identified, and possible reasons for translating global trends of Postfeminism and consumerism into Pakistani settings are also evaluated. This chapter analyzes these novels in light of Gill's critique of Western postfeminist discourses. Additionally, Robertson, Dirlik, and Jameson's selected works are used for this aspect of the discussion.

The novels seem to have some satirical elements directed toward their local society and also the international community. I discuss these satirical episodes illuminating where the satire is surpassing its intended boundaries and transitioning into a form of expression that is no longer comical but is tantamounting to be harmful even.

5.2 Ambivalence between Feminism and Anti-Feminism

Gill discusses several postfeminist features present in various contemporary media forms. In this section, I discuss these features in the two novels under discussion. I also consider how different aspects of women's lives in Pakistani settings are being influenced by postfeminist sensibilities, where a postfeminist sensibility is defined as an amalgamation of "feminist" and "anti-feminist" (Gill 163) ideas.

KYKM and *BFTA* seem to be raising feminist concerns in various ways. For example, characters like Henna, a female, cannot manage her father's farm. Therefore, she has to marry Javaid (Philips 44). As she has imbibed patriarchy, she agrees with her father's decision about her marriage. Philips also brings another feminist discussion of the restriction of women to the domestic sphere through an event where Henna advises one of her subjects from the farm to keep her daughter "inside" (Philips 49) her home to be safe from being harassed. Like Philips, Imtiaz also voices feminist concerns when she discusses a rape of a woman. She shows that instead of punishing a rapist, society justifies rape by criticizing the victim's dress, saying the victim was wearing "jeans" (Imtiaz 44) and was at a public place late at night; therefore, she got raped. These are valid concerns that the two texts raise.

Other aspects that these novels seem to foreground are the postfeminist media depictions of women for whom Gill uses the adjectives of "confident", "assertive" (153), and "autonomous" women (154). This is true for both novels under discussion. Women's representation in both *KYKM* and *BFTA* is that of independent and autonomous women. Apparently, the protagonists of these novels are not taking any submissive positions as women do under patriarchy; instead, they seem to be empowered. Imtiaz, in *KYKM*, has presented Ayesha as a sovereign woman whose empowerment is visible in various ways. Ayesha describes herself as a "hard-core reporter, an intelligent, independent woman" (Imtiaz 127). Unlike women in the past, she is not restricted to the domestic sphere; instead, she is working in a male-dominated field and one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Ayesha gets financially dependent upon her father for a while when she loses her job; otherwise, she is independent.

She is confident enough to work as a journalist and does every job that men around her do. She meets violent gangs, and visits blast sites like other male journalists. Imtiaz challenges traditional gender roles through the character of Ayesha as she expresses that she even interviewed those "gangsters" to whom "male reporters" (Imtiaz 139) were not willing to visit. Similarly, Imtiaz presents gender role reversal at the site of the blast as Ayesha is shown more composed than men in this situation. She says the rickshaw driver at the blast site seems to "pass out" (Imtiaz 241), but she tries to bring him back to his senses. Another male at the site, her boss, Kamran, is also shown having a "panic attack" (Imtiaz 242) with fear, but Ayesha helps him walk out of the situation with courage.

Likewise, Aynah in *BFTA* is a strong independent woman working as a journalist. However, her career as a journalist is not stressed in the novel, unlike the career of Ayesha

in *KYKM*. She makes an influential documentary along with her friends. She is highly educated and is a graduate of Oxford University. Opposite to the idea of a traditional woman, she is a modern smart woman who knows from a very young age how to deal with people just as she controls her driver by giving him a threat and taking her where ever she wants to go secretly during “school hours” (Philips 98). Moreover, she parties all night and actively pursues her sexual life (Philips 115). There seem to be no restrictions on her in any way. She knows her strong position as a woman and expresses that if anyone has to form rules in a relationship, “it should be her” (Philips 107). Like feminists, she endorses women's education through the character of Nilofer (Philips 52). This shows that she has a strong personality with clear likes and dislikes.

Moreover, besides the two protagonists in *KYKM* and *BFTA*, other women are also depicted as empowered in these novels, such as Ayesha’s friend, Zara in *KYKM*, who is an “investigative reporter” (Imtiaz 6). She is an extrovert who loves drinking alcohol and going to parties. Similarly, in *BFTA*, Aynah’s friend Mumtaz is a foreign graduate. She makes a successful documentary along with Aynah for which she wins an “award” (Philips 228) as well.

Thus, with the autonomous, financially independent, and active representation of women in the public sphere, *KYKM* and *BFTA* seem to represent empowered female characters. However, there are various ways in which these texts show anti-feminist characteristics, as discussed below in the following sections of the discussion.

5.2.1 Desperation for men

As mentioned earlier, Gill views postfeminist texts as an amalgamation of feminist and anti-feminist ideas (163). In light of this quote, we see that Imtiaz and Philips, despite representing women as sovereign in *KYKM* and *BFTA*, also depict these female characters as desperate for men. These characters are portrayed as devoid of self-respect in this regard, just as in *KYKM*, we find Ayesha being desperate to be accepted by a man (Imtiaz 135). Like Bridget in *BJD*, Ayesha tries to become “a woman of substance” (Fielding 2) and follows the same measures as Bridget when her boyfriend rejects her. She tries not to be obsessed and become love-struck if a man rejects her and instead be composed and a “collected woman” (Imtiaz 127) to realize her worth. However, like Bridget, she confesses she still waits for recognition and acceptance from a man (Fielding 21) by checking her “phone” (Imtiaz 127) again and again for his messages and being ready for a dinner “date” (Imtiaz 80) as soon as he offers her, even after he ignores her initially.

Gill writes that women in chick lit are mostly portrayed as single and unhappy about being single (5). Like Fielding, Imtiaz shows that successful and independent women are still sad because they go through many problems of single life and cannot rely on themselves for their happiness. Imtiaz shows it through the character of Ayesha that she wants to share food with someone (Imtiaz 39) but cannot go alone to a restaurant and has no dance partner at weddings (Imtiaz 30), which makes her sad.

After being ditched by a man, Ayesha represents a single woman's life. She fears she will be like single aunties at parties who repeatedly make kids fetch a drink for them, and they are invited to parties only because people take “pity” (Imtiaz 178) on them for being single. Though the writer does not elaborate on why, it seems to reflect the social concept regarding single women without children: they will depend on others as no one will care for them in their old age (Balen 106). Ayesha’s contemplation about the single life is similar to Bridget’s thoughts about being alone. Ayesha fears ending up “alone” (Imtiaz 126) in life, just like this British counterpart that we discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, she wants to take every chance with a man even after he ignores her (Imtiaz 108), and she is ready to stoop to any level to get him. Despite being an independent woman, Ayesha requires external validation, especially from a man, to make her feel “desirable” (Imtiaz 94) and tell her about her worth.

Similarly, another independent woman in *KYKM*, Zara, portrayed as a well-established journalist, is also shown as a desperate woman. She goes to parties in search of men (Imtiaz 10) and tries to seduce a “kid who is barely twenty” (Imtiaz 224) years old. Diane Negra in *What A Girl Wants* (2009) points out that it is considered to be an axiom that “single and non-parenting women’s lives are empty” and “deficient”. She explains that society believes that thoughts of getting married “dominate”(61) the lives of single women. Through the characters of Ayesha and Zara, Imtiaz proves it to be true.

Likewise, despite representing an independent woman, Imtiaz is not giving total autonomy to Ayesha in a relationship like a traditional woman. She is not the one who takes any decision in a relationship with her boyfriend, Jamie. Jamie decides when they should meet, and he has to decide about the kind of date he wants, whether it would be a “one-night stand thing” (Imtiaz 151), a long-term relationship or just a meet-up to have “coffee” (Imtiaz 16). Ayesha moves according to his wishes, as she feels at midnight that he expects her to leave; thus, she goes home (Imtiaz 122), despite being willing to stay a little more. Jamie is the one who decides whether they should have another meeting or not; till then, she analyzes her sexual encounter with him. She assesses her behavior if she provided him

with enough pleasure or not and did she look attractive enough to arouse his interest in a meet-up because, after this meet-up, he contacts her according to his convenience after a whole day passes (Imtiaz 107). Imtiaz has depicted an independent woman without integrity who is desperate to have a man even after he deceives her by stealing her article (Imtiaz 235). Imtiaz does not give total autonomy to Ayesha in her relationship with Jamie, just as Gill writes that in postfeminist culture, women themselves are considered responsible for their sexual relationships and for providing pleasure to men (151). Thus, the onus is on Ayesha to keep entertaining a man to keep the relationship going.

Moreover, Imtiaz presents Ayesha just like the protagonist of romantic predecessors. As in the past, typical romantic stories such as *Cinderella* depicted weak and helpless women being helped by heroes. Ayesha also requires a man to rescue her from Karachi when she receives threats for covering a serious issue in the newspaper related to a high-profile prisoner (Imtiaz 148). Her friend Saad understands the seriousness of the situation and helps her get out of the city to a safe destination.

Gill writes that women in postfeminist discourses are presented as starving for sex and ready to have a physical relationship with an anonymous person at the “slightest invitation” (152). This is true for Ayesha in *KYKM*, who considers Jamie, a good-looking man who has invited her for dinner, which is enough for her to have dinner with him, though she has met him only once. She is not only ready to have dinner with him but also prepares herself for a physical relationship with him by wearing “black lacy” (Imtiaz 80) undergarments, which she explains such “lingerie” (Imtiaz 94) is worn when one wants to have physical contact with someone. Ayesha explains she is up for this intimate contact, even if she has to go back home feeling ashamed because she feels her body is “deadened” (Imtiaz 122) and only a man can give it life by touching it. Though Ayesha fears that Jamie might be playing with her, she admits as she did not have a physical relationship in the past “six months” (Imtiaz 130), not even a kiss “let alone...sex” (Imtiaz 66) therefore, she does not want to miss this chance. Moreover, she adds that Jamie was charming and irresistible so she could not skip an opportunity of having a relationship with him (Imtiaz 130). Imtiaz has actually depicted her character as starving for sex, as Ayesha expresses that she longs for it (Imtiaz 61) and is ready to go for it no matter what the consequences may be.

Like Imtiaz, Philips also presents the desperation of a woman for a man in *BFTA*. When Aynah is upset, she knows a man can make her “feel better” (Philips 14), whether he is a boyfriend or just a male friend like Faisal. Aynah has this faith in her friend Faisal that a “girl can always count on ..[him] to lift her spirits” (Philips 149), and what he actually

does to raise the spirit of girls is also given a hint, that is sex. Besides Faisal, Aynah is dependent on her boyfriend Kamal, as when she feels insecure, she misses her boyfriend's hug with his "strong arms", which makes "her feel secure" (Philips 148). She is shown to be so desperate for a relationship with a man that right after meeting Kamal at a party for the first time, she tells him that she thinks she loves him and, therefore, wherever he is going after the party she will accompany him. However, a man has to remind her that she is going with a "complete stranger" (Philips 18) she still goes with him. Just in the morning, she realizes that she checked into a random hotel with Kamal (Philips 96) at night.

Another independent woman in *BFTA*, Mumtaz, is also shown craving for a man's attention. All she wants is sex and fame, which she gets in the end. However, she gets the fame she craves and attention from Monty through a lie. Although Monty disgraces her by saying that all she wants in her life is sexual attention from a man (Philips 14). Yet, when she becomes famous, she falls for the same guy who ridicules her (Philips 103). She does not even care about her self-respect for having a relationship with him.

Thus, Imtiaz and Philips undermine the achievements of women as human beings. They depict them as anxious to get the attention of men, and therefore, they fall for anyone, stooping to the level of desperation.

5.2.2 Women's sexuality as empowerment

Gill writes that in postfeminist discourses, independent and confident women present themselves as "desiring sexual subjects" (151) and consider it their empowerment. She compared writings from the past where women were sexually objectified. However, now in the media, there is a representational shift as women are not directly objectified; they present themselves as confident and assertive females who actively choose what they wish to do in life while sexually objectifying themselves (Gill 152). Thus, when the depiction of women in *KYKM* and *BFTA* is considered, one realizes that despite giving the subject position to female protagonists and narrating stories from their perspectives, the authors are objectifying women.

In *KYKM*, it is shown that Ayesha likes taking the initiative in relationships representing a confident woman. She shows her empowerment over Jamie when he sends her a text because she takes pride in her "flirting" (Imtiaz 108) skills. Ayesha candidly expresses her carnal desires and feelings that she wishes "to feel someone's body pressing against" (Imtiaz 115) hers. She ruminates over how much she wishes "to rip Jamie's clothes

off” (Imtiaz 82), and begin the sexual activity. Likewise, in *BFTA* Aynah takes the initiatives in sexual relations with Kamran (Philips 100) and invites Kamal to have “phone sex” (Philips 41) with her. She shows her empowerment over him by making him “salivate” by saying something “dirty” (Philips 55). She openly expresses sexual desires by saying how she wishes to touch Kamran’s thick hair and feel the texture (Philips 17). In this way, Imtiaz and Philips consider taking the initiative in sexual relationships as confidence for women.

Aynah in *BFTA* is bold to the extent that she wants to kiss her boyfriend on a road (Philips 194) and have sex with him even on a road (Philips 100). She does not care about society and social morality, on the other hand, her boyfriend is concerned about social morality and stops her from doing sex on the road (Philips 194). Thus, this independent woman is much bolder than a man. Ayesha is also concerned about social morality to the extent that her family does not know about her sexual relationship with her boyfriend; however, she also does not care if the rest of society knows about it. Therefore, to get a birth control tablet, she chooses to get it from a “hotel pharmacy” (Imtiaz 115) away from her home. Similarly, after having a physical relationship with Jamie in a hotel, she walks out of the hotel lobby in the middle of the night boldly by holding a cigarette in her hand while the doorman gets embarrassed to see her and turns his face away (Imtiaz 123). Both of the protagonists of *KYKM* and *BFTA* are not concerned about showing affection towards their boyfriends in public places as they are kissing their boyfriends on the road (Philips 216) or at an airport (Imtiaz 262), challenging the idea of values.

The intimate moments of Ayesha and Aynah with their respective boyfriends are no secret because both narrate their kissing scenes to their friends (Imtiaz 93) (Philips 43). Sexual scenes are narrated repeatedly and told to both male and female friends, and in Ayesha’s case, even her friend’s brother is aware of her dating experiences (Imtiaz 31). This shows Ayesha and Aynah have active sexual lives. They take sexual initiatives because they are confident women. However, when Aynah is criticized for this kind of lifestyle of having sexual relations, she describes it as “life” (Philips 5). Thus, illicit love affairs and sexual relations are presented as normal for these women.

On the other hand, compared to these Pakistani female characters, Bridget, even in a Western setting, is concerned about social morality as she wears a “wedding ring” (Fielding 117) to a shop to buy a pregnancy test kit to give an impression that she is married. The social morality she is concerned about, the protagonists of the selected Pakistani novels

are not even bothered about it. They are sexually assertive and always ready for it, as Gill says it suits postfeminist women's "liberated interests" (151).

In one of her interviews, a famous psychologist Marisa Peer explains with reference to Marilyn Monroe that she made herself a sex symbol because she felt that she had to prove her worth. Monroe wanted love from people and to become famous through whatever means she could. Thus, she became a sex symbol in the world of men. Similarly, the female characters in the novels under discussion are not enough in themselves and require external validation from men, just as patriarchy has been telling women for ages that they are not enough. These female characters are just falling for any guy that comes their way. They have sexual relations with men, upon their conditions, because these women do not know their own worth.

Thus, Imtiaz and Philips are anti-feminist in their representation of women in this way. Both Ayesha and Amynah are sexually active because it suits their independent and confident status, and they want to show the world that no one restrains them, and they do what they wish. Therefore, using flirting skills and making people salivate is empowerment for these women. As Gill writes, postfeminist discourses encourage women to use their femininity as empowerment, and it is advised to women "to take over a company" (qtd.in Gill 153) while distracting men with sexual activities. In contrast to a representation of a woman, the representation of a man is done differently in the novels under discussion. For example, besides deciding the nature of the date Jamie wants to have with Ayesha, he casually has sex with her and moves on to serious issues in life, such as the publication of a case about a prisoner taken to Guantanamo (Imtiaz 176). Or Kamran in *BFTA* has a serious career motive behind having a relationship with Amynah, while Amynah is depicted as a non-serious woman who has fun drinking and partying. Thus, a man is still shown as seriously pursuing a career, while a woman is shown involved in non-serious activities and considering her sexuality as empowerment.

Gill writes in postfeminist discourses; women are referred to in a "dehumanizing and objectifying manner" (160). Their body parts are ridiculed and talked about jokingly, considering the end of "sexism" (160) with feminist movements of the past. This is similar to what can be observed in the novels under discussion. Both Imtiaz and Philips sexually objectify women by referring to the naked female bodies of both Amynah (Philips 96) and Ayesha (Imtiaz 122). Similarly, a woman's body parts, such as "breasts" (Philips 101) and hips (Philips 149) are referred to in a sexualized manner. Moreover, the details of a

woman's undergarments are described (Imtiaz 82,94) and Imtiaz also discusses scenes where the protagonist is not wearing them (Imtiaz 123).

Similarly, the character of Sophie is objectified by a description of her naked figure. Though the male is also mentioned in the same scene, details of a female figure are given more importance (Philips 229). Despite being females, Imtiaz and Philips give an erotic presentation of a female body resembling the fantasy of a male depicted in pornography. Gill describes such content as a significant characteristic of postfeminist culture (150). Imtiaz and Philips are using female bodies as "instruments" (Nussbaum 527) to create sexual scenes clearly portraying women's objectification.

Philips objectifies women depicting girls as a symbol of showing success as in Monty's case. He has a single girlfriend before he becomes successful, but he has two girlfriends called two "young things" (Philips 88) by his side when he becomes successful. Likewise, he treats Mumtaz as an object when she becomes famous, who is under erasure even before her success and even after she dies. Mumtaz is treated as an object which does not have human worth, as she gets replaced by other girls after her death. She is objectified and treated as a "fungible" (257) object, as Nussbaum would argue.

Thus, the sexuality of women is portrayed as women empowerment in these novels. Their boldness and confidence are expressed through being sexually expressive and assertive. However, to show this form of empowerment, there is a focus on a woman's body, and she is objectified. In this way, sexual imagery is being created using a woman's body by both Imtiaz and Philips. In other words, the objectification of women is being portrayed as empowerment which challenges this version of women's empowerment.

5.2.3 Redefined independence of a woman

On the one hand, independent women are shown as very much dependent and desperate about men and sex, as discussed in the previous two sections, but on the other hand, Philips in *BFTA* shows having a man through a legal relationship that is through marriage is a prison for a woman. Marriage is presented as a prison for an independent woman by depicting all the sacrifices a woman must make in a relationship. Through the character of Henna, Philips shows that marriage is an end to a woman's independence as both Henna herself and Aynah are aware of this aspect of marriage between Henna and Javaid (Philips 32). Henna is already shown as transformed after her engagement to Javaid, as she used to drink "wine" and wear "miniskirts" (Philips 201) in pre-engagement days (Philips 201) but left these practices after her engagement. According to the author, Henna

pretends to keep an appearance of a Pakistani wife, whereas Philips describes a Pakistani wife's life as devoid of fun (Philips 40). She writes Henna is not "being herself" (Philips 41) because she is avoiding drinking and dressing up fully as it is a demand of her fiancé (Philips 43). The author paints a gloomy picture of a woman's life after marriage through these details.

While Henna, who is presented as a traditional Pakistani woman, does not believe in sex before marriage, her fiancé has relations with anyone willing to have a relationship with him. Javaid is depicted as a complete flirt who attempts to have a relationship even with his fiancé's friend, Aynah (Philips 45). However, like a traditional woman, Henna does not talk about it. She cannot take a stand to save her childhood friend from her cruel husband, although being a politician, Javaid is empowered enough to take any action. Henna also requires the approval of her fiancé to befriend anyone. If he deems a person appropriate and decent, only then is Henna allowed for friendship with a particular person (Philips 167). She is shown as an entirely suppressed woman in a marital relationship.

Likewise, besides Henna, there is an example of another character, Nilofer, who is going through the same restrictions in her marriage. Aynah and Henna are surprised to see Nilofer, their childhood friend, after a long time. Looking at her head covered with "dupatta" (Philips 54), Aynah is reminded that Nilofer hated coming under any restrictions, including covering "her head" (Philips 54), but now after marriage, she is doing it. Although her husband beats her, society supports him in it. Society seems to have imbibed the idea of taming the shrew^{xv} regarding Nilofer. They support her husband's cruel treatment of her because they believe she is not obedient to her husband; thus, she is "sinful" (Philips 51). Therefore, by punishing her, her husband is right in "teaching her how to behave" (Philips 51). Thus, through the characters of both Henna and Nilofer, Philips has shown that women of both higher and lower strata of society are bounded by restrictions of marriage. Through these characters, she criticizes the institution of marriage, reiterating that marriage is inherently a trap for women to bind them.

Philips shows that women have internalized patriarchy in marital relationships. Henna seems to have imbibed patriarchy by saying that transforming her dressing style and making it according to the one acceptable to her husband is not a sacrifice and does not infringe on her rights as a woman. She asserts these transformations are insignificant compared to her serious responsibility towards her husband being his wife (Philips 46). As

discussed earlier, she is also ready to leave her friends because her husband disapproves of her circle of friends.

Henna's character is given as an epitome of a woman after marriage. Aynah is presented as her antithesis, who is not restricted by anyone from going out to parties and doing whatever she wishes, such as smoking and drinking (Philips 44). Aynah, being empowered, thinks Henna is too gullible to sacrifice herself for marriage. However, when Aynah thinks about her marriage with Kamran, despite being sovereign, she cherishes the restrictions laid by Kamran. She feels special when he feels "possessive" about her and stops her from meeting her friends he does not "approve" (Philips 175).

Similarly, another incident also shows that women have internalized patriarchy in a marital relationship, such as when a group of religious leaders threatened to set their wives on fire rather than themselves to register a protest against the government, and their wives did not resist it (Philips 177). The incident indicates that the women have internalized patriarchy. This shows that women in a marital relationship are restricted, but by imbibing patriarchy they are practicing it even after becoming sovereign.

Besides marriage, it is also important to consider Philips's views about parda that is veil while depicting issues of women. As discussed above, she writes that Henna wore "miniskirts" (Philips 201), but had to leave this type of dressing after her engagement. Likewise, Nilofer covered her head after she got married though she "used to hate having to cover it" (Philips 54). Aynah also wears "chador" (Philips 58) upon Henna's request while they are going out of her house in a village, but as soon as she comes back inside the home, she throws "off the chador" (Philips 58), giving the idea that wearing it is a burden and it is enforced upon women by patriarchy. As Aynah expresses, Henna is forced and "brainwashed" (Philips 47) to wear a veil. Thus, the author is aligning with the Western idea of parda that patriarchy imposes it upon Muslim women though they do not want to do it themselves. White feminists like Simone de Beauvoir consider the veil as a part of "slavery" (119) of Muslim women. They believe the veil is imposed upon women by patriarchy and do not consider it an autonomous decision of a Muslim woman to cover herself.

Afiya Zia, a Pakistani feminist, writes that local feminist movements and ideas put forward by secular women in Pakistan are criticized for replicating and blindly following "white feminist agendas" (135), but considering the examples from the text discussed above it seems true that Philips is promoting the idea of white feminism. Over here, the West is

defining the definition of freedom for women. As Henna wore skirts and jeans before her engagement, and according to Aynah, under her fiancé's influence, she refrains from wearing these clothes, which Aynah considers as the oppression of patriarchy but it is important to note that the clothes Henna used to wear were Western clothes. This gives the idea that wearing Western clothes defines the independence of women. Philips represents an independent woman, but even if she is trying to undo a conservative image of her country, she is presenting freedom as how the West defines freedom.

By highlighting all the negative aspects of marriage, Philips seems to be against the institution of marriage. She is also endorsing the Western idea about the veil, considering it a tool patriarchy uses to suppress women. Her idea of an independent woman shows streaks of the Western definition of freedom.

5.2.4 Sexualization of Culture

As written in the previous chapter, Gill believes sexualization of culture is being created through the rampant propagation of “discourses about sex and sexuality” (150) in postfeminist discourses. This is true for both novels under discussion, as there is extensive discussion about sex and dating in both texts.

There are a number of kissing scenes described in detail in both novels. In *KYKM* the first kiss between Jamie and Ayesha is described in detail, explaining how it gave Ayesha a “stomach-dropping” (Philips 64) feeling. Similarly, in *BFTA* Aynah's kissing scene with her boyfriend while taking shower (Philips 96) is also described in a lustful manner. There are kissing scenes not only between the protagonists and their boyfriends but with their male friends as well, like a casual lip lock between Aynah and Faisal, her childhood friend (Philips 143). She and Faisal are friends and never dated each other seriously but even with a friend as Philips writes “once in a while when the vibe is good, they get a little carried away” (Philips 16). Aynah has several sexual encounters with Faisal mentioned in the text such as at a party (Philips 216) and at her house (Philips 124) as well.

In addition to kissing scenes, sex scenes are also explained in profound detail. Sexual imagery is constructed through words by Imtiaz for all three sexual experiences Ayesha has with her boyfriend. Ayesha explains how sex with Jamie began while he played with her hair and then held her hand and in return, she kissed his “cheek” (Imtiaz 121). She considers her sexual experience with Jamie as “mind-blowingly good” (Imtiaz 122), because she had this romantic experience of being “unwrapped” (Imtiaz 122) after a long

time. Through these explicit sexual scenes, it may be inferred that the writer is trying to arouse a reader's interest in pornographical contents. These scenes are a way of gratifying basal human nature, the way it is being shown in some filmic depictions as well. However, the discussion about such filmic depictions is not the focus of my research for now.

Ayesha describes another sex scene with her ex-boyfriend as well while she is explaining the reason of break up with him. She believes she broke off with him on the day she was busy having sex with him, while simultaneously attending calls from her job. He could not understand the nature of her job and got irritated; therefore, he left her (Imtiaz 34). Likewise, Aynah in *BFTA* expresses that she tries to feel the warmth of the body of her boyfriend in a room in a hotel. She also wishes to join him in the "shower" (Philips 96). Philips constructs vivid sexual scenes through this imagery.

Both the authors have depicted a casual attitude towards physical relations, therefore just like kissing there are no restrictions even for having sex casually with a friend once in a while as Philips writes when they feel like having sex, they go for it (Philips 13,124). As Aynah is not willing to have a long-term relationship with any of the people with whom she has physical relationships rather she believes in having "a good time" (Philips 29). She does not consider it wrong in any way, as Aynah admits it herself. The same is shown to be true for another couple in *BFTA* that is Sophie and Faisal, who are aware that they cannot be in a long-term relationship due to personal issues, yet they are developing sexual relations with each other just to enjoy each other's company for the time being (Philips 115). Similarly, Imtiaz in *KYKM* shows that a single sexual date with anyone is not even worth mentioning, because that is a casual date. However, after at least "eight dates" (Imtiaz 93) with a person there seems to be a relationship worth mentioning.

The authors normalize dating culture not only through protagonists but through other minor characters as well. Such as a mention of a journalist named Ali who takes his girlfriend to Bangkok for vacation (Imtiaz 251). Similarly, Ayesha's friend Saad's sexual relationships are mentioned saying that he "had sex with most of the people" (Imtiaz 48) present at a party. Ayesha also imagines how Saad and his girlfriend would be having sex while she is watching "Sex in the City" (Imtiaz 257). Moreover, an entire sexual scene between Saad and his ex-girlfriend is described, where he ridicules his girlfriend by calling her a "starfish" (Imtiaz 12) the way she did sex.

Similarly, Philips shows that it is not only youngsters who are casual or easygoing about sexual relationships, but the older generation is doing the same as both parents of Aynah have their respective sexual partners besides each other. Aynah mentions her

father's affairs with "Knightsbridge mistresses" (Philips 26). Likewise, the mother of Aynah has an affair with a married man and she even entertains her boyfriend at her own house (Philips 195) which shows that it is not a secret or a taboo, because Aynah and even the servants are aware of her relationship

Sexualization of culture is shown through different means. Such as through "phone sex" (Philips 41) and "one-off" (Imtiaz 124) culture, where people have a physical relationship and then decide, whether they will have a physical relationship for a night only or a long-term relationship. Also, through "Clubbing", "dancing" (Imtiaz 153), and partying all night long (Philips 7) the authors are showing there is no sexually segregated society. Everyone is obsessed with sex. At parties, people stand in queues to have sexual relations in washrooms (Philips 20). Gill explains with extensive discourses about sex in mainstream culture, porn, and human sexuality are no more distinguishable. Thus, while reading these sexual details in the novels under discussion the difference between pornography and an art form is blurred.

The definition of pornography as explained in the previous chapter includes a sexually explicit portrayal of a female figure through pictures or words. Pornographic content also includes references to woman's body parts and presents them as obsessed with sex (Dworkin 36). Both Imtiaz and Philips seem to be promoting the sexualization of culture and pornography of women through raunchy and sexually explicit content. They are endorsing the sex industry by creating content that is "sexually arousing" (37) in Dworkin's terms.

Thus, through the readership of these novels, a generation of youngsters is being brought up on porn even if it is soft-core. Julie Bindel writes in a newspaper article that consuming pornography makes one "desensitized". Quoting from research she explains, while it negatively impacts men who start seeking harsher and more violent forms of sex, it also affects women's perception of themselves negatively. The more pornography penetrates into mainstream culture, "the more girls and women are stripped of full human status and reduced to sex objects". This shows pornography has a negative impact on both men and women.

For a very long period in history, women were refrained from having a voice to articulate their concerns. They did not have access to education, especially in our part of the world still war against the education of females, is being fought. It is a new and great achievement for these female authors to voice their concerns and share them with the world. However, they are using this feat to describe female figures for pornography and present

women as sex objects. Perhaps it is due to the reason Arynah mentions that people do not read books to gain knowledge, but they read them because they are “titillating” (Philips 31). Thus, both Imtiaz and Philips objectify women and give sexual imagery which they can sell. These Pakistani women are having agency enough to talk about “lingerie” (Imtiaz 94), “periods” (Imtiaz 262), and “PMS” (Philips 46) and they are using it for the objectification of women which shows that agency is given to them upon this condition. They are bringing up these topics in their writings under the name of “being oneself” and expressing themselves however they are being manipulated as Dianne Negra argues referring to Ariel Levy’s argument that “female sexual desire which seems so unbounded and expressive everywhere in the popular culture landscape, often operates merely in mimicry of sexist codes of exploitation” (5). These authors by focusing on women’s bodies are endorsing sexism.

By portraying women as obsessed with sex, Imtiaz and Philips are degrading and misrepresenting women. However, producing sexual content is a lucrative tactic of the sex industry, because it means more readership. As Gill writes women are taking bold steps under the idea of “being oneself”. However, she finds a connection between this idea and neo-liberalism as both of them emphasize empowerment and “individualism” (153). These women are choosing bold topics, but a connection between the empowerment to speak about these topics and capitalism can be found.

5.2.5 Dependency on smoking, drugs, and alcohol

Through some events, both *KYKM* and *BFTA* seem to be presenting satire on society for having a typical perception of society about a modern woman. For example, *BFTA* begins with a letter criticizing the magazine editor for sharing all the stories focusing upon women involved in drug addiction, overconsumption of alcohol, and presented as party girls. The editor is criticized by the protagonist of the novel for not including any “substantial” (Philips 3) information about Pakistani women and “‘real’ Pakistan” (Philips 4). This gives the impression that the novel is going to be a satire on a typical perception of society about a modern woman who drinks and parties, however, Philips herself does not share anything other than this aspect of the life of a modern woman. Both Imtiaz and Philips show the dependency of independent women on external things such as drugs, smoking, and alcohol to the extent of addiction which raises anti-feminist concerns in these novels as discussed in this section of the discussion.

For both Ayesha and Amynah smoking is a very significant, yet not very unusual part of their lives. Ayesha smokes in bulk like she keeps three packs of a cigarette for a meet-up with a friend which merely lasts for three to four hours (Imtiaz 92). She is not the only female character in *KYKM* who smokes, other women in the novel smoke as well. Such as in a fashion show a model is shown smoking casually while conversing with Ayesha (Imtiaz 99). A reader is informed that Ayesha and her friend Zara became friends because they were both smoking together while waiting for an event to kick off and this is how they were able to connect with each other (Imtiaz 6). These characters smoke casually or sometimes to deal with their emotions when they are angry or disturbed (Imtiaz 26). When Ayesha loses her job, her only financial concern is of arranging money “to pay the bootlegger and buy cigarettes” (Imtiaz 201). Similarly, Philips’s protagonist smokes casually at parties (16), when having deep conversations with a lover “Marlboro Lights” (Philips 101) accompanies her or like Ayesha (Imtiaz 5) she smokes when she is under stress (Philips 61). Even the cover page of *BFTA* depicts a woman smoking. Ayesha and Amynah not only smoke a cigarette, but they even take drugs (Imtiaz 29) (Philips 15). Drugs are offered to them at parties like snacks (Philips 20) (Imtiaz 13) though, as shown in Amynah’s case she is unable to handle the effects of it (Philips 21), yet she takes it.

Likewise, besides men, cigarettes, and drugs these women are overly dependent upon alcohol. At every party, both the protagonists attend alcohol is offered to them. Not even a causal dinner or party is without alcohol and it is an important part of a meet-up among a group of friends (Imtiaz 25) or a casual visit to a friend (Imtiaz 33), (Philips 124). Ayesha and her friend even carry alcohol around in their “handbag[s]” (Imtiaz 127, 90). Protagonists of both *KYKM* and *BFTA* have personal contact with “bootlegger[s]” (Philips 12) (Imtiaz 201), rather Ayesha is contacted even by men to arrange wine (Imtiaz 33) for them.

There are proper bars at the parties Ayesha and Amynah attend (Imtiaz 56, 14) (Philips 13, 170). They are not just simple bars but lavish ones as Ayesha sketches a description of a bar at one of the parties she attends. She explains it ran along the “length of a garden” (Imtiaz 10) with several bartenders providing drinks. Philips also describes the arrangement of liquor at her home, and she writes there is a special cabinet dedicated to it. She explains it was made specially to keep liquor in a cupboard disguised as a table (Philips 195). Like bartenders who are experts at mixing up wine, at home, this service is provided by Amynah’s servant, Abdul. He can make a mixture of Vodka and 7 Up (Philips 22), but his expertise lies in making special lemon “martinis” (Philips 195,196). Thus, even

at home, the servants are trained to blend exquisite wine. Philips not only presents her protagonist as obsessed with wine but generally other characters in the novel are also presented as alcohol obsessed. They are obsessed to the extent that for the sake of one bottle provided to them as a bribe, they are ready to do anything (Philips 156). Therefore, besides drinking wine Aynah gives alcohol as a bribe as well.

There is no limit to drinking for Ayesha as she and her friend can consume “four cans” (Imtiaz 92) of booze at a time. She is drinking on both weekends and weekdays which affects her work routine (Imtiaz 23), but it is part of her daily life. She has enough knowledge about alcohol and even has a more developed taste for it than Bridget or Becky in *BJD* and *SA* respectively. Ayesha demands different types of alcohol at different times according to her mood, like “cosmopolitan”, “mojito (Imtiaz 11), booze (Imtiaz 25,57), “Jasmine vodka”, “scotch”, “Murree beer” (Imtiaz 26), “tequila” (Imtiaz 61), and “white wine” (Imtiaz 55). Likewise, Aynah has a well-developed taste in wine even if it is slightly tarnished in taste, she can identify it (Philips 12). She gets disappointed at a party when there is a limited variety of wine which includes “champagne, wine and gold label” (Philips 170) only.

Aynah mentions that she and her friends started consuming wine in their teenage (Philips 198) as she recalls events from the past and narrates she was “fifteen” (Philips 198) when she used to go out for a drive with loud music and get drunk. Looking at an old picture, she also recalls a memory of drinking wine, when she and her friends were “eighteen” (Philips 201) years old and Mumtaz was holding a glass of wine in her hand in that picture.

Just like smoking, alcohol is consumed by the female characters of both the novels under discussion to deal with stress. They are normalizing consuming wine in distress generally for Pakistani people not just for women as Ayesha writes “the entire city” (Imtiaz 249) is taking wine to deal with the fear and pain of a blast. Likewise, a model at a fashion week explains there is no other way of dealing with anxiety except for taking wine (Imtiaz 106). Similarly, in *BFTA* Aynah also confesses that besides swimming, booze helps her get “relaxed” (Philips 173). However, swimming is done as a way to relax is mentioned only once in the novel, whereas she repeatedly turns to wine when in trouble. There are several examples where Aynah consumes alcohol to deal with stress. For example, she says she just wants to have vodka to deal with the stress of finding a solution for Nilofer, to save her from her brutal husband (Philips 61). Or when Aynah is panicking on this occasion, she just gulps vodka down straight from the bottle, instead of her usual way of

enjoying it with “ice and lime” (Philips 58), but even that helps her to feel better. On another occasion as well when she has to visit Mumtaz’s father in jail, she is uneasy about the whole situation and again she wants to have wine while admitting that when “reality” is hard to accept, one easily tends to become “drunk” (Philips 116) to deal with it.

Moreover, the novel ends with Amynah having a drink (Philips 154) and getting happy about life. Although at that time she is reflecting on her life after the death of her friend and being deceived in a relationship, her thought process is stopped by getting a drink that numbs her senses. Though she says at that point that a glass of wine will not “harm” (Philips 154) rather it would help her change her mood, it does harm her because she is not properly reflecting upon her life and is not able to come out of repeated patterns of being stuck in the problems of others rather than doing something constructive.

Looking at the issues of Henna and Nilofer in *BFTA* it seems Philips is fighting with patriarchy and shows that women are being suppressed by patriarchy. But we need to consider when it comes to exercising power what are both Philips and Imtiaz fighting for. They are showing the hypocrisy of a society that has double standards for men and women. In Pakistani society, women generally do not smoke, therefore when Ayesha finds Zara smoking in a public space, she is glad to find another woman smoking in a public place besides her (Imtiaz 6). Ayesha explains that if a woman is found smoking, besides considering it an immoral act it is considered a strange act by society that people try to record it on their cameras and consider it equivalent to “pornography” (Imtiaz 21). Similarly, she quotes a statement of a cop who questions her values, but she wonders men who smoke are not questioned in the same way (Imtiaz 88). The public cannot accept this behavior from women therefore, they associate extremely unsavory thoughts regarding it and view it as the end of humanity and a sign that “judgment day” (Imtiaz 88) is near because it is believed that before judgment day, people would be showing adverse behavior.

In a similar way, Amynah is pointing out at double standards of society regarding drinking when she says that bearded men are enjoying whisky while their wives are sitting at home in purdah (Philips 103). On another occasion at a party, Amynah’s friend Faisal openly pours and drinks wine while a girl present over there has to cover it up in a 7 UP bottle, because consuming it, can ruin a girl’s reputation (Philips 15), but not of a boy.

This reaction of the public does show the double standards of society which allows men to smoke and drink, but not to women. However, highlighting smoking rights for women does not seem to be the right portrayal of an independent woman. The feminist rights of these women seem to be morphed into smoking and drinking. This form of

independence would help consumerism to get benefitted by accepting this act as normal and hence increase the number of consumers.

These feminists, by asking for smoking and drinking rights, are actually asking for consumption rights as Gill explains that postfeminist sensibility has “interrelated themes” (147). Consumerism is gaslighting their vision of freedom by equating freedom with smoking and drinking just like in the previous chapter it is argued that consumerism is manipulating the empowerment of women. As Ayesha explains, Henna is not being herself by avoiding drinking and revealing clothes (Philips 43) and is forced to do so, but if she is allowed to exercise her free will, she will opt for things forbidden to her. This shows that women's essentialism is drinking and dressing up in revealing Western dresses. In Aynah's view, Henna lacks sense because she got engaged at fourteen and therefore under the patriarchy of her father and her fiancé, her own growth is eclipsed; therefore, she does not really “know what she wants” (Philips 45) in her life. Otherwise, maybe she could have become empowered like Aynah. However, this is “female chauvinism” (Tong 8), because she considers herself privileged and empowered to analyze Henna's personality and speaks on her behalf.

Although the authors are portraying free consumption of alcohol, according to the “Pakistan penal code under the prohibition order of 1979” (Haider n.p.) it is considered a crime. Therefore, alcohol consumption is done under the cover. The authors are trying to show the reality that it is consumed under the cover. However, it is stereotyping the nation, in general, and women in particular, with alcohol addiction. Moreover, the writers are showing society's double standards regarding smoking and alcohol consumption, but highlighting this issue is distorted feminism as it shows links of this empowerment with consumerism. These products are also eclipsing the growth of these characters and stopping them from self-reflection. But the female characters in both novels are opting for these products under the idea of being oneself and pleasing oneself.

5.2.6 Commodity fetishism and appearance of women

As mentioned earlier Gill notes a significant characteristic of postfeminist sensibility is the idea of the difference between men and women (158). The difference between sexes is created with the help of consumerism which in turn benefits consumerism. Imtiaz and Philips are also showing the sexual difference in their respective novels through commodities.

Like Kinsella, Imtiaz and Philips use pink packaged commodities to show this difference, as Aynah keeps a “pink lighter” (Philips 8) with herself and the color scheme of Aynah’s room is pink as well. The walls are painted in “candy pink” (Philips 23) color and a pink fur cushion is there. Her room is all decorated like a stereotypical girly room, with pink walls, decorated with golden “fairy lights” hanging from the walls and a “Barbie” (Philips 23) doll. Thus, the difference between men and women is enhanced and celebrated with the help of commodities.

Consumerism helps the female characters of both *KYKM* and *BFTA* to be more acceptable to society. A critic of capitalism, Thorstein Veblen asserts that pricey clothes and accessories are “evidence of pecuniary success” and “social worth” (120) for people. Therefore, wearing expensive clothes indicates a person’s social status and worth. In *BFTA* we find that Mumtaz was invisible to people when she wore an old pair of jeans, a shirt, and “cheap.. plastic chappals” (Philips 11), along with wearing thick-framed glasses while Aynah was center of attention wearing a trendy dress from “Armani” (Philips 11) and carrying a “Gucci bag” (Philips 79). However, when Mumtaz changes her dressing style by wearing trendier clothes, “jeans with a lot of desi-Western tops” and “tortoise shell designer specs” (Philips 139) she gets attention at parties. Due to the change in her dressing style, she is not only able to find more friends, but her self-esteem raises to “self-obsessed[ion]” (Philips 95). Likewise, in *KYKM* Ayesha also tries to take help from consumer culture to boost her self-esteem. As she is not fashion-conscious and does not believe in herself because the society, she is living in does not accept her and she suffers from low self-esteem hating her clothes because the rest of the people follow fashion presented in fashion magazines such as *Vogue* or they dress up following international stars like Angelina Jolie. She realizes that wearing trendy clothes can boost her confidence (Imtiaz 10). Thus, Imtiaz and Philips show that following fashion trends helps these characters to get accepted in society and also gain admirers, connecting their socio-economic status with their worth.

Gill writes in postfeminist discourses women’s dressing is discussed in a derogatory manner. Quoting an incident from a talk show about an actress, Angelica Huston's dress, she writes it is described in the show as it was long to an extent that it could be used as a hiberna shelter for small animals (Gill 149). In a similar manner, Ayesha in *KYKM* ridicules the dressing of women. She describes women wearing long dresses, as wrapped in ten meters of fabric, making them all look like they were about to “deliver triplets”

(Imtiaz 100) or another woman at a fashion show is described as wearing a red outfit that looked “like it was sewn onto her” (Imtiaz 99) because it was so tight. In the novel, Ayesha refers to a study that asserts that women spend sixteen minutes every day selecting clothes and she herself does the same (Imtiaz 114). Thus, Ayesha endorses the age-old beauty obsession associated with women. She neither challenges it being an independent woman nor shows confidence in whatever she wears.

Gill asserts that in postfeminist culture women are still judged from “narrower judgments of attractiveness” (Gill 149) for which they need to discipline and monitor themselves. Women are judged, not only in terms of clothes and accessories but they are also judged for their looks. This makes them obsessed with their appearance. This can be noticed in *BFTA*. Aynah conceals her flaws using “YSL.. concealer” (Philips 79). She chooses a dress for a party that shows her long “sexy” (Philips 11) legs and does a “pedicure” (Philips 91) to maintain her feet. She keeps changing the color of her hair streaks because she gets bored with the same color for a long and blow dries her hair for a party look. These beauty practices are important for her because she is concerned about her looks and wants to enhance them by using accessories rather than wearing a “burkha” (Philips 10) and hiding her looks. Similarly, when Mumtaz becomes famous, she straightens her hair, has red streaks, waxes her arms, and gets a manicure (Philips 139) and this helps her get admirers as discussed above. In *KYKM* Ayesha’s friend, Zara is also depicted as very particular about her looks despite her demanding job. She maintains her looks to the extent that it seems she has walked out of a page from a “fashion magazine” (Imtiaz 5).

An “attractive” “female body” is considered to be a woman’s source of identity in postfeminist culture, explains Gill. She writes a woman has to maintain her weight and remain between extremes of the “too thin” and too “fat” categories (149). Imtiaz describes different female characters in *KYKM* in a similar way on different events. She uses all negative expressions to describe women. She describes women on different occasions as “stick thin women” wearing “oversized sunglasses” (Imtiaz 39), super skinny girls (Imtiaz 99), a woman whose “face is so thin it actually hurts to air kiss”, a woman with “branch-like arms” and a fat woman whom she compares to a cow (Imtiaz 252). A woman has to struggle to stay between the two extremes and have an ideal weight by going to a gym. Imtiaz writes about women going to the gym and working out like maniacs to lose weight (Imtiaz 252) because a woman’s weight is a serious issue. Philips in *BFTA* also refers to a woman’s ideal weight through Mumtaz whose mother forbids her from eating too much, because she will get fat. The reason behind it is that women want acceptance from men as

Mumtaz's mother adds that if Mumtaz gets fat, she will not be able to find a "husband" (Philips 111). On the other hand, women who have ideal body weight are presented as confident, such as Aynah whose confidence stems from her sexy body (Philips 16). Thus, patriarchy forces women to have an ideal weight because as Gill writes "[N]o transgression in looks is forgiven" (149) for women and interestingly these standards are not even ignored by the female authors, Imtiaz and Philips.

The link between self-esteem and consumerism presented through female characters of both *KYKM* and *BFTA* can be seen. In this regard, a gender and cultural studies expert, Negra in *What a Girl Wants* (2009) analyzes the importance of looks for females in Postfeminist culture. She explains postfeminist discourses emphasize on "self" (119) and to raise "self-confidence" and "self-esteem" (Negra 120) women have to adhere to an "ideal femininity" (Negra 119). A woman is taught to attain ideal femininity by choosing the "right commodities" (Negra 4), "elite beauty products" (Negra 9), and aesthetic regimes like going to day spas and nail salons. She adds that it seems that women are demonstrating agency, but it actually bounds them "within firm limits" (Negra 4). Females are shown to be owning and claiming their bodies, but they are controlled by social norms like in the past. She mentions that revenues generated from the beauty industry rose to a greater extent in "the 1990s and 2000s" compared to the past, therefore it is necessary to analyze the emphasis on self in postfeminist ideology in relation to "economic changes" (Negra 119) during this period. In the Pakistani context, it raises another concern as well that the products selected by the female characters are international products, such as "Gucci" (Imtiaz 103) (Philips 15) and "Armani" (Imtiaz 208), (Philips 11), which then means that beauty industry of Pakistan is giving economic benefit to other countries.

As written in the previous chapter women are made to be influenced by magazines. Like Bridget and Becky, Ayesha and Aynah also refer to different magazines, which provide information about the latest fashion trends (Imtiaz 30) (Philips 90). Negra writes magazines use celebrity "stardom" to reveal the "consumerist habits of celebrities" (144) by giving details of their fashion statements to influence common women. In *KYKM* Imtiaz depicts a similar picture as when Ayesha goes to a party, she finds women dressed up as models from *Vogue* magazine, rather one of the women is said to be wearing a copy of a dress worn by "Angelina Jolie" (Imtiaz 10) in Oscar. *KYKM* and *BFTA* are very much like fashion magazines that describe the latest fashion trends as these novels are giving fashion details and incorporating them in the form of stories.

Gill writes that women in postfeminist culture consider following fashion trends and taking care of their looks as their “personal choices” (Gill 155), but they are ignoring the “pressures” (Gill 161) that are leading women to abide by these trends. It seems that consumerism has joined hands with patriarchy making women subscribe to particular beauty standards to retain their femininity. Women through the novels under discussion are being shown the importance of following fashion trends and reminded about ideal weight, hairstyles, dresses, and fashion trends that can transform their lives.

The discussion in entire section 5.2 shows how feminist and anti-feminist ideas are found in amalgamation in *KYKM* and *BFTA* just the way Gill writes that the patterned nature of contradictions composes postfeminist sensibility. These texts are feminist in many ways such as by representing educated and empowered women who are not under any kind of restrictions of going out in the public sphere. However, even after presenting independent women, Imtiaz and Philips are presenting them in an objectified manner by focusing on female bodies and portraying female characters as desperate for sex.

As Aynah in *BFTA* says that West likes the subject of oppressed women (Philips 31), thus both authors are writing novels to show different sorts of Pakistani independent women who do not wear a veil. They are writing to show a secular side of the country to the world. But they are showing another extreme and not constructive independence. The characters they are presenting are not involved in constructive activities. Their careers are stagnant, and they are obsessed with drugs, wine, smoking, and sex. These authors are having a chance to construct and describe the identity of Pakistani women, but they are describing women as addicts. The authors are empowered and have the agency to talk about the carnal desires of women, yet they are not having any positive story of woman’s achievements in the public sphere to share with the world.

Moreover, if these authors are writing to show a secular side of the country to the world by presenting independent women, then Imtiaz and Philips are writing back to the empire and fighting against their strict views about the lives of Muslim women and typecasting them. However, the description of independence they are giving is problematic. As Rabia Aamir writes in her paper “Women’s Rights or Ontological erasure” (2018) that any sort of freedom of woman that “is not taken from within the framework of Islam and Quran, will follow the same colonial pattern of subjection” (86). Thus, these authors are portraying the independence of women according to the definition of freedom defined by the West.

Gill considers different aspects of a woman's life affected by consumerism under postfeminist sensibility and the novels under discussion show these traits. Characters in the novels under discussion try to be carefree, but they do care for their looks and judge other women on their looks and dress as well. They are assertive in speaking up for their rights and they are showing the patriarchal hypocrisy of society by showing society's different set of rules for men and women regarding smoking and drinking. This means that they are asking for their rights as consumers.

5.3 Effect on Women's Writings: Pastiche and End of Individuality

As *KYKM* and *BFTA* are written in the postmodern era and Jameson finds a connection between postmodernism and consumerism, therefore consumerism can be traced in these novels as well. To substantiate his arguments, Jameson gives different characteristics of art related to consumerism found in the postmodern era. He asserts postmodern writers unlike modern writers are not having "unique styles" (4) of writing. Being different from each other and experimenting with new techniques was the zeitgeist of modern writers; they wanted to be as different and distinct from each other as "fingerprints" (6). However, postmodern writers lack this quality of individuality. Just as we see that *KYKM* (2014) and *BFTA* (2010) are similar to *BJD* (2001) and *SA* (2001) in several ways as discussed below.

KYKM (2014), *BFTA* (2010), *BJD* (2001), and *SA* (2001) are of about a similar length that is below or around three hundred pages. The cover photos of *BFTA* and *BJD* are exactly the same; both of them depict a woman holding a cigarette in their hands, the only difference is that of a depiction of a brown woman and a white woman respectively. While the cover photos of *KYKM* and *SA* show girls' accessories such as high heels, bags, nail colors, and lipsticks. Imtiaz uses the first-person pronoun "I" like Fielding, and Kinsella to narrate the story. However, Philips uses third-person pronoun and narrates the story from Aynah's perspective.

Considering the writing style of Imtiaz and Philips we can see that they mention date and day at the beginning of chapters (Imtiaz 1), (Philips 6) in their novels just like Fielding in *BJD* (Fielding 7). All three of these writers begin a new chapter in their respective novels in a similar way but they vary in giving additional information. Fielding gives additional details about cigarettes, alcohol, and calories (7) Bridget consumes in a day while both Pakistani writers add a piece of news in addition to the date and day. The information they give in this news is not immediately related to the protagonists themselves

or to the story. The news they include in the heading of the chapters is most of the time related to their country (Philips 64), (Imtiaz 1,14,29). Moreover, the incident especially which Imtiaz covers in this piece of information is not even remotely linked to that particular chapter or overall story, for example, one of the headings is “a pet snake stolen” (Imtiaz 14). Imtiaz and Philips in this way leave loose threads in their novels that have no connection at the end of the story which makes these texts fragmented.

Furthermore, *KYKM* and *BFTA* just like *BJD* and *SA* are written in a very informal style of writing. They make use of abusive language like “fuckwittage” (Fielding 44), “bitch” (Fielding 22), (Kinsella 70), (Imtiaz 97), (Philips 167), and “fucking” (Kinsella 123) (Imtiaz 9) (Philips 86).

The characters of *KYKM* and *BFTA* are also similar to each other and to Western novels as well. The protagonists of these novels are active and energetic women as Ayesha works in the morning and parties at night. Similarly, Amynah is also shown partying mostly during the course of the novel. Just like Bridget who is a working woman and Becky is a shopaholic who can shop for a long stretch of time. Moreover, the jobs of Ayesha and Amynah are similar to that of Bridget and Becky as all of them work in a field related to television and media.

Ayesha and Amynah do not have particular constructive aims like Bridget and Becky. For example, we see that Bridget’s aim is to lose weight and find the right man for herself. Similarly, Ayesha’s aim is also to find the right man. Besides this, she aims to find and publish a story that can make her popular and get international recognition.

Moreover, just like Becky in *SA* who wants to write a book about managing finance (Kinsella 18), Amynah also wants to write a book about a suppressed woman (Philips 36). But both of them are not able to complete their books as they are not seriously writing these books rather, they are doing the task nonchalantly. That is because Becky is writing about managing finances, but she is aware of this that she does not have command over this subject. She knows there are no practical rules for it because she herself is not able to manage her finances. Similarly, Amynah is writing a novel about a suppressed woman, but she lies and exaggerates every incident to grab the attention of foreign readers. Besides this failed project, she also makes a documentary that is fake. Thus, there are no serious aims in the lives of these characters.

Ayesha, just like Bridget, is in search of Mr. Right. She also gets ditched by him like Bridget gets ditched by her boyfriend and eventually like Bridget Ayesha finds her true love in her childhood friend Saad and Bridget finds her true love in her childhood friend

Mr. Darcy. Both of these protagonists in a similar way keep ignoring their childhood friends but ultimately, fall in love with them.

Considering all these similarities from cover photos to characters, themes, plots, and language Imtiaz and Philips are producing works that are similar to *BJD* and *SA* in many ways. Thus, as Jameson writes that there is an “end of individualism” (3) in postmodern times, it is true for these authors who are following the concept of pastiche; that is “imitation of dead styles” (4). Jameson describes characteristics of a pastiche composition and that is he says a combination of already written works just as we can see in the above discussion. Thus, Imtiaz and Philips are combining different ideas and writing new work rather than inventing new ideas. These novels seem to be suffering from what Jameson calls an “aesthetic dilemma” (6) because they lack originality and innovative ideas.

The end of individualism is there in these novels to an extent that even the same expressions are used by the Pakistani authors. Imtiaz and Philips are not only presenting the same kind of stories as *BJD* and *SA*, but they are also following the style of these novels. For example, Kinsella in *SA* writes “three cups of tea later” to describe time expression (Kinsella 229). Imtiaz in *BFTA* uses the same expression for the same purpose saying “half a pack of cigarettes later” (Imtiaz 6), two large glasses of “whiskey drinks and a plate of prawn tempura later” (Imtiaz 31), a few hours and “two beers later” (Imtiaz 170) or “two plates of biryani” (Imtiaz 229) later. This shows that Imtiaz is not showing her individuality as a writer.

Jameson points out that, there is an end of individuality in the postmodern era because it is the age of “corporate capitalism” (6). The individuality and unique styles of creativity which emerged with capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie social class ended with corporate capitalism and organizations. The publishing houses can also be categorized under corporate capitalism. Thus, considering the success of *BJD*, it seems that Penguin publishers are publishing a number of books that are similar in nature as all the novels under discussion are published by the same publishing house. Penguin publishers are publishing books using the same recipe that ensures profit in the market.

The similar nature of the books under discussion can also be analyzed considering George Ritzer’s ideas. Ritzer in his book *McDonaldization of Society* (2019) describes the transformation in the function of society with the advent of the chain of restaurants called McDonald’s. He defines McDonaldization as a “process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurants are” influencing other aspects of society (Ritzer 19). He gives four

principles of this chain of restaurants. These principles include efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. He explains workers in McDonaldized “systems function efficiently just like the drive-through process of McDonald's, by following the steps in a predesigned manner” (Ritzer 19). Calculability highlights “the quantitative aspects of products” such as the size of the product. In this system “quantity has become equivalent to quality”, a “lot of something” and a “quick delivery” is considered quality. Calculability is also considered on the part of the consumer who knows that the time spent on getting the product would be a set span of time (Ritzer 20).

The third aspect of the McDonaldization of Society is predictability that is all franchises would offer the same kind of food for the same duration. The workers in the McDonaldized system also behave in predictable ways. They follow corporate rules. In many cases what they say and what they do is highly predictable (Ritzer 21). The fourth element in the success of McDonald's is controlling. Ritzer explains “[T]he workers in McDonaldized society are controlled to a high degree ... they are trained to do a limited number of tasks in precisely the way” (22) they are asked to do them.

The same model of McDonald's can be applied to *KYKM* and *BFTA*. These books are revealing the aspect of efficiency by showing that Imtiaz and Philips are writing these books following the formula steps of a predesigned model of writing. They are also showing the calculability aspect through the emphasis on the quantity that is the similar length of these books. There is also the aspect of predictability for a reader because the reader knows the same kind of material would be offered in these books and perhaps the authors follow the “corporate rules” over here that is the dictation of publishing houses to use similar plots, characters, and language, etc. as discussed in detail above. These writers are controlled to perform a task in “precisely the way” (Ritzer 22) they are expected to perform just like workers at McDonald's. Thus, the genre of the novel also seems to be influenced by the impact of the McDonaldization of society showing a mechanical production of literature. Therefore, as Jameson writes difference between art and work produced for commercial purposes seems hard to draw (2) in postmodern literature, it is true for *KYKM* and *BFTA* as well because Imtiaz and Philips are following a successful and standard formula of writing chick lit.

Jameson asserts that the new cultural features introduced by postmodernism correlate with new economic order, late capitalism, and multinational capitalism (2). In the context of this discussion, Imtiaz and Philips are also writing literature that is in sync with capitalism. Virginia Woolf explains that by addressing taboo issues in the novels modern

writers go through pangs that the previous writers did not feel because they were not writing anything which was against society (qtd. in David Daiches 1153). However, considering the content of *KYKM* and *BFTA* it can be asserted that the pangs which Virginia Woolf talked about are also not felt by Imtiaz and Philips. As discussed in section 5.2.4 it can be seen that Imtiaz and Philips are extensively writing sexual content, but they are not being banned and are easily accepted by society. However, when books about sexuality were written by D. H Lawrence, they were banned from society. The female writers under discussion are not restricted in any way because as Jameson writes sexually explicit content is now taken in “stride by the society” (19). Accepting sexual content is normalized in society.

This section of the discussion presented arguments showing that *KYKM* and *BFTA* seem to be replicas of *BJD* and *SA*. Imtiaz and Philips are not showing their creativity by writing novels with innovative ideas as following a set formula of writing ensure the success of novels for both, the authors, and publishers as well.

5.4 Local as a Site of Promise and Predicament

This section deals with the representation of local which is given importance in the international frame in the present era. It analyzes the local presented in *KYKM* and *BFTA* and considers where these novels are presenting satire and supporting local and where they are going against local narrative and putting forward colonial narrative.

Dirlik writes local movements are widespread in the contemporary world (Dirlik 85). The trend of focus on local can also be witnessed in Anglophone literature. Production of Anglophone literature by Pakistani authors is relatively new. Foreign writers like E.M Foster and Rudyard Kipling had been writing novels using the setting and characters of the subcontinent, but Pakistani writers came forward and started narrating their stories with local settings and characters in Anglophone quite late. Both Imtiaz and Philips, the authors of the novels under discussion are Pakistani. Their characters Ayesha and Aynah are also Pakistani. Moreover, the setting of *KYKM* is mainly Karachi and a few other parts of Sindh, Pakistan, while the setting of *BFTA* is also mainly Sindh, but parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtun Khwa are mentioned as well. Thus, the authors, characters, and settings of these texts are all local. Therefore, a reader may pick these novels with the hope of finding local stories and knowing about Pakistan. As Muneeza Shamsie quotes a British critic, Bonamy Dobree: “It may well be that we shall not understand India until it is explained to us by

Indian novelists of the first ability, as it was that we understood nothing of Russia before we read Tolstoy, Turgenev, and others” (Shamsie 69).

Dirlik asserts that focus on local represents a “site of promise” (Dirlik 85) for the countries which were once colonized. Thus, the focus on local which is brought by local writers from colonized lands is a ray of hope towards decolonization as in this way they can devise a self-image and can undo imperial oppression. These novels seem to be a satire on whites. As Ayesha after being deceived by Jamie, a British journalist compares Jamie with East India Company because Jamie befriends her and steals her scoop of secret news regarding a famous prisoner and publishes it with his name (Imtiaz 176). The author compares it with the colonization of India which began when the East India Company secretly brought India under its subjugation.

Similarly, Philips in *BFTA* pokes fun at the Western attitude towards the Muslim world through a television program called as “Who wants to be a terrorist?” (Philips 9) for a channel based in London. A man named as Monty is given a lucrative amount of money to form a mock terrorist camp in Waziristan called as “Islamic terrorist camp” (Philips 9) for the show. Thus, by showing that Monty is being given money for the show to make Pakistan look like a terrorist country seems to be a satire on the West.

Dirlik writes that local was “suppressed” or “marginalized” (86) in the past in the name of universal, in “various ideologies of modernity” (86) associating local with backwardness. Frantz Fanon in “National Culture” considered the role of the native intellectuals very significant in this regard, because he believed that native intellectuals could fight against colonial narrative by writing “literature of combat” (Fanon 155) while presenting their national culture. He asserted that colonialism not only influences people and their thinking, but it also distorts and disfigures their past. Native intellectuals in this situation can come forward and register their existence as a nation. Imtiaz and Philips being educated are among intelligentsia therefore we expect the same role of the intelligentsia from them and looking at the previous paragraph they seem to be performing the said role.

Though the British and American novels discussed in the previous chapter did not provide much detail about their countries, the novels under discussion in this chapter provide great details about both Pakistan and Pakistani nations. Thus, details about the country in the analysis of this chapter hold importance.

5.4.1 City noir

Dirlik writes that though local is being given importance internationally at present, it actually disguises parochialism in it (85). Therefore, it is important to consider how Imtiaz and Philips discuss their local country and cities in their novels.

In *BFTA*, Amynah while writing her fictional book, thinks of a famous Western writer “Bernard Henri Levy” (Philips 36) how he described Karachi. She explains, while describing Karachi he wrote that there were no women to be seen at Karachi airport. This shows that women in Pakistan do not move into the public sphere. Moreover, to show that a country is addicted to “heroin” (Philips 36), he wrote as soon as one lands in the country, he is offered drugs. Amynah believes that he fabricated this idea, but she knows that his book became popular therefore she decides to adopt similar ideas in her book. It seems that Philips through Amynah’s fictional novel is trying to mock Western writers for this attitude towards Pakistan as these writers are writing against Pakistan and minting money by incorporating these ideas in their novels. However, the country is described in a similar way; not only in Amynah’s fictional novel, but these baits for readers are there in *BFTA* and *KYKM* as well which are discussed in this section of the chapter.

Moreover, Amynah notes other tactics which make people read novels, especially in the West. For example, she talks about adding “filth and horror stories” (Philips 37) to her fictional novel. She also talks about the uncivilized behavior of men towards women mentioning a rape of a woman (Philips 95). However, these issues are discussed by both Imtiaz and Philips *KYKM* and *BFTA*. A lot of examples of dirt and horror stories such as that of mugging and blasts are mentioned in both novels which are discussed ahead in this section and in the coming section as well. Similarly, rape of women is also mentioned in both of the novels, such as when an influential man drags a female performer from the stage (Philips 7) in *BFTA* or a rape incident in Defense (Imtiaz 43) mentioned in *KYKM*.

The authors do not seem to look at their country from a positive perspective. Imtiaz describes Pakistan as a garbage dump (77) and Karachi “as a good-for-nothing city” (93). The physical description of the city includes narrow lanes with “overflowing gutters” (Imtiaz 140) and streets with “plastic” (Philips 190) thrown all over and “rubbish clogged drains” (Imtiaz 196). A grim picture of the country is given by Imtiaz and Philips in the novels.

The authors criticize different government departments and show that there is no law-and-order situation in the country. Imtiaz shows that financially powerful people

follow no rules (8) and can dictate law enforcement agencies that are cops. Similarly, Philips shows there is a different law for the rich and poor in the country by showing that the police have no power over the gentry of the country. As in *KYKM* Faisal's car is not checked by the police for any alcoholic drinks and drugs etc. which is done for the rest of the people, because his father is a member of a national assembly (Philips 12). Philips further criticizes the police, by narrating different incidents like police taking a bribe to let people cross the border between Iran and Pakistan (Philips 119). Likewise, she criticizes the legal system of Pakistan, where the prisoners are empowered enough to give death threats to people even while sitting in jail cells (Philips 239). Imtiaz criticizes the government for the functioning of public hospitals as well because they are not sincere with the public so they inject water into children in the name of the Polio vaccine (6). Philips also criticizes religious institutions by mentioning that pedophilia is committed in "madrassas" (70).

The authors also highlight other serious issues in the country for example child labor. Philips sheds light on child labor in the country when Aynah looks at a twelve-year-old girl working at a restaurant who is described as "forced to find work to survive in a country" (Philips 171). She also shows the class distinction in the country shown through porcelain cups used for tea by rich people and cups made of tin used for poor people of the village (Philips 55) at Henna's place.

Criticizing the management of the country, Imtiaz also comments about the power outage which happens frequently in the country, as while giving details about hair straightener Ayesha jokingly explains that she is not able to make use of her straightener properly due to frequent power outage in Karachi (Imtiaz 115). She also mentions that the electricity-providing management Field shuts the power as soon as it starts raining (Imtiaz 198). While writing an article about Pakistan, taking a dig at the country's development Ayesha explains it is difficult to write about the country's development in more than "six hundred words" (Imtiaz 1). She calls Karachi as a Wasteland (Imtiaz 15) giving a reference to American Poet, T.S. Eliot. Eliot described the wasteland as a fragmented and useless land. Imtiaz expresses similar views about Karachi by mentioning mugging, kidnapping and bomb blasts in the city.

Imtiaz shows that Karachi is full of muggers. To endorse this idea, she quotes various incidents. For example, Ayesha explains the lives of the citizens are not safe on the roads due to muggers and therefore they drive fast like "maniacs" (Imtiaz 228) to save themselves and keep their expensive possessions such as cell phones hidden somewhere

other than purses, so that even if they lose a purse they can save their phones (Imtiaz 80). She mentions a story of her friend Zara who is robbed at a traffic signal and is robbed not only of her money but a glass of “fresh juice” (Imtiaz 190) as well. The robbers are not always adults but even teens are involved in it (Imtiaz 150) and nobody is safe from them, even a shopkeeper who sells juice has to keep a security guard to save his day’s meager earnings (Imtiaz 215). Besides stealing the money and possessions of victims if they show resistance, muggers, easily kill them after torturing their bodies (Imtiaz 4). Therefore, victims easily surrender instead of showing resistance.

Imtiaz explains people in the 1950s used to secure their houses from thieves by putting broken glass on the walls of a house (Imtiaz 8) so that the thieves might not be able to jump from walls but this does not scare the thieves anymore at present therefore, barbed wires are used for the purpose of security. This shows that barbarism has increased in the country with the passing of time and thus it is easier to “hire an assassin” (Imtiaz 15) in Karachi than find an attractive potential lover. With all these details Ayesha admits that she is living in an uncivilized part of the world (Imtiaz 166).

Similarly, in *BFTA* while talking about part of Punjab’s rural area, Philips writes though it looks beautiful and calm, actually, it is far from calmness because under this calmness lies brutality done to women. The apparent peaceful silence over there is because of the silence with which the women live over there. The women remain silent against the extreme cruelty done to them such as giving “electric” (Philips 56) shock as a punishment or they remain silent and commit suicide to avoid violence when it gets unbearable.

Philips in *BFTA* also mentions another city in Pakistan that is Peshawar. She mentions Peshawar with a reference to the character of Mumtaz and her family. Mumtaz feels ashamed of her connection with a Pathan family, who are residents of Peshawar. Though, she explains her father is an atypical Pathan because he is open-minded and does not restrict his daughters to a house. They are even allowed to go for “swimming” and “golf” (Philips 117). While a description of typical Pathan women is given through the Pathan women who appear at Mumtaz’s funeral following strict purdah, as even “in a room full of women where men are not allowed, they do not remove their burkhas” (Philips 223). Philips gives the same kind of description of Pathan women as given by Western media. As described in a BBC news report titled “Pakistan ‘honor’”, that Pathan women follow a strict patriarchal code. They are suppressed and are made to wear burkhas and they are not even allowed to exercise their choice in marriage.

Philips associates Peshawar with the drug dealing business, its manufacturing and distribution (Philips 117). She becomes a racist by typecasting Pathans and describing them as “long-bearded, turban-wearing, Kalashnikov-wielding” (Philips 118) people. A description of a typical Pathan man is done through her father’s uncle who deals in drugs and is involved in prostitution (Philips 118). The violence she associates with Pathans is not new. Orientalists such as Winston Churchill also described the strong violent nature of Pathans by describing them as “more cruel, more dangerous, more destructible than the wild beasts” (Stefan n.p.). Although they have been described as violent and “savage” in colonial literature and in contemporary literature as “sympathizers of militants”, a local analyst analyzes Pathans and their history and writes that they are actually victims rather than perpetrators of violence (Yousaf 1). But Philips chooses to support the narrative of the colonizers.

The authors under discussion also give a lot of information to construct an image of their cities. A critic, Jeremy Tambling in *Literature and City* (2016) writes that “[M]odern novel attempted to know a city” (2). Referring to Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848) he writes that this work of literature has “many set pieces where it tries to explain the city to those outside it” (1). This shows that by presenting imagery novels portray a picture of real cities. Looking at the discussion above, Imtiaz and Philips are giving information about their respective cities in a similar way, by discussing various features from physical description to class differences, political issues, and mismanagement of government.

Tambling considers how the “urban consciousness” (6) of a writer who writes about the city is created. He explains “[E]very urban culture” has a “diversity of cultures” (Tambling 18) and every writer writes about the city according to his /her own parameters. As he explains in Baudelaire’s poems Paris lacks “landmarks, sights, and monuments” (Tambling 13) whereas the same city is defined differently by Zola as he gives “panoramic views” (Tambling 14) of the city. Similarly, the same Chicago city is experienced differently by the white community and black community as is expressed by Richard Wright in *Native Son*. Thus, it is significant to consider the perspective of Imtiaz and Philips with which they are giving the information about their cities because the perspective certainly seems to be negative.

Thus, while performing the responsibility of intellectuals by presenting local stories and satirizing Western discourses about the country, Imtiaz and Philips are also defaming their own country. Bridget in *BJD* also works at a publishing company and Becky in *SA*

works in a morning show, but Fielding and Kinsella do not even give a passing comment on the situation of their countries, especially since they do not have anything negative about their countries to mention in their novels.

A renowned feminist, Gjurgjan advises female writers that they should come forward and write to express themselves while subscribing to the literary canon (201) to fulfil the aesthetic demands of literature while they should simultaneously do “side-stepping” (Gjurgjan 204) to raise their social or feminist concerns. She believes that feminists need to exercise their creativity and celebrate their innovative contribution to literature besides sharing their feminist ideas. Just like Virginia Woolf who cannot only be categorized as a feminist author, but her contribution to novel writing is also remarkable. However, Imtiaz and Philips are writing the same kind of literature as Fielding and Kinsella, which means they are compromising on their creative contribution to literature, as discussed above in section 5.3 as well. They are subscribing to the canon of chick literature by killing their creativity; however, they are side-stepping in terms of raising social and feminist concerns by discussing their own country in a negative light. It seems that they are going through the situation as described by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) where a colonized subject tries to “whiten” (Fanon 28) himself by following colonizers, but then realizes that he is different from them and gets into “inferiority complex” (Fanon 80). These writers also try to jump on the bandwagon of writing chick literature like Western women but when they do so they are reminded of their inferiority complexes looking at their country and they cannot resist writing about them.

5.4.2 Description of orientis

Besides the negative portrayal of the physical description of the country, Imtiaz and Philips do not have positive ideas to mention about the country’s general public. In his book *Orientalism* (1978), a postcolonial theorist, Edward Said explains that people in the East were defined by a group of people or by Orientalists in the West. Said defines orientalis as “[A]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects” (Said 2). Although he points out this practice done in the past, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries by Western authors, both Imtiaz and Philips are giving a similar description of the Orient at present.

Imtiaz and Philips do not describe the people of their country any differently and give the same monolithic Western view of the colonial subjects. For example, Said mentions in his book that Orientalists^{xvi} describe the Orient as “lazy (Said 178). Imtiaz in *KYKM* sketches a similar picture of the people of her country as Ayesha gives a list of employees absent from work, along with the reasons for which they are skipping their working day. The reasons are portrayed to be excuses only, as most of them are said to be sick and one is said to be suffering from Dengue fever. Ayesha then explains that this employee is lying because Dengue fever occurs in a specific season only (Imtiaz 3). She ridicules the employees for making excuses and lying to avoid work. She also mocks people for having no concept of punctuality (Imtiaz 6) and shows that even the educated class has no regard for time. They typically start “getting dressed at the time of invitation” (Imtiaz 24) and arrive late at events casually.

Both Imtiaz and Philips in their respective novels, show that locals do not like their country and are obsessed with going to the West. For example, Ayesha shows hatred towards the place she is living and her life which she finds boring, but she knows solutions to all her problems in life lie in going to the West. Many times, she expresses the wish to go to a Western country. The novel begins with her disappointment in being rejected from a fellowship in New York (Imtiaz 1). Likewise, when she writes her report on a famous prisoner, she looks forward to getting a fellowship or job abroad (Imtiaz 178). If she cannot go abroad, she wants to work for a foreign-based organization (Imtiaz 89) in her own country. It is not only Ayesha who considers working for an American employer, but her friend Zara looks at such job opportunities in the same way. They consider working for a foreign channel such as NBC, a big achievement for any local reporter (Imtiaz 89). Ayesha categorically expresses that in a career of a journalist becoming a “bureau chief” (Imtiaz 91) is the aim, but being employed by a “foreign news channel” (Imtiaz 91) is the highest achievement a journalist can attain. This is considered to be the highest achievement because, in a year, this leads a person to a job in America or the United Kingdom which seems to be the ultimate dream destination for the entire Pakistani nation.

Imtiaz shows that local people try to flatter any Western person to get their approval and develop an acquaintance with them (Imtiaz 99). They readily fall for a random “foreign reporter” (Imtiaz 94) and even offer sexual services to him (Imtiaz 94). Ayesha is portrayed as a follower of the American dream and wants to reach America by any means. She has a lot of hopes from the report she writes regarding a famous prisoner. She dreams of getting

the report published by a foreign magazine and getting a “Pulitzer award” (Imtiaz 219) for her recognition in the West.

By narrating different incidents Imtiaz and Philips both show that violence is in the nature of local people. For example, in *BFTA* Aynah recalls an incident from the past, where her friend’s fiancé Javaid was given “boxing gloves” (Philips 33) as a present when he was sixteen years old. To show off his gloves to his friends, using his influential power he just called out a poor boy to be the subject of his violence and gave him ten rupees in return. Similarly, in *KYKM* Imtiaz gives details of the callousness of people by narrating an incident where a son kills his mother and decapitates her “head” (Imtiaz 69). The people as described by her are ruthless to the extent that they have fun with the dead bodies dragging them and “playing football” (Imtiaz 59) with their heads.

Similarly, Imtiaz mentions a catfight between two female media hosts where one throws “a glass of whisky” (Philips 170) at another. Imtiaz also mentions the unruliness of people by describing a street fight between shopkeepers and customers (2) just in the beginning of the novel and a fight between a car and a tank driver on the road (Imtiaz 196). In another incident, she narrates a fight between a bus passenger and a vendor, where the passenger “spits paan” (Imtiaz 110) from a bus window on the vendor and the fight begins between the two of them.

Both Imtiaz and Philips through their novels under discussion refer to sectarian violence as well in the country. Imtiaz gives a passing reference to it while she is trying to satirize news reporters by saying that the news reporters do not understand the emotions of people who are suffering and ridicule them. She quotes a reporter saying that a girl at a “sectarian protest” (Imtiaz 45) was protesting as if her mother had died. In this way, even while satirizing news reporters she does not refrain from giving a hint of sectarian killings in her country. Thus, she makes it clear to the reader that in her country people kill each other in the name of religion. She also names a religious group involved in promoting propaganda for sectarian violence and killing the Shia sect which is called “Sipahe-Sahaba” (Imtiaz 74). Likewise, in *BFTA* Philips also mentions a murder of a Shia leader and his family (112) while she and her boyfriend were shopping in a mall. Thus, Imtiaz and Philips are including very sensitive issues of the country in their novels.

Moreover, in *KYKM* Ayesha quotes various blast incidents in the novel. For example, a blast “at a train station” (Imtiaz 16) gives a grim picture of a blast sight which is full of smoke and fumes (Imtiaz 241). Ayesha explains the bloodshed looked like “after math of Bakra Eid” (Imtiaz 249). She writes that it gets difficult for her as a journalist to

write about repeated bombs and bloodshed in different ways (Imtiaz 249) which shows that she frequently has to report blasts scenes. Similarly, in *BFTA* Philips quotes various incidents of blasts. For example, Aynah gets stuck in a traffic jam, because an important leader is bombed along with his wife and children (Philips 112). She recalls another blast incident from the past where the American embassy was bombed. She describes it as a powerful blast and people could see “human body parts flying through the air” (Philips 96), which created a very bleak scene to be tolerated by humans.

Another blast scene mentioned by Philips in *BFTA* is given much importance by bringing the death of an important Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto. This true incident is quoted by Philips while mixing it up with the death of a fictional character that is Aynah’s friend, Mumtaz. According to Aynah, there are 136 initial casualties and 400 people wounded in the blast. Just like the blast scene explained before, witnesses could see human body parts scattered everywhere. Aynah gives details of the explosion by adding that a small grenade was thrown off at a convoy of the leader and then when people gathered together a larger bomb exploded. She adds that some people said that a small “baby” (Philips 180) was given to the leader to hold and a remote-control bomb had been attached to the baby. However, even after consulting various sources, I could not find any newspaper discussing the possibility of a baby being attached to a bomb and given to Benazir Bhutto. Although writers take liberty when they write historical fiction, the kind of liberty which Philips is taking is important to consider. She is adding more sensation by mentioning an innocent baby tied to a bomb. Moreover, no grenade was thrown at Benazir Bhutto, as according to BBC news, after a rally suicide bomber shot at her and then blew himself up.

Despite portraying an extreme form of violence, Imtiaz and Philips show the people of the country seem to be immune to all the violence and it is normalized for people. For example, Ayesha casually breaks the news of the death of twenty-five people in an accident while attending a party (Imtiaz 38). Not only Ayesha herself is callous to trauma, but she gives examples of other people as well in this regard. As she explains just an hour after the heavy exchange of fire between two gangs, kids started playing in the same playground where the incident occurred and she also mentions a woman who was doing her laundry on a rooftop in one of the houses in the vicinity with a “nonchalant look on face” (Imtiaz 60), as if nothing really happened. Thus, Imtiaz shows that this kind of situation is normal for Pakistanis, because as she says that every other day people are “blowing themselves up” (Imtiaz 176), in Pakistan. Moreover, despite being mugged, people do not refrain from carrying expensive items with them as if they are immune to crimes. She writes

categorically that Karachites do not “raise an eyebrow” (Imtiaz 107) on disasters anymore, because it is part of their everyday lives.

The violence and barbarity both Philips and Imtiaz are associating with the people of Karachi or Pakistan is not new as Said has also pointed out in *Orientalism* (1978, 2003). He explains Orient is described in the West as a “violent” being and “murderer” (287), but Said described Orientalism practiced in the past. Imtiaz and Philips are not failing to associate violence with Pakistanis in this era.

They are not the only ones who are talking about violence and Muslims, the present Orientalists or neo-orientalists^{xvii} are doing the same. One of the examples for the sake of evidence is mentioned here that is taken from The Guardian newspaper dated 28 August 2013. It is explained that New York Police Department labelled mosques as “terrorist organizations” and therefore every individual who enters a mosque for a prayer service is spied on even if that individual does not have any criminal record. Imtiaz also talks about a mosque in a similar manner. As when Ayesha is visiting a famous prisoner under all security, she gets scared, but reminds herself that she is not going to a “training camp of militants” or a mosque which incites “violence in the Friday sermons” (Imtiaz 139). She juxtaposes a terrorist training camp and a mosque. Thus, she is talking about mosques, in just the same way West is discussing them.

Similarly, in *BFTA*, Philips brings a discussion of religion. As explained at the beginning of the section, it seems that Philips is satirizing the West for their obsession with Islam and terrorism as her friend Monty creates a fake camp for a television show (Philips 9). Philips reveals that Monty is given money for the show to make Pakistan look like a terrorist country. The show in the novel becomes very much popular and is shown in forty-six countries. Aynah believes it strikes a chord with the audience because the show involves violence and there is a combination of “English celebrities and mad mullahs” (Philips 19) who stay together in a camp and influence each other.

This camp is given a derogatory name and called as “Islamic terrorist camp” (Philips 9). The activities which the participants are supposed to do in this camp are an amalgamation of Islam and terrorism. Participants have to wake up in the early hours of the morning, recite the “Koran” (Philips 9) by moving back and forth and are forced to memorize it (Philips 125) as well. The participants are beaten to follow a strict routine of memorizing “Koran” (Philips 125) which sometimes lasts for twenty-four hours. Besides these religious activities, they do terrorist activities such as learning how to make a bomb and grenades, and practicing commando moves using “Ak 47” (Philips 125) guns. Despite

the tough routine of the camp, the participants are not willing to leave the show, as if there is something addictive about these activities. One of the English participants that is Rachel Goldberg discusses the addictive and numbing nature of these activities of the camp saying that she was “delirious” doing these activities and was ready to kill “Jews” (Philips 125). Thus, in this fake camp, participants of the show are portrayed as actually getting influenced by terrorist activities and Islamic practices in the wrong way.

Besides Rachel Goldberg, another contestant of the show, who is a winner of the show as well, called as Johnny Black also re-enforces the idea of brainwashing done in the camp. For example, Black one day suddenly disappears from his hotel and leaves a note behind stating that he intends to join terrorists in “Waziristan” and be a part of “jihad” (Philips 86) against the West which is his own people. Black is later on found to be working with a famous terrorist named as “Maulvi Mian Nawaz Hussain” (Philips 92). The terrorist is described as a “Pakistani citizen” and a wanted criminal in connection with the 9/11 incident by the US. He is also described as a high-ranking member of the terrorist organization “Al Qaeda” (Philips 135) and is believed to have information about the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden. He is said to previously reside in Waziristan but then fled to “Rahim Yar Khan” (Philips 135), which is part of Punjab. Finally, Philips reveals that he gets arrested from a private property of a member of the National Assembly Sardar Taimur Ali Khan. Thus, the novel which is written in a light way gives a serious anti-state narrative by showing that a primary convict of 9/11 was found in Pakistan though Bin Laden was found in Pakistan in 2011, while the novel is written in 2005. It shows that Philips is somehow promoting the Western narrative and is a part of the consciousness-raising journey against Pakistan to associate it with terrorism.

Philips associates terrorism with different parts of Pakistan including Peshawar, Waziristan and Rahim Yar Khan. Aynah explains Rahim Yar Khan is considered to be a “terrorist-free” (Philips 145) area however, an important terrorist is found from there in the novel. One may consider the incident to be a satire on news channels particularly Western news channels for yellow journalism because without any evidence the news channels start associating the arrest of the criminal with the fake documentary made about Nilofer in the same area by Aynah and her friends. The news channels comment that “three brave young women tried to warn” (Philips 145) everyone with their documentary about a suppressed woman that there is a presence of profound violence and terrorists in this area. But as the reader knows that the documentary about Nilofer is fake, therefore catching a terrorist from

this place may also be fake. However, Nilofer's story is exaggerated in the documentary but parts of the story are true, therefore it cannot be regarded entirely as fake.

In *KYKM* Imtiaz also associates violence with the country on every level. Even it is supported and appreciated at a fashion show where models are dressed up as suicide bombers, wearing a type of jacket worn by a famous terrorist "Ajmal Kasab" (Imtiaz 117). The fashion show also presents a group of models dressed up as commandos while the national songs are played in the background during their performance. Though she expected people will criticize this "military aggression" (Imtiaz 118), she explains people applaud them, endorsing the same idea that the people of Pakistan like violence and aggression.

The position both Imtiaz and Philips are taking regarding terrorism in Pakistan is very complex. They are trying to satirize it by exposing the Western stance on it but it is important to note that it is part of stereotyping Pakistan with terrorism even if the authors are negating the association. Their aim of negating terrorism in the country is also one of the ways of stereotyping called "negation bias" (Beukeboom 219). Beukeboom while explaining the technique of negation bias writes that repeatedly negating a stereotype also maintains a stereotype.

Not only do Imtiaz and Philips associate Pakistan with terrorism they even candidly give an anti-state narrative. For example, Ayesha says that the armed forces of the country should not be appreciated because they are the ones responsible for "genocide in Bangladesh", hundreds of extrajudicial killings, and for torturing activists and journalists all over the country" (Imtiaz 118). She ridicules the Army chief quoting a private conversation between him and his brother at a party, where she says they were bickering like "schoolboys" (Imtiaz 170). She mentions this maybe to show that the Army chief of the country is very immature as there does not seem to be any logic for bringing up this incident in the novel, it is not adding humor, but it is just a passing comment, the nature of which is derogatory.

Philips in *BFTA* also talks about Army with a tongue in cheek, reading a motto of the Army written at the airport "Muster All Your Strength Against Them" (Philips 140). Aynah finds it "preposterous", because she believes they should name their enemy i.e. Indians instead of calling them as "them". Moreover, Aynah's supposed lover that is Kamal is also from a department of the Army (Philips 205) called ISI. He deceives her by having a relationship with her only to procure information about her friend's father. She also accuses the army to have information about the murderer of Benazir Bhutto saying they "must" be aware of it because they "know everything before it happens" (Philips 222).

Thus, Philips is blaming Pakistan Army for the murder of Benazir Bhutto. Therefore, Aynah openly abuses it by saying “Fucking” (Philips 205, 222) and “bastards” (Philips 222).

Moreover, Philips gives an anti-state narrative through other incidents as well. For example, when Aynah and her friends try to make the news of Nilofer’s abuse more interesting for CNN they place a “poster of a jihadi with his face covered, wielding a pistol in the snowy mountains of Kashmir” (Philips 92) to show that Nilofer’s husband supports terrorism. In this scene, the author is trying to enhance Nilofer’s abuse through the picture of a man holding a gun, but he is presented in the setting of Kashmir. It makes us question the writer’s stance on the Kashmir issue. To show violence she is showing a jihadi from Kashmir. However, according to the stance of Pakistan on Kashmir, a jihadi is a freedom fighter. But the writer juxtaposes a terrorist and a freedom fighter of Kashmir. Philips is undermining the efforts of the people of Kashmir in their fight for freedom by showing them as women abusers and in this way, she is going against Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir. Thus, both Imtiaz and Philips are doing what Dirlik calls “political manipulation” (Dirlik 89) while presenting local.

Philips also shows that Pakistan has a subservient relationship with America. To give arms to Pakistanis American government gives different conditions and harasses them through different means. She writes America accuses Pakistan of supporting militants and asks it to prove itself otherwise by acting on what America wants it to do, such as asking for the arrest of Mumtaz’s father, who is an important figure for them. Philips writes that Mumtaz’s father is important to those who have “wars on terror” (Philips 123) because of several reasons. He explains himself he has connections with terrorists, “poppy growers” (Philips 122), and knows Afghanistan and North of Pakistan well, which can benefit the American government. Secondly, his daughter Mumtaz apparently exposes an alleged “Muslim murderer” that is Allah Nuamani for killing his wife (Philips 203) showing that she is a feminist and so “Westernized that she helps” (Philips 203) him to be caught. Through this, the American government knows that the family shares a similar stance and agenda for the country as Americans themselves, which means that the loyalties of the family can be bought by them. Therefore, Mumtaz’s father is given special treatment even when he is in prison on account of drug dealing. Due to his connections with Americans, he is allowed to have his own food and water and is even allowed to watch television while many other prisoners are not provided with basic necessities like “clean water or sanitation” (Philips 82). He is treated differently in prison from the rest of the prisoners because he has

the support of America. Philips through this character shows that the Pakistani government is not even able to punish its own criminals due to American dictation. As they are dependent on them for “arms deals” (Philips 203) therefore, to get the deals they try to prove themselves that they are not supporting militants and do different tasks to achieve their trust.

A character named Rizvi in *BFTA* who is said to be an Army officer narrates another incident where the Pakistani government tries to prove themselves to America. Philips makes an armed official confess crimes committed by Pakistani officials. Rizvi explains that in a rape case of a Christian girl four Muslim men were hanged to death, though they were not guilty of the crime. The accused criminals pledged that they are not the culprits however the intelligence branch of the Army punished these pseudo-criminals to give a good impression to the American government that they took quick action to find the culprits and punished them (Philips 204). Thus, the author tries to show that the Pakistani Army is answerable to America and commits atrocities to please them. In this way, it is a satire on America, but it is a satire on the Pakistan army as well.

Similarly, Aymah explains that CNN gives an award to Pakistani journalists who raise their voices for “human rights” (Philips 228) and they decide to give it to Mumtaz, although they are aware of it that the documentary, she made was fake. Moreover, not only CNN but the Pakistani government also decides to give her the “Pride of Pakistan” award, while they also know the reality of her documentary. But they give her an award to endorse Americans.

Thus, Imtiaz and Philips are becoming a mouthpiece of the West and degrading their country and becoming a source of tarnishing national identity although as Dirlik writes that local had to appear “as a source of national identity” (Dirlik 86). Dirlik explains that in the postmodern era “[L]ocal narratives” (Dirlik 87) are highlighted so that “metanarratives” (Dirlik 87) may be rejected. But the local writers Imtiaz and Philips are portraying a negative picture of the local and “disguising oppression” (Dirlik 87) by criticizing Pakistan and Islam. *KYKM* and *BFTA* are local narratives, but at the same time, their nature is similar to a metanarrative, as the masters' ideas are replicated in these works. The authors are performing the role of the native informant or “Re-Orientalists” where Lisa Lau defines re-orientalists as Orientals or diasporic Orientals who are writing “South Asian literature in English” (571). They distort the representation of the Orient.

Imtiaz and Philips are describing Pakistan and its nation from a Western perspective unapologetically. The authors might be unaware of it, but they are ignoring the potential

pitfalls of this controlled empowerment. They are given empowerment to write their local stories and get published but upon conditions. They are cadre, trained for this particular purpose of giving parochial touch to their local stories. Thus, local in this case is not a site of liberation or empowerment, but a site of manipulation. The Western publishing houses, Penguin Publishers in this case are giving a chance to local writers get their works published. The local writers are being allowed to present local stories and express themselves, but this empowerment and liberating experience is helping them to reconstruct their identities according to the motives of the West. By doing so they are consuming their own culture and identity.

The genre of chick literature is linked to Jane Austen (Whelehen 181) and therefore we do not find political statements in *BJD* and *SA* as apparently, they were not part of Austen's novels as well. This is because as Edward Said writes in his essay "Jane Austen and Empire" (1994) that everything that is there in Euro-American culture combines the "grand idea of empire" (Said 80). He analyzes how British literature was representing Britain and parts of the world beyond Britain before and during colonization. He believes the construction of these narratives by writers was a significant reason which stopped the natives in the homeland to oppose the idea of constructing an empire using foreign land and people. The writers constructed binaries by writing about their homeland using all the "positive ideas.. of a nation and its the language of proper order, good behavior, [and] moral values" (Said 81). This form of literature convinced people to be in sync with the agenda of colonization. Even the writers like Jane Austen were part of this mission whose voice is generally considered to be "modest" (Said 87). Her position in this regard is different from Kipling's expression of empire, who openly expresses it as a white man's burden to enlighten the rest of the world. Austen is comparatively modest. However, even her apolitical texts by constructing the narrative of binaries are aligned with the political aims of the empire.

A renowned Pakistani-American critic Sara Suleri criticizes the rampant culture of "anti-intellectualism" (Suleri 756) regarding identity formation, prevalent in mass media. She writes that the issue of identity formation should not be dealt frivolously under anti-intellectualism but needs to be addressed by the "academy" (Suleri 757), because it does not have to be dealt nonchalantly. This idea applies to *KYKM* and *BFTA* because if the authors of these novels are criticizing the confused identities of their nation and satirizing them, they are dealing with them frivolously as we can see that their novels are not even edited properly. For example, Imtiaz makes a casual mistake while writing dates in the

novel. She writes “Friday, February 5, 2012” (Imtiaz 47) and skips Saturday and mentions Sunday as “February 6, 2012” (Imtiaz 64). Similarly, in *BFTA* Philips makes casual spelling mistakes like writing “Neelofer” (98) and “Nilofer” (99) with different spellings referring to the same character.

Imtiaz and Philips are not leaving any stone unturned to talk against the country by highlighting serious issues of terrorism in a light read and showing aspects of yellow journalism. However, in the novels discussed in the previous chapter, which are from the same genre of chick literature, we do not find any mention of the issues of a country. Thus, they are subtly reproducing the ideological underpinning of the West. They are looking at themselves with “double consciousness” (Du Bois 8), one of their own and the other is looking at themselves with an eye of a colonizer.

5.4.3 Condition of women as described by authors

Imtiaz and Philips are well aware of what kind of writing regarding their country is appreciated in the West. They seem to satirize Western discourses for focusing on the oppression of women generally in Muslim countries and particularly in Pakistan. For example, Fielding in *BJD* mentions Muslims as “vicious” (Fielding 290) in dealings with their women. Similarly, Simon de Beauvoir presents a similar picture of treatment towards Muslim women (191). However, as the discussion below shows both Philips and Imtiaz are not giving a different representation of women of their country by discussing the oppression of women in their novels as well. This section presents a discussion on the two different positions Imtiaz and Philips are taking in *KYKM* and *BFTA*.

In *BFTA* Aynah while making a documentary and writing a fictional novel mentions different baits to tap Western audience and readers (Philips 62) and explains the issue of “oppressed woman” (Philips 24) is a favorite topic of audience in the West. She provides reasons for this saying her friend ran away from her oppressive husband and became famous enough to be invited to Oprah’s show to share her story (Philips 24). Similarly, there are a number of award-winning books about the issue of oppressed women in her bookshelf from which she takes help for her novel as well. These books have titles related to Islam, with portraits of veiled women on their covers, who look “vulnerable and oppressed” (Philips 24). Aynah gives a few common sentences as well from these books which are related to how Islam and Muslim men bound women and make a note of them to add them in her novel as well (Philips 155). She knows that these ideas can pitch in the

West, as such books are both published by and read by the West because Western audiences have taste for such books (Philips 24).

The novel Aynah writes is pinned on this issue of the oppression of women in Pakistan. She shows that her protagonist who is born and raised in Britain and had a promising future is forcibly brought to Pakistan. She writes in Pakistan, at the airport men beat her bare “ankles” (Philips 37), because her ankles are not covered by clothes and she is forced to keep her head down while walking as women are supposed to walk in public spaces (Philips 36) in Pakistan. Aynah describes the house the protagonist has to live in is made of “mud”, to give an “uncivilized” (Philips 94) and primitive effect to the setting of the novel. She adds a side note to it saying that she should later add some “horror stories” and “filth” (Philips 37) in the description because this is how Muslim houses are described in Western novels. The protagonist of her novel comes across different people who claim to be Muslims and they “beat” her and “rape” (Philips 95) her. Thus, Aynah creates an entirely depressing picture of an oppressed woman stuck in Pakistan.

Likewise, Aynah and her friends decide to pick a similar theme of the oppression of women in Pakistan for their documentary. Their first documentary is about “honor killing” (Philips 30) of women and they decide to adhere to violence done to women for their next documentaries as well. They are aware of how they can make their documentaries more sensational and catch the attention of the audience such as by showing a face of a woman “burnt by acid” (Philips 62). She says CNN which is a Western channel shows their interest in such documentaries where Islam and the condition of women in Islamic countries are depicted. Through this explanation given by Aynah for the success of her novel and documentary, to cash the idea of a suppressed woman, it seems that Philips wants to satirize Western authors.

Though the documentary and novel Aynah is writing using marketing techniques are fake and fictional, Imtiaz and Philips portray women in their novels in similar ways. The condition of women in Pakistan according to Imtiaz’s description is very bad. Women are harassed on roads with catcalling (Imtiaz 21) and in one of the incidents the discussion among journalists and police shows that “thousands of girls are raped every day” (Imtiaz 45) in the country. Therefore, rape is not considered a big issue by the people of Pakistan; hence it is casually discussed by people. Imtiaz also shows that people pull their contacts to suppress investigation against rape cases, even the “prime minister” (Imtiaz 114) gets involved in these acts. She shows this is how sexual harassment cases are treated in

Pakistan. However, Imtiaz mentions the stories of rape just by the way while describing something else.

Likewise, in *BFTA* Philips narrates an incident at a concert where a female performer is harassed and pulled from the stage “against her wishes” (Philips 7) by a drunk male audience. Philips shows that the level of frustration of men in the country is to take pictures of women without their consent to make a collection to satisfy their “sleazy” (Philips 10) interests. She explains, a woman’s honor in society is always at stake and even gossip can ruin her “reputation” (Philips 26). Philips also explains that women get severe and cruel punishments like stoning for committing adultery.

Moreover, both Imtiaz and Philips mention in their respective novels that a woman’s dress is judged acutely by society. Philips writes people throw acid on women “if they think they are showing too much flesh” (Philips 26). Both of the authors mention that jeans-wearing girl is not accepted by society and is “scandalized” (Philips 47). Imtiaz mentions that in an incident where a girl is raped, police mentions that she was wearing “jeans” (Imtiaz 43) and that invited men’s attention which justified what happened to the girl.

Philips while mentioning the condition of women in Pakistan also brings up an issue of female child abuse through the character of Aynah. She writes Aynah gets sexually abused in her own home through her stepfather who first gave her presents and then abused her (Philips 72). Besides issues of women in Pakistan, Philips also mentions the condition of women in other Muslim states. She talks about acid attacks on “female writers in Sudan” and coma victims raped by male doctors in “Saudi Arabia” (Philips 70).

Philips gives specific figures of violence while discussing the statistics of violence committed against women in Pakistan. She writes in the novel that there are “4,383 women killed in the last four years in Pakistan, according to the Sindh additional inspector general” (Philips 72) and “80 per cent of the women in Pakistan are abused in some way” (Philips 72). If the figures she is giving are true, then the same question arises why there is the need of bringing such tarnishing aspects of a country in this form of light-read chick lit novels.

On the other hand, the figures Philips gives may be fabricated, but she presents them as facts. Moreover, even if they are fabricated, a reader would probably not get the information researched while doing a pleasure reading of a fictional novel. While reading a fictional novel, especially a reader’s guard is down. As in the international Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test to check a person’s abilities one of the tasks is to identify a difference between fact and opinion in the ‘Analyze an argument’ task. The instructions

are given to students on the website. It is suggested in the instructions of the test to read carefully and even read it more than once to understand the argument made by an author to check if the arguments given in a passage are facts substantiated with evidence and proof or if they are just opinions. Thus, it requires practice and an alert mind to segregate facts from opinions, but this would probably not be done by a reader doing reading for pleasure.

Philips besides discussing the condition of women in Muslim countries compares the condition of women in Western countries as well such as stating that in Britain per week “two women” are murdered by their partners. Such figures given about Western countries can also be given a benefit of the doubt just like the examples discussed above. Looking at her argument it might be taken as if she is questioning West that when so many women are being murdered in Britain and US then why honor killing in Pakistan is an issue for West (Philips 147). But this seems to be a weak argument as to make this point the examples she gives from Western countries are general in nature, whereas in Pakistan’s case, she substantiates her statements by providing true examples such as that of “Mukhtaran mai” (Philips 32). Philips not only names her but gives details of her tragedy to make the readers aware of it if they missed the news by explaining that she was gang raped in 2002 by tribal councils as a punishment for her brother’s sin. This clearly shows that the writer wants to highlight these issues in the country.

Philips adds another story of women's oppression by mentioning the practice of honor killing practised in the country through the minor characters of Shazia and her lover Dado. Shazia’s father wants to murder his daughter because she married a man of her own choice and brought “dishonor” (Philips 48) to the family. Aynah shows her anger towards the irrational behavior of people who want to find Shazia and kill her and curb Shazia’s right to be happy.

Philips gives more examples of the suppressed condition of women in the country such as mentioning an incident of a religious group, where they register their protest against the government by threatening that if their demands are not fulfilled, they will put their “women on fire” (Philips 177) instead of putting themselves on fire. Similarly, the story of Nilofer also shows a number of cruelties she had to go through in her life being a woman. Her father sold her to his cousin who was much older than her. She had to go through brutal and painful sexual experiences, because of which she could not even walk. This is also mentioned that to excite himself her husband gave her a beating and even once put an electric wire into the vagina (Philips 56). Her husband is shown as sex-obsessed and cruel who married thrice and even killed his first wife.

As Nilofer was unable to produce a child, therefore she was beaten by her husband and was made to ask for forgiveness for the sins which were stopping her from conceiving a child, therefore she had to prostrate “before her husband and before God” to ask for forgiveness (Philips 55) yet being a weak woman, she quietly “endured” (Philips 56) all the beating. Though later on, we come to know that Nilofer’s story is not entirely true which the writer explains (Philips 212). However, there are reasons through which it can be believed that if not entirely true, much of her story is true, such as her enforced marriage to an old man (Philips 55). Women of the village are also witnesses of abuse done to her when they say that her husband is trying to “teach her how to behave” (Philips 51). This shows that Aynah exaggerates stories of abuse in the documentary she is making, but some of the stories are true as well.

It seems that Philips wants to raise this point through Nilofer’s fake story that women in the country just dramatize their problems to get benefits. She shows that rich and educated women like Mumtaz and Aynah raise this issue to get fame whereas poor women like Nilofer do it for their own benefit. She shows that Nilofer is even ready to do all the required acting to add more drama to her story as she agrees to have “bruises painted on her face” (Philips 89). In this way, Philips is satirizing the people of the country who pick up such issues for their personal benefit. However, she is underestimating the violent experiences of women in the country who actually face these situations and is silencing the pain of the real victims.

Secondly, Philips is defaming the country in any case whether Nilofer’s story is true or false as she gives a number of reasons to believe in violence done against women in the country. For example, Aynah and Mumtaz admit that they want to make a documentary not only for Nilofer, but through this they want to help “a hundred women” (Philips 70) suffering from domestic violence in Pakistan. When Aynah thinks about making a documentary, several images of women who are suffering come to her mind such as that “of women with cigarette burns on their breasts and Rakaia, whose brother sold her to a man who burnt her eyes to be sure that her last image of the world would be of him” (Philips 230). Philips gives such details of violence practised against women through these examples.

Thus, in light of the discussion presented in this section, it can be asserted that Imtiaz and Philips in *KYKM* and *BFTA* respectively are taking confused positions regarding the oppression of women in their country. On the one hand, they are satirizing the obsession

of Western media regarding this issue but on the other hand, they are promoting the same narrative through their novels. They give several fictional and real-life examples of violence committed against women in Pakistan to show that women in Pakistan are “treated like cattle” (Philips 31) and burnt in the name of honor and raped by mobs as discussed above. It is important to note that like Arynah in *BFTA* Becky in *SA* also wants to write a book. However, the topic of the book chosen by Becky is very general which is to teach people about saving money while Arynah is writing a book to demean her country and get international recognition.

5.4.4 Criticism of Islam

This section presents a discussion on how Islam is portrayed in *KYKM* and *BFTA* by Imtiaz and Philips. The positions the authors of these novels are taking regarding Islam are confusing as on the one hand, they seem to be criticizing the negative portrayal of Islam in the Western discourses but on the other hand, they are criticizing the religion themselves. Both of the positions the authors are taking are discussed in this section of the discussion.

Philips in *BFTA* criticizes a British news channel for using words like “Islamists” (Philips 112) to describe “terrorists” (Philips 113) using the two words synonymously. She explains that anyone who follows and practices Islam is an Islamist and not all Islamists are terrorists. She writes that the West is obsessed with Islam and they go to any extent to create a mountain out of a molehill. This shows that she is criticizing Western media for its negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims for example she quotes an incident where an anchor on a Western news channel uses the word “Islamists” instead of terrorists and says “Dangerous Islamists seriously injured six British expats in a popular shopping mall in Karachi” (Philips 112-113). Although by checking a local Pakistani news channel Arynah comes to know that the said serious injuries turn out to be minor scratches on a cheek and a “scrape on the leg” (Philips 113) of the victim. The incident shows that Philips is criticizing the West for relating Islam with terrorism.

Similarly, in *KYKM* Imtiaz seems to be satirizing the locals in her novel when Ayesha discusses fellowship at a think tank in the United States where she would be trained to write about “religious parties in Pakistan” (Imtiaz 1). Getting coaching from New York for writing about religious parties in Pakistan is ironic, due to the difference of religion practised in Pakistan and in New York, but Imtiaz wants to show that Pakistanis are even ready to go for such blind fellowships where they may learn about how to analyze their

own religion. However, from other examples from both *KYKM* and *BFTA*, both Imtiaz and Philips seem to be criticizing religion.

Both of the authors discuss the violent behavior of religious parties in Pakistan. Imtiaz writes that anyone can easily be “lynched” (Imtiaz 75) by them in the name of blasphemy even for a small inadvertent mistake, endorsing that they are very strict and rigid. Similarly, Philips in *BFTA* describes religious people as ones who forcefully barge into private parties with their guns and stop people from dancing and drinking to save them “from getting sinned” (Philips 7). She also shows that they are violent and they assert to give punishments to people as per her description “in the tradition of the jihad” (Philips 65) by leaving the body of a culprit “on the side of the street so that he can scream and squirm and bleed for mercy” (Philips 65). This form of description of the holy war is self-perceived and gives a negative impression.

Moreover, religious people are depicted as misogynists by both Imtiaz and Philips. Philips in *BFTA* shows that Nilofer’s husband Allah Numani Haq gets the sympathies of religious parties when he is sentenced to death for killing his wife, categorizing the religious people as misogynists. Although the religious party is not sure if Haq killed his wife or not, they believe Nilofer was a “whore” (Philips 213), because she blamed her husband for abuse, in a patriarchal society, thus she deserved death anyway. They consider Haq a “martyr” (Philips 213) who died for a good cause that is murdering his wife. They sympathize with him and even one of them gets his daughter married to him because in their view he did an act of piety by murdering his disobedient wife. All the religious parties having misogynistic agenda support Haq in every way they can and his funeral is attended by famous religious leaders (Philips 213) as well to show their respect for him. Similarly, Philips also mentions that “Islamic psychos” as she calls them, throw acid on women if they believe women are “showing too much flesh” (Philips 26). By doing so she shows that religious parties support violence done to women and sustain patriarchy. She says that religious leaders who wear a “green turban” (Philips 59) are fanatics and they force people to be extremists and they consider all those people as enemies who speak about women’s rights. She describes the crude treatment of religious people towards women in a similar way as done by a white feminist Simon de Bouvier where she writes that Muslims “profess the utmost disdain toward women” (119).

Philips discusses the double standards of religious leaders through a group of men from MMA that is Mutahida Majlishe Amal, which is a religious political party in Pakistan. She describes a scene where they are enjoying alcoholic drinks and the company of women

while they believe they are being virtuous by keeping “their wives at home in purdah” (Philips 103) although they are denying them the right to enjoyment. She also shows that maulvis are ready to do a job for Monty’s fictional television show where “maulvis” (Philips 14) with long beards are hired on pay to work for him. In this way, she is pointing out that religious people can even do acting for monetary benefits. She describes maulvi as a person who has a “long beard” and “spews hatred (Philips 158). Thus, she presents religious people in a negative light and shows that they are doing all the prohibited acts.

Likewise, Imtiaz in *KYKM* criticizes and ridicules religious leaders. A spokesperson of a religious group called “Sipah-e-Sahaba” is described with negative adjectives such as she writes he is a “potbellied man” (Imtiaz 77) and a murderer of many people of the Shia sect, yet he avoids eye contact with Ayesha showing respect to a woman. However, his double standards are shown when he calls Ayesha at midnight to “chat” (Imtiaz 83) with her. Another incident of double standards of religious groups is shown by Imtiaz through a gang that attacks Ayesha and her boss. These people are properly dressed up like thieves covering their faces with scarves and holding guns yet they are described as “religious activists” (Imtiaz 244). In addition to these experiences that Ayesha goes through, other news reporters besides Ayesha also share bad experiences they have with religious parties (Imtiaz 187) and thus they ridicule them.

The religious parties are shown to have abhorrence towards America and they abuse Americans by calling them “pigs” (Philips 65). In *BFTA* when Nilofer’s husband named Haq is executed in a fake case of murdering his wife, the religious parties believe that America is behind Haq’s execution and without having any strong evidence, they want to take revenge on America for his execution (Philips 213). They are presented as supporters of Haq because he was violent towards his wife and the religious parties are portrayed in the novel as supporters of violence against women as discussed earlier. Similarly, Imtiaz shows hatred of religious parties towards America through badges distributed among members at a rally by a religious group called “Jamaat-ud-Dawa” (Imtiaz 109) to incite hatred towards Americans.

Philips in *BFTA* shows that Pakistanis are at a distance from their religion. Aynah seems to be irritated by her own religion. For instance, she compares her zoning out at a gym to the boredom she felt during her “Islamiat class” (Philips 87) at school. Out of all the other subjects she had to study at school, she can only think of a comparison with Islamiat. Similarly, Mumtaz although is a Muslim but despises Islam. When Mumtaz and Aynah discuss Mukhtaran Mai’s story, Aynah says it is the tribal law that made her

suffer not Islam, although West showed that she suffered at the hand of Islam. But like Western ideology, Mumtaz asserts she believes “it’s the same thing” (Philips 31). Thus, there is no difference between the two for Mumtaz because she thinks Islam laws are responsible for the tragedy of Mukhtaran Mai. Arynah also expresses her hate for Islam candidly and calls religious people “bloody fundos” (Philips 7). She also despises the look of religious people who have a beard, although having a beard is a part of Islam.

Arynah is not able to relate with the cause of the religious protest when the people protest against “Danes” (Philips 78) for disrespecting the Prophet (PBUH). She believes these people cause unnecessary unrest in the country by halting traffic and forcing people to adhere to their cause. Similarly, on another occasion, when Arynah is visiting a place in Punjab, she hears “Azaan” (Philips 81), which is a call for prayers, from multiple mosques at the same time. Hearing this she thinks it must be an area of “religious fanatics” (Philips 81) although Azaan is a call for basic prayers of Muslims. She does not know the words of Azaan, because she thinks “religion is overrated” (Philips 81). Moreover, she says it ironically that learning “Koran” (Philips 81) is a much simpler task than making a good Martini which seems to be a senseless comparison. It is important to note the spellings of the holy book Philips uses in the novel. Simone de Beauvoir also spells it in the same way (119). The Western press prefers “Koran”, while Islamic and Arab scholars do not use these spellings, as an article in Hartford Courant explains. Arynah talks about religion from a distance as if she does not own it. She describes the situation of Mumtaz’s pre-burial rituals and says, “as their religion dictates, the women of her family have washed and prepared her body for this one last event” (Philips 223). The use of the word “their” makes one suspicious that the narrator does not own the religion.

At some points in the novels, it seems that the writers are satirizing the West for its negative portrayal of Islam. However, both Imtiaz and Philips are not discussing their religion in any different way as they are also degrading it. Both authors refer to religious people as “Islamic Fundos” (Philips 103), “Islamic Psychos” (Philips 26) and “bloody beards” (Imtiaz 240). Thus, looking at these examples one questions who are the audience of these novels if they are satirizing their religion, is it for their own people or an English-speaking audience. As Negra asserts about chick flick movies that are not produced purely for “entertainment and without cultural agenda” (Negra 7) over here it seems that the agenda of Pakistani chick lit is the negative portrayal of religion.

5.4.5 Cultural and social homogenization and fragmentation

Dirlik writes that “Global Localism”, represents a combination of global and local culture and creates a “homogenization” (Dirlik 93) of culture through cultural convergence. However, he adds that this form of culture does not represent local culture in its pure form, but it represents new and diverse culture, which shows the fragmentation of local culture. This section presents a discussion on how Pakistani culture and global cultures are presented in *KYKM* and *BFTA*.

In *KYKM* and *BFTA* we find characters showing homogenization of culture through the use of language. Despite differences between Eastern and Western cultures characters from *KYKM* use the same expressions used in the West to show surprise or distress, such as “Jesus” (Fielding 21, 32) (Kinsella 234,254,336) (Imtiaz 182, 242). Characters in *BFTA* also repeat the same word seven times during the course of the novel (Philips 50,55,61,86,100,147,221). Similarly, Ayesha in *KYKM* uses the word “bucks” (Imtiaz 9) to refer to the currency instead of using rupees which is the local currency of Pakistan. But buck in slang language refers to the American currency that is a dollar. Thus, Pakistani authors are showing homogenization on the level of language by using similar words used in the West which have no relation to their culture.

Homogenization of culture is also being done through different forms of “mediascapes” (Appadurai 35) such as through literature. We see that the portrayal of the local Pakistani characters of Ayesha and Aynah in *KYKM* and *BFTA* respectively are well-acquainted with Western literature. For example, in *KYKM* different physical locations remind Ayesha of places about which she had read in English literature. As her workstation in Karachi reminds her of “Ann Frank’s attic” (Imtiaz 2) from the novel *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) by Anne Frank and a corridor of a restaurant reminds her of a description of architecture from Dickens’s novels (Imtiaz 170). Like Ayesha when Aynah in *BFTA* looks at her friend Henna with long open hair she is reminded of a scene depicted in a painting done by an Italian painter “Boticelli” (Philips 42). Similarly, when somebody talks to Aynah about planes she pictures “Learjet planes” from “Jackie Collins” (Philips 142) novels. This shows that the characters in *KYKM* and *BFTA* are so acquainted with Western literature, that the characters of the Western literature are etched in their minds and therefore every now and then they are reminded of them even in their local scenarios. This also shows that like the characters in these novels the authors of these novels are also equally acquainted with the Western literature.

We come to know that Ayesha started reading Western literature from a young age because when thinking about the reason how Saad and she became friends, she explains it was because when she and Saad were kids they used to discuss “*Famous Five*” (Imtiaz 12) series which is a novel series written by an English writer Enid Blyton. Likewise, Aynah in *BFTA* is also fond of Western literature besides Pakistani literature. In a bookshelf in her room are kept books written by various white authors such as “Huntington”, “Tolstoy” and all the books written by “Bronte sisters”, besides the works of Eastern writers such as “Rushdie, Ghalib and Rumi” (Philips 23).

Besides language and literature, other aspects for bringing homogenization of culture in these novels include visual media. Ayesha in *KYKM* watches American shows like “Sherlock Holmes” (Imtiaz 219), “Jerry Springer” (Imtiaz 219) show, and “Master Chef” (Imtiaz 223). Different situations in Ayesha’s life ring a bell for her from different television shows or movies Ayesha has watched, like the CNG crises in Karachi remind her of war scenes from an American movie “300” (Imtiaz 110) or when her boss gives her ten thousand rupees for a trip to Larkana and tells her to make her expenses fulfilled in this amount, the situation makes her think as if she is a participant of an American television show “Project Runway” (Imtiaz 162). Project Runway is an American reality television show, where contestants are challenged to make fashionable clothes with a limited amount of money. Likewise, when she binges on wine in public, she thinks people are looking at her rudely like people did in the American movie “Superman III” (Imtiaz 58) when Spiderman got drunk. Ideas from Hollywood movies are ingrained in Ayesha’s mind as her “lacy lingerie” (Imtiaz 94) collection makes her realize that she invested in this collection of embellished undergarments because she wanted somebody to see them. She got this idea from an American movie “10 Things I Hate About You” (Imtiaz 94). Thus, the protagonists from both novels not only watch British and American movies but what they learn from them, they apply them in their lives, creating homogenization of culture with the West.

Western media is not only a part of the lives of the protagonists of these novels but the minor characters of these novels are also influenced by it. As Ayesha in *KYKM* mentions her father watches an American drama series “Breaking Bad” (Imtiaz 88), her boss watches Hollywood movies such as “Devil Wears Prada” (Imtiaz 97), and Saad’s favorite movie is “Iron Man” (Imtiaz 18). Characters from *BFTA* are also fond of British and American shows as Aynah keeps a DVD of an American movie “Dallas” (Philips 23) in her room and her friend Mumtaz watches English news channels “BBC” and “CNN”

(Philips 112). Moreover, like Ayesha other characters in *KYKM* also relate their real lives with that of movie characters, for example as she expresses that everyone imagines in their minds a Hollywood star “James Bond” (Imtiaz 76) from detective movies when Ayesha tells them she has a spy who works for her. People think of James Bond as a spy because he is considered as an epitome of a spy by them due to his movie. Thus, these characters are able to relate to the imaginary and fictional characters of the Western media being produced in other parts of the world.

These characters are not only into visual media but auditory as well. The characters are so well acquainted with the songs of the American singer Justin Bieber that they are able to recognize his song “One Direction” (Imtiaz 13) and “the way you make me feel” (Imtiaz 14) just with initial beats of the songs. Imtiaz writes radio stations try to recreate a scene of rain in November even when it rains in April by playing the song “November Rain” (Imtiaz 197) sung by an American music band of the nineties called Guns N Roses.

The characters in both *KYKM* and *BFTA* are having nostalgia for the past for which they do not have “lived experience or collective memory”(Appadurai 78). For example, when Aynah peeps into her boyfriend’s car, all she can look at is the smoke of his cigarette and she can hear a hit song of the 1970s “Another Brick in the Wall” being played in the car on high volume. The disco song and smoke in combination remind Aynah of “seventies’ disco” (Philips 194) which originated in the US. Likewise, when she and her boyfriend get bored, they decide to watch a movie from the era of the “eighties” (Philips 197). The movie she chooses is “St. Elmo’s Fire” (Philips 197) which is an American movie, released in 1985. Similarly, she attends a party where the party organizers recreate a scene from “*The Phantom of the Opera*” (Philips 170) musical and looking at the mannequins there, she recognizes that they are dressed up in “fourteenth-century” (Philips 170) dresses of English people. Similarly, when Ayesha looks at a closet in a room at a hotel she is visiting, she thinks the closet seemed to be so old that it made her think it must be in use in the time of “Miss Havisham’s” (Imtiaz 165) time period, who is a nineteenth-century character from Dickens novel *Great Expectations* (1861). Thus, these characters recreate and associate with the time in which they did not live and most importantly the time is not even experienced by their ancestors rather it belongs to the past of the West, but they are expressing “Nostalgia without memory” (Appadurai 3) and hold it in high regard.

On the other hand, when the characters in *KYKM* and *BFTA* talk about movies from the eighties era of their ancestors i.e., Pakistani ancestors they do not consider it in high

esteem. For example, when Ayesha looks at a dress, she does not like she says, it reminds her of the dresses worn by Pakistani actresses in “the eighties” (Imtiaz 113). This shows that the homogenization of culture which can be highlighted in these novels, illuminates imbalance, because it seems to be inclined towards Western culture. Thus, Appadurai is right in saying that globalization caters to the interest of “those who own and control” (9) the media. In this case, as can be seen through the discussion, the Euro-American hegemony of global cultural flows is visible which can be linked to the experience of colonization and imperialism.

Just like the touchstone method^{xviii} the characters of *KYKM* and *BFTA* are comparing everything they see and hear with that of the West. For example, when Ayesha looks at something local, she directly compares it with Western shows she has watched (Imtiaz 235). Likewise, when she looks at shirts worn by models in a fashion show which have Imran Khan’s image depicted on them; she weighs these art pieces against “Warhol’s pop art” (Imtiaz 117) and says that the local pieces of art are “poor imitation” (Imtiaz 117) of the original Western art. She also does not mention any antiques from her own culture, but looking at an old piece of furniture reminds her of antiques found at the “Paris flea market” (Imtiaz 88). Thus, the characters in both *KYKM* and *BFTA* are looking at local media and products from Western spectacles. Dirlik is right in saying that the combination of global and local which is occurring at present is “70 percent global and 30 percent local” (Dirlik 93). Imtiaz and Philips are presenting locals as the true embodiment of Lord Macaulay’s vision of a class of people during postcolonial times as he envisioned people of Indo- Pak subcontinent as “Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay 430) because the characters in both of the novels under discussion seem to have well-developed taste in all forms of Western literature and Western culture in general.

Furthermore, global and local are blended in *KYKM* and *BFTA* in other ways as well than discussed above such as in terms of fashion. For example, characters in both of the novels combine jeans which are a Western dress with a “kurta” (Imtiaz 27) (Philips 22) that is a Pakistani dress. Aynah in *BFTA* comments this combination of jeans and kurta gives a “trendier” (Philips 139) look to a person in a Pakistani setting. Similarly, Ayesha in *KYKM* describes women at a fashion show who had adapted a local Pakistani dress with patches worn by “faqir at a shrine” (Imtiaz 100) of the saint “Abdullah Shah Ghazi’s mazaar” (Imtiaz 100) and gave it a new chic style by blending it with “Western cuts”

(Imtiaz 101). Thus, even if the characters in both of the novels wear Pakistani dress, they make it glocal and give a new fashionable touch to local trends.

The characters in the two texts under discussion either wear a blend of local of global dresses or most of the times they wear purely Western dresses such as a “jumpsuit” (Imtiaz 104) at work or at parties (Imtiaz 5,105). They do wear purely Pakistani dresses as well on certain special occasions such as when they decide the particular dress as a “dress code” (Imtiaz 225) for a certain event. However, they usually prefer wearing Western dresses, because when Aynah’s friend Henna wears shalwar kameez, Aynah believes she has been “brainwashed” (Philips 47) by her fiancé to wear Shalwar kameez instead of jeans. Thus, as these characters are not wearing their original traditional Pakistani dress, Dirlik is right in saying that local is not represented in a “conventional or traditional sense” (Dirlik 85) but it is appropriated according to global trends. This cultural fragmentation “also called as multiculturalism” (Dirlik 92) shows that Europe and the United States culturally retain their values in Pakistan even after the end of colonization. Imtiaz and Philips are not showing their local culture in their respective novels enforcing the perception of colonizers that Pakistan is “culturally bankrupt” (Hassan 43).

Jameson is right in saying that culture in a postmodern world is becoming “homogeneous” (43). But it is important to note in the novels under discussion that Western culture is majorly followed by the characters in these novels and when the characters are not able to follow Western culture properly, they are ridiculed by both the authors. For example, Ayesha in *KYKM* mocks Pakistani models who follow the style of Western models in fashion shows, but are unable to follow the fashion properly. For this, she mentions an incident from a fashion show, where a model while walking on the ramp wearing a jumpsuit tries to imitate “Marilyn Monroe” but looks “awkward” (Imtiaz 105). Similarly, Aynah in *BFTA* mocks Mumtaz’s family for their “Anglophile house” (Philips 41). She ridicules the architecture of the house which is built on the design of English architecture. Moreover, she ironically smiles and laughs at the words “White House” (Philips 107) written on the name plaque of Mumtaz’s house, as the White House refers to the house of the president of the United States. She ridicules Mumtaz’s family for naming the house a white house because this mimicry is an attempt to reveal their higher status (Philips 107). The situation of Mumtaz’s family described by Aynah is similar to what a consumer culture critic, Roberta Sassatelli mentions in her book that a nouveau riche tries to emulate “nobility” (13) to show their higher status. In this case, Mumtaz’s family is trying to imitate the nobility which is not present in their country but in the West. This

shows that when global trends are followed locally the people, they are being laughed at by the authors of both novels. They show that Pakistanis are obsessed with Western styles, but they are not even able to follow them properly.

Thus, there is a homogenization of culture, with a blend of global and local as presented in *KYKM* and *BFTA*. Media is creating a homogeneous society through globalization by infiltrating ideas in the society and the characters are following them entirely or by blending them with local culture. Therefore, there is a homogenization of culture, but at the same time, there is a fragmentation of local culture in a very negative way, as there is an imbalance in this homogenization which shows a dominance of “Euro American” (Dirlik 183) culture. Moreover, local people and culture are looked down upon in this form of homogenization by Imtiaz and Philips.

5.4.6 Homogenization and fragmentation through consumerism

Homogenization and fragmentation of culture is visible in *KYKM* and *BFTA* not only through media and literature, but through other means as well that is with the help of consumerism. Consumerism is building a bridge between global and local and providing a way of expressing both. This section presents a discussion on how global is being presented in local Pakistani novels and settings and how global trends are being promoted which are benefitting consumerism. Dirlik asserts that under a combination of global and local, boundaries and cultures of the local are appropriated to allow global to enforce:

“different cultures into realm of capital only to break them down and to remake them in accordance with the requirements of production and consumption and make producers and consumers more responsive to the operations of capital”. (Dirlik 93)

Global trends being followed locally can be witnessed through food items being used by the Pakistani community in the novels. Both Ayesha and Amynah in *KYKM* and *BFTA* refer to international brands of drinks such as “Coke” (Imtiaz 14) (Philips 86 , 229), “Diet Coke” (Imtiaz 6, 112, 221) (Philips 229), “7 Up” (Imtiaz 61,69) (Philips 15), “Nescafe” (Imtiaz 108), and international brand of water “Nestlé” (Philips 21,52,116,174). Besides drinks, they also refer to international food chains such as “KFC” (Imtiaz 65) and “McDonalds” (Imtiaz 128,262) (Philips 190,199). They also mention other international brands of food items such “Bonne Maman jam” (Imtiaz 10) produced by a French company, “Magnolia bakers” (Imtiaz 11) an American bakery, “Royal Dutch” biscuits and biscuits from an international brand “Marks and Spencer” (Philips 75). The characters of both novels are

consuming food from big chains and imported food and both the authors in a similar way do not refrain from mentioning these brands in the novels.

Global fashion trends are also being followed by these local characters. For example, Ayesha's friend Zara follows the haircut of a British singer "Natalie Imbruglia" (Imtiaz 5). Characters wear dresses from international brands such as a dress from an Italian brand "Massimo Dutti" (Imtiaz 27) or a dress from "Armani" (Imtiaz 4) (Philips 11) and jeans by "Zara" (Imtiaz 81). Thus, the characters are not only wearing Western dresses, but they are using dresses of international brands.

Characters do their shopping from abroad (Imtiaz 27) and get accessories also from big international brands like a wallet from "Charles and Keith" (Imtiaz 190) and bags from "Chanel" (Philips 118), "Prada" (Philips 221,8), "Gucci" (Philips 79), and "Birkins" (Imtiaz 101). Other accessories used by the characters include Make up from a French brand "YSL" (Philips 79), Perfumes such as "Cool water" (Philips 167) from Davidoff and "Chanel No 5" (Imtiaz 39), and lighter from a British brand "Harrods" (Philips 8). They also use gadgets of international brands such as "the iPad" (Imtiaz 51) and "the iPhone" (Imtiaz 205) by Apple. Thus, to describe this situation, we can appropriate Friedman's term "The World is Flat"^{xix} for consumers. He used this term to explain that there is an equal opportunity for individual entrepreneurs and companies from all over the world to participate in the world economy. By appropriating it, it can be said that there is equal opportunity for consumers from around the world to consume what they want from anywhere in the world.

Looking at the presence of these brands in novels removes the distinction between a fashion magazine and a novel for a reader. Imtiaz and Philips seem to promote consumerism through these brands by naming them. Some of the brands are not only mentioned but their advantages and description are also given in detail. For example, Ayesha explains how one can instantly enjoy coffee through Nescafe' without any hassle of "grinding" (Imtiaz 108) coffee beans. *KYKM* and *BFTA*, like the novels discussed in the previous chapter, include advertisements of products and their use.

Like Becky in *SA*, Ayesha in *KYKM* shows a pull towards consumerism when she is in a market saying "[E]verything looks new and gleaming, screaming out "try me', 'touch me', 'buy me'" (Imtiaz 185) in a shopping store. Similarly, like Becky she gets "carried away" (Kinsella 232) (Imtiaz 185) while shopping. Thus, these authors are stereotyping women and presenting them as shopaholics.

Moreover, besides international food chains and brands, the characters in these novels also mention local Pakistani brands. For example, Ayesha in *KYKM* not only mentions a restaurant named “Chairman Mao” (Imtiaz 138) but in the fashion of advertisement she also names the best dishes the restaurant serves, such as “green curry” and “prawn toast” (Imtiaz 138). She also promotes “Beach Luxury” (Imtiaz 48) hotel in Karachi, which is usually a venue of the literary festival in Karachi. She describes all benefits of the hotel, describing it as a “nice place” (Imtiaz 48) with an amazing “view of the sea” (Imtiaz 48) and a combination of the contemporary and retro style of the building. She also provides details of the cafes and restaurants there named “Café 007” and “Casbah” (Imtiaz 80) restaurant at the hotel. Thus, with the presence of advertisements in these novels, it proves Jameson’s view that consumerism has entered literature (2).

Moreover, considering the nature of consumerism being promoted in these novels, we find that majorly Western brands are given importance. Whereas local brands such as “Marie” (Philips 75) biscuits which are locally manufactured in Pakistan by English biscuit manufacturers, are looked down upon as Mumtaz’s mother in *BFTA* says she offers Marie biscuits to regular guests while “Royal Dutch” (Philips 75) biscuits to special guests. Similarly, Ayesha in *KYKM* expresses that she needs to change her dress from a local brand called “Khadi” (Imtiaz 97) and switch to another dress so that she may not be put on the “worst dressed list” (Imtiaz 97) at a party. Ayesha likes eating “Thai food” (Imtiaz 90), whereas she has the disliking for local dish “daal rotie” (Imtiaz 198). Aynah in *BFTA* also finds it funny that her boyfriend likes “desi” (Philips 97) food because she prefers eating “burgers” (Philips 97). Hence, although local Pakistani brands and food items are part of the two novels under discussion, they are not held in high regard.

As discussed in the previous section, Imtiaz and Philips ridicule characters who are local but are not able to follow global trends with style where the discussion was related to art and architecture. Similarly, Ayesha in *KYKM* laughs at the naivety of women who hold replicas of “Louis Vuitton” (Imtiaz 86) or “Louboutin” (Imtiaz 100) bags instead of original bags from the brands. She mocks them for using fake bags. Ayesha also finds it funny that a local woman is not able to spell an international brand called “Herme’s” (Imtiaz 96) correctly.

The blend of global and local, done through literature, food, clothes and brands, shows a homogenization of culture. However, global trends are dominating in this combination. Local is being presented in these novels just in name, but it is being appropriated and therefore misleadingly presenting local culture. It reinforces Dirlik’s view

that highlighting local is related to a “new phase in the development of capitalism” (Dirlik 88). By promoting Western culture and brands these novelists are doing their bit to add to Eurocentric hegemony in global capitalism.

Antonio Gramsci asserts that in modern times bourgeoisie cannot dominate by advancing their own narrow economic interests through “force” and “coercion” (Adamson 168). Instead of coercion, now the bourgeoisie uses the consent of people to convince them through ideology and institutions, which helps in producing and reproducing the hegemony of the dominant class. Using softer means, they develop a hegemonic culture that propagates values and norms that become “common sense” (Adamson 149) values for all. Considering these beliefs as common sense values proletariats help to maintain the status quo rather than revolting against it. Thus, the novelists under discussion are maintaining the status quo regarding lifestyle, fashion and brands put forward by the West and they are not revolting against it. They are giving a satire on their own country and people who are not able to adapt to the Western lifestyle, considering it an accepted style of living. They are writing chick literature with local Pakistani flavor, but it does not benefit Pakistan because it does not represent Pakistani culture. Cultural, social, and political homogenization was done in the past by colonizers to create universality while ignoring local (Dirlik 86), but now local is brought into focus however cultural, social, and political homogenization is still done by forwarding the ideas of West while simultaneously referring to local, but the agenda behind the new fashion is same as it was during colonial times.

It can be inferred from the whole section 5.4, that Imtiaz and Philips are performing the role of the colonizer. They are writing novels keeping their colonial baggage intact and not picking up homegrown ideas. These novels may be called unhomey literature, a term which I am appropriating using Bhabha’s term “Unhomey Lives”^{xx}. The novels are unhomey because local is not presented in these novels in its pure form. Rather, the authors negate their cities, countries, people, religion, and culture.

While considering the inclination of Imtiaz and Philips towards the West, it is also important to consider the background of these authors. Imtiaz was a part of several American fellowships and is currently working for *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* newspaper. Philips is also a graduate of City University in London and is residing there as well at present. Thus, both Imtiaz and Philips have that experience which Rushdie calls “double perspective”(Bhabha 19), because being local and having experience of living outside their country they are both “insiders and outsiders” (Bhabha 18) of the world they

describe. Therefore, these writers can look at and comment on their country from an outside perspective as well. Considering the discussion in this section, they seem to describe the country from an outsider's perspective, propagating Western ideology, though they appear insiders.

Roy being a Marxist critic, criticizes the hold of corporations on "media" (11), "literature" (18), and "art magazines"(18). She explains media and literature are dependent upon corporations because "the major share of their revenues comes from corporate advertisements" (Roy 14). It is due to this that just according to the interest of the corporation, the media sometimes treats blasphemous news as an expression of "free speech" (Roy 18) or it keeps a blind eye towards important news (Roy 19). Similarly, she asserts that corporations only propagate that form of art which benefits them. The writers write books that cater to the agenda of corporations and get promoted through "literature festivals" (Roy 19) which are sponsored by corporations. Therefore, we can see from the above discussion that Imtiaz and Philips are promoting the imperialist agenda as *BFTA* and *KYKM* are published by Penguin Random House India, which has its headquarter in New York, United States. Imtiaz and Philips are writing against the country because they seem to be loyal to their publisher. As Roy writes that "Hum Tata ka namak khatay hain" (Roy 20) then how can they betray them. Therefore, the writers are not showing "national loyalties" (Dirlik 77), because they are the product of the same system.

Moreover, as Dirlik writes that due to globalization "process of production is globalized" (Dirlik 90) and there is an "international division of labor" (Dirlik 91). He asserts that corporations are domesticated into a local society which only mystifies the "location of power" that actually lies in the "global headquarters of the company, which coordinates the activities of its local branches" (Dirlik 95). Thus, under the idea of the global division of labor, local Pakistani writers are writing for the West and getting their works published in India under an American publishing house.

The local writers are given the empowerment to write and get their works published by a renowned publishing house. However, their agency is restricted. They are endorsing the Masters' imperialist agendas, culture, and brands which are all related to capitalism, which means that the writers' freedom to write also has underpinnings of consumerism. Thus, as Dirlik writes that end of Eurocentricism is just an illusion because capitalist culture has "Eurocentricism built into the very structure of its narrative" (Dirlik 92). Therefore, by

promoting Western ideology, culture, and brands, the writers are helping the economic flow move towards the global North.

5.5 Conclusion

As Gill writes that postfeminist sensibility is a fusion of feminist and anti-feminist ideas, it is true for the texts under discussion as well. *KYKM* and *BFTA* portray feminist concerns by showing educated, empowered, and working women who are not restricted to the domestic sphere. Women have been under the control of patriarchy for a long time in the past, but the patriarchal straightjacket keeps transforming shapes at different times. In the past, women had to adhere to a set of practices to appear feminine; now, in addition to appear feminine they also have to adhere to practices that define them as modern empowered women. As empowered women, they are involved in practices such as consuming cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol. They are objectified and portrayed as desperate for sex and men.

All four works discussed in this dissertation show links with consumerism but in different forms. The presence of consumerism in the novels is also pointed out in the previous chapter. However, the dynamics of consumerism are changing in the novels discussed in this chapter. *BJD* and *SA* portray an amalgamation of consumerism and postfeminism, whereas, *KYKM* and *BFTA* depict a blend of consumerism, feminism, globalization, and imperialism. Thus, consumerism is present in both Western and Eastern novels but it is weaseling its way out in both parts of the world in different ways.

The novels under discussion in this chapter seem to provide local Pakistani literature as both the characters and settings of these novels are local. There are many instances in both of the novels which endorse Dirlik's idea of the "promise" of reviving local culture, but there are more reasons which state otherwise. Imtiaz and Philips are reinforcing colonial narrative about their country through their novels. Therefore, as Dirlik finds a relationship between "global capitalism" and the "emergence of concern" (Dirlik 85) for locals, it is visible in these works as well. Imtiaz and Philips seem to be agents of Eurocentric capitalism because their publishers, Penguin publishing house is allowing them to exercise their power to write and get their works published but at the same time, it is restricting them to present only that narrative which is in sync with the colonial narrative. In this way, the local writers are writing local stories putting forward colonial narratives, and giving financial benefits to the publishing house as well, because the publishing house is selling their stories and minting money.

The local writers also enjoy an illusion of power. They are using a formula for success and fame by doing a mechanical production at the hands of their masters instead of touching the matters which Fanon wanted to raise. This intelligentsia is not writing resistance literature because they are a product of it which seems to empower them because of the publishing of their works. However, their empowerment is actually chameleonic in nature. They are strengthening the system that oppresses them, which is a catch-22-like situation for them.

At some points in *KYKM* and *BFTA*, the novels seem to be a satire on the general public in Pakistan as already discussed in this chapter. In this regard, it is important to consider that the literacy rate of Pakistan in 2015 was 60 percent; which includes 70 percent males and 49 percent females, according to an official government website for surveys in the country (Financial Surveys, 2015). The novels are basically written for a female audience and as less than fifty percent of women are unable to read English this proves that the novels are basically written for an international audience. Their novels are satirizing and stereotyping Pakistani women internationally. Moreover, even if the novels are written for the local public, the writers are creating an inferiority complex among people for their country and fellow citizens by discussing all the negative aspects of the country.

There is a possibility that Imtiaz and Philips are writing a satire on the pretext that there is something wrong with a society that they can mend through satire. However, there are flaws in their perception of their country and people, because they are looking at them from the eyes of a colonizer, as it has been discussed in this chapter. Moreover, if they are trying to ridicule the perception of the West about Pakistan, this means that they are writing back to the empire, taking the position of a slave and misrepresenting empowered women of the country. Although looking at the characters and incidents covered in these novels, it helps us see where the sympathies of the readers are invited.

End Notes

^{xiv} As mentioned in the introduction, the acronyms of the titles of these novels will be used henceforth. *Karachi You're Killing Me* is mentioned as *KYKM* and *Beautiful from this Angle* as *BFTA*, for the sake of convenience.

^{xv} The term "Taming of the Shrew" is taken from Shakespeare's play between 1590 and 1592. The play is about a disobedient woman whose husband punishes her till she becomes a good and obedient wife.

^{xvi} Said in his book *Orientalism*, describes an Orientalist as a person who researches or writes about an orient.

^{xvii} Neo-orientalism is a term used for modern incarnations of Orientalist thinking. It is used to critique Western attitudes to Islam and Islamic world post 9/11.

^{xviii} Touchstone method is a comparative method devised by Mathew Arnold for poetry. In this method a poem is judged by comparing it to masterpieces of poetry

^{xix} Thomas Friedman in his book *The World is Flat* analyzed the economic situation of the world in twentieth century. He explains the world is flat, because there is equal opportunity for individuals and entrepreneurs from all over the world to tap the free market.

^{xx} Bhabha in *Location and Culture* explains the term “Unhomely Lives”. He asserts in postcolonial context when suppressed subjects attempt to express “indigenous culture” they look at the present in the ‘realm of beyond’. They are unable to look at their present without the shadow of the past. The subjects then experience “unhomeliness” where unhomeliness does not mean homeless, but it means subjects disown and negate their selves and culture.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the significant components of the entire thesis. The thesis was concerned with three predominant research questions related to the links among postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism in selected chick lit novels. This chapter presents the answers to these respectively and summarizes the process through which it gets to these findings and arguments. Furthermore, the chapter also concludes by stating further research possibilities in this particular area of study.

6.2 A Retrospective View

To conclude this research project, it would be insightful to review my arguments in relation to the research questions and the primary texts. The project is based on the premise that the primary texts, which include Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*, Saba Imtiaz's *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*, and Maha Khan Philips's *Beautiful from this Angle* engage with postfeminist and glocalist concerns influencing *écriture féminine* and endorsing consumerism. Three research questions were formed to address these concerns in the study. I have sought to investigate the extent of postfeminist concerns in redefining the boundaries of *écriture féminine* in the selected texts. This study has also demonstrated the selected texts' projection of the consumerist mindset and a simultaneous subscription to feminist issues. Furthermore, I have carried out the analysis to explore the process through which the selected texts reflect glocalist cultural concerns.

A multipronged lens was formed using the selected theoretical underpinnings of Gill, Jameson, Robertson, and Dirlik to address the research questions. Their ideas regarding postfeminism, consumerism, and glocalism helped in forming this bricolage of theoretical lens to study the primary texts. Given the qualitative nature of this exploratory study, a textual analysis qualified to be the most suitable method for analysis. The qualitative analysis enabled me to incorporate a degree of discursivity in my responses, a characteristic feature of qualitative research, without taking any essential positions.

Although not conclusive, the outcomes of the questions are pertinent to my thesis statement and research questions.

The first two research questions; namely, the extent that the postfeminist concerns redefined the boundaries of *écriture féminine* in the selected texts and how the selected fiction engages with the consumerist mindset and simultaneously subscribes to feminist issues, exhibit a degree of overlap. To address these questions Gill and Jameson's selected works are used as a framework. As Gill writes, "postfeminist sensibility" (163) is an amalgamation of feminist and anti-feminist ideas; I employed this idea to the primary texts selected for this study. Since postfeminist women believe they are empowered, independent, and not restricted to the domestic sphere, I analyzed women's achievements in the public sphere as depicted in the selected texts.

My findings relating to the extent that these postfeminist writers are redefining the boundaries of *écriture féminine* may be seen in their representation in the public sphere, followed by the sexually explicit content that may be seen in all four texts. Primarily, if we look at the jobs of all four protagonists as depicted in the selected primary texts, we see that though they are shown as working women, they are not ambitious for career growth. They are not shown to pursue their career seriously despite being independent. Looking at this phenomenon objectively, it may be observed that in real life, there is a slight improvement in the situation of women compared to their situation in the past, as they are not restricted to stereotypical "pink-collar jobs" (Denfeld 1). However, the women in the selected primary texts are not opting for better jobs, nor are they depicted as using their full human potential and rational abilities. As Becky is a "personal shopper" (Kinsella 342), Bridget is just a common employee in a company where she keeps getting harassed by her boss (Fielding 104), Ayesha is not satisfied with her job and wants to go abroad for work (Imtiaz 178), and Aynah's career is not given importance in the novel. On the other hand, all male characters from all four texts are depicted pursuing their careers seriously, be it Daniel, Luke, Jamie, or Kamal.

I have further argued that while being in the public sphere, the boldness of empowered women is depicted in the selected texts through their active sex lives. Being empowered, they are open about their sexual desires as well. Unlike the women in the past, they like taking initiative in relationships, as they are confident women (Fielding 29), (Kinsella 17). Bridget even enjoys the sexual harassment of her boss (Fielding 104). Similarly, both Ayesha and Aynah are shown as obsessed with sex and being bold; they

conform to public displays of affection by kissing their boyfriends on the road (Philips 194,216) or at an airport (Imtiaz 262). By depicting women as desperate for sex, the authors are tainting and undermining the achievements of women in the public sphere.

Moreover, there is undue mention of sex in all four novels under discussion. There are kissing and sex scenes among all four couples. Besides them, sex, among other peripheral characters, is also discussed. Comparatively, there are more sex scenes in *KYKM* and *BFTA* than in *BJD* and *SA*, as different sexual practices like “phone sex” (Philips 41), and one-night stand or “one-off” (Imtiaz 124) culture are also mentioned. This shows that the authors are promoting the sexualization of culture.

I have also argued using Gill and Nussbaum’s ideas of objectification that there is an objectification of women in these texts in various ways. Fielding has presented two women as fungible objects for a man, who chooses them according to his mood (185). To show a man's success, Philips has also portrayed female figures as “things” (88). Woman’s body parts are referred to as objects in these novels, such as “breasts” (Fielding 65), (Philips 101), hips (Philips 149), “legs” (Kinsella 69), etc., which are mentioned in a sexualized manner. Authors of these novels are using female bodies as “instruments” (Nussbaum 527) to create sexual scenes, clearly portraying women’s objectification. Crafting “sexually arousing” (Dworkin 37) content, with undue mention of sex, gross images of woman’s bodies, and their objectification, shows that these female writers are celebrating pornography.

With the frank depiction of pornography in these novels, which is now an “industry” (Power 42), the novels show unequivocal capitalistic approaches. The authors seem to include such content to reap additional readerships because pornography is a lucrative business. However, the exaggerated association of empowered women with sexual assertiveness does not portray women in an advantaged situation. Writers like Bindel write that when pornography penetrates into mainstream culture, females are “stripped of full human status and reduced to sex objects” (n.p.) which damages the perception of women about themselves.

The authors of the selected primary texts have enough agency to talk about “underwear” (Fielding 2) (Kinsella 93), “lingerie” (Imtiaz 94), “periods” (Imtiaz 262), and “PMS” (Philips 46). Being empowered, they talk about bold issues under the guise of

“being oneself” (Gill 153). However, they are producing sexual content and working to promote this industry.

Moreover, literary classiness is tapering off by producing such literature, just as Jameson explains that in the postmodern time, the difference between high-brow culture and low-brow culture (2) is being diluted. These women writers seem to be taking advantage of this situation and are therefore incorporating pornographic content to gain readership. There is stagnation in the representation of women across the ages. Patriarchy represented women as sexual objects in the past, and the authors of the primary texts replicate the same. Texts involve an explicit celebration of the physical description of women considering it empowering to choose a bold topic. However, this version of empowerment does not seem autonomously generated by women, as it benefits patriarchy and consumerism. The writings of these female authors are getting influenced by contemporary patriarchal and consumerist trends, which portray women's sexuality as empowerment. The writers seem to be succumbing to the demands of the society.

Empowerment of women in these novels is also associated with a set of behavior which includes smoking, drug, and alcohol addiction. Power has termed this behavior as “Consumer feminism” (27). Cover photos of both *BJD* and *BFTA* depict smoking female figures, symbolizing their empowerment. Bridget, Amynah, and Ayesha all three of them are depicted in the novels as chain smokers and alcohol addicts. Bridget repeatedly makes an effort to quit smoking and control alcohol consumption (Fielding 2) to be more acceptable to society, but she fails. Ayesha and Amynah are even shown as taking drugs. These authors are asking for their feminist rights by showing a mirror to society and pointing out that men are allowed to smoke and consume alcohol. At the same time, women are questioned (Imtiaz 21,88) because it can harm a woman's reputation (Philips 15). Thus, the feminist rights of all three protagonists seem to have been reduced to smoking and drinking and these habits are ostensibly linked with emancipation, however, it is a pseudo-emancipation that inadvertently is benefitting consumerism and capitalism.

Women's economic empowerment is shown through consuming unlimited products from the market. The cover photos of *SA* and *KYKM* showing shopping bags and accessories of girls are symbolic. Both Becky and Ayesha get “carried away” (Kinsella 232) (Imtiaz 185) while shopping. Especially the character of Becky is shown as addicted to shopping and suffering from “oniomania” (Vasiliu 134), which is a serious psychological disease that requires proper treatment. Becky buys various unnecessary products but

justifies what she buys for different reasons. For example, when she purchases various items related to her career of writing a novel, she justifies it by saying that she is “investing” (Kinsella 94) in her career, although she never pursues this career. Shopping numbs her senses and hypnotizes her because she finds herself buying things (Kinsella 94) that she does not need but realizes this later only.

Therefore, economic empowerment is equated with shopping, this version of empowerment is closely linked with capitalism. Consumerist trends are manipulative because of causing a false façade of the empowerment of women. It deceptively portrays shopping and consuming different products as symbols of emancipation and empowerment. This way, consumer culture is using feminism to promote their businesses while women are expressing their financial autonomy with shopping. Although it is called “retail therapy” (Selin 638) by a few theorists, and women are buying stuff in the name of “pleasing” (Gill 153) themselves, they are not looking at the sources that are getting benefitted from this situation. Gill writes that Postfeminism has turned the idea of the “personal as political on its head” (153) due to overemphasis on individuality; therefore, this version of empowerment is not considered suspicious. Commercial interests underpinning this empowerment are ignored because these are considered an individual’s choice. This way, consumerism creates chains for women, like patriarchy, using different tools and rhetoric. Instead of resisting this dictation, the authors under discussion present these trends as normal in these novels. I have substantiated these arguments with the views of various economics theorists such as Packard, Evans, Power, Selin, and Vasiliu. The tactics of catching hold of consumers discussed by these theorists are all present in these novels, which may not be noted by a reader who is doing a pleasure reading of the text.

Besides stressing empowerment, as Gill writes, there is an emphasis on “natural sexual difference” (158) between men and women in the postfeminist discourses. This difference is revived by making women express their femininity. For this purpose, consumerism provides them with sources to express their femininity through gender-specific products. Gender-specified “pink-colored” (Genz 5) commodities are used by female characters in all four novels (Fielding 42), (Kinsella 105), (Philips 23), (Imtiaz 190). Feminists like Cixous wanted women to explore their bodily strengths and pleasures, limited to them, and express them in their writings (Cixous 880); however, these female authors celebrate the difference through products.

In postfeminist culture, beauty standards, also called “beauty myth” (10) by Wolf are set for women to make women retain their femininity. A woman must subscribe to beauty standards regarding every aspect of her body. Just as in *BJD*, Bridget is told by her mother that if she does not improve her appearance, she will never get a new job (Fielding 192). Like Bridget, Aynah’s friend Mumtaz is also ignored by people when she does not care for her looks (Philips 11). However, those characters in these novels are depicted as confident about themselves who follow well-updated fashion. Compared to Bridget and Ayesha, Becky and Aynah seem more confident about their physical appearances. They are using branded products like dresses from “Armani” (Philips 11), bags (Philips 79), shades (Kinsella 48) from “Gucci”, and cosmetics from “Sephora” (Kinsella 184). They seem to be a typical example of postfeminist discourses that emphasize self in order to raise “self-esteem” (Negra 120). These protagonists are like those women who have to adhere to an “ideal femininity” (Negra 119). These characters enhance their self-esteem with the help of products; however, as stated above, this practice also has links with consumerism. By creating beauty myths, the beauty industry is getting benefitted by creating a complex among women in the first place and then providing them with solutions through products. However, in the Pakistani context, it raises another concern as well that the products selected by the female characters are international products, such as “Gucci” and “Armani” which means that the authors of these novels are giving economic benefits to other countries by subscribing to the beauty myth.

This beauty myth also includes age and weight complex. Women have to remain between the “too thin” and too “fat” (Gill 149) categories in postfeminist culture. Bridget gets anxious about both her age and weight. She is anxious about her age and fears looking old. Therefore, she tries to cover signs of aging through makeup. She is also fixated on losing her weight. Her daily diary includes an exact count of calories she takes during the day. Through the character of Mumtaz in *BFTA*, Philips also talks about an acceptable weight for a woman in society.

I have argued that if women's roles in novels written in the past could not be rationalized on account of their domestic duties; that is to say that those depictions of women were overly domesticated and were appreciated with the phrases of ‘angels in the house’, the women depicted in the selected novels are equally not showing rationality as they caught in the fetishism of consumerism. Thus, neither the earlier depiction of domesticated women nor these overtly independent women have any capability to achieve

self-actualization or their ideal potential. These characters are unable to reflect upon their lives and themselves as humans. They are dependent upon external validation for their appearance. Considering themselves as incomplete, they run after external means to gratify themselves but are alienated from their bodies and selves. They are like Marcuse's idea of "*One Dimensional Man*" (xviii-xix) because there is no growth of characters in these novels.

The novels written by these female writers are increasingly influenced by consumerist trends. Due to this consumerism promoting explicit mentions of products in these novels, I have termed these novels as "consumerism-endorsing novels", as these novels are not just narrating stories, but it seems that they are promoting brands as well, or seem to be dropping plugs for readers to promote brands. In the past, fashion magazines and catalogs of products were printed separately; however, these novels have incorporated catalogs in the stories. The novels are fictional accounts, but they make the readers aware and inform them about brands that are considered classy. While Woolf wanted women to write and encouraged them in this regard by advising them "to write for your good and for the world at large" (Woolf 129), these authors are writing for the consumer world. These novels are aligned with the present means of production and promote the ideology of consumerism.

My third question of the research is how the selected texts reflect glocalist cultural concerns. Just like the first two questions, the answers to which overlapped each other, the third question is also discussed in conjunction with the second question, which is how the selected novels engage with the consumerist mindset and feminist issues. I have answered this aspect of the project using Robertson and Dirlik's ideas about glocalism. Robertson's theorization about glocal culture as "the linking of localities" (35) may be seen as manifested in all four novels; may that be Bridget's craving for oriental cuisine, Becky from an English background aspiring for American brands, or Ayesha and Amynah from (an ostensibly) eastern background, aspiring for western brands and products. My findings are that different localities are linked in all four novels under discussion, making them glocal texts. The British writers Fielding and Kinsella, besides predominantly representing their local cultures in their respective novels, also refer to other cultures and localities. The settings of both novels are Britain, and the characters are British as well. However, the characters in both novels are shown to be remotely working for American companies (Fielding 55) (Kinsella 52,332).

The characters in *SA* frequently travel between Britain and the United States. Becky, during her visit to the US, explores and learns about the American culture and social “etiquettes” (Kinsella 174). While in New York, she is introduced to new shopping experiences and locations, such as SoHo (Kinsella 194). She is particularly impressed with the innovative shopping concept of a “sample sale” (Kinsella 166).

As mentioned above, Fielding also alludes to other global locations and cultures like Kinsella. In *BJD*, Bridget demonstrates familiarity with “Oriental” (Fielding 66) culture, including a preference for “Indian” cuisine (Fielding 31). She also tries to achieve balance in her life through the ancient Chinese practice of “Feng Shui” (Fielding 66). This practice proves helpful in resolving some personal issues. Bridget also finds similarities between her experiences and those of Turkish women, particularly when she feels oppressed (Fielding 84).

Moreover, Fielding and Kinsella represent their local culture in their respective novels, but they have a global impact; as mentioned in the second chapter of the analysis, I discussed their impact on the selected Pakistani chick lit authors. The selected Pakistani novels are similar to *BJD* and *SA* in many ways. *KYKM* (2014) and *BFTA* (2010) are written in the second decade of the twenty-first century, while *BJD* (1996), and *SA* (2001) are written before them. The cover photos of *BFTA* and *BJD* are exactly the same; both of them depict a woman holding a cigarette in their hands. The only difference between the cover photos of the two novels is that of a depiction of a brown woman and a white woman, respectively. While the cover photos of *KYKM* and *SA* show girls’ accessories, such as high heels, bags, nail colors, and lipsticks.

Upon examining the writing styles of Imtiaz and Philips, it is apparent that they begin chapters in their novels by mentioning the date and day (Imtiaz 1), (Philips 6), similar to Fielding in *BJD* (7). While all three novelists have similar approaches to beginning a chapter, they differ in the nature of the additional information they provide. In some instances, the authors sometimes even use identical expressions in their texts. For example, Kinsella in *SA* writes “three cups of tea later” to indicate the passage of time (229). Imtiaz in *KYKM* uses similar words for the same purpose saying “half a pack of cigarettes later” (Imtiaz 6), two large glasses of “whiskey drinks and a plate of prawn tempura later” (Imtiaz 31), a few hours and “two beers later” (Imtiaz 170) or “two plates of biryani later” (Imtiaz 229) to describe the passage of time.

The examples in the above two paragraphs and the detailed analysis done in the previous two chapters show that Pakistani writers, while internalizing a global impact, are not showing their individuality. The characters, themes, style, and length of the texts are similar; just as Jameson explains, there is an “end of individualism” (3) in the postmodern era. Thus, Imtiaz and Philips seem to be doing clone production with slight changes in their works. Besides Jameson’s ideas of pastiche, I have backed this argument using Ritzer’s idea of McDonaladization of society and Benjamin’s ideas regarding art produced during industrialization. *BJD* and *SA* have given a successful literary form that has become a formula that is reproduced and packaged according to the audience’s taste and location, as can be witnessed in the selected Pakistani chick lit.

The Pakistani authors show the element of globalization and consumerism through cultural homogenization depicted through the “mediascapes” (Appadurai 35) and brands. The local Pakistani characters in the selected texts are well acquainted with Western literature such as “*Famous Five*” (Imtiaz 12) series, Western singers such as Justin Bieber (Imtiaz 13), and television shows such as “*Master Chef*” (Imtiaz 223). This shows that the cultural flow is moving from West to East, which reveals the cultural hegemony of Europe and America in the selected Pakistani texts. Besides using Dirlik’s views on the subject, I have substantiated this argument using Appadurai’s ideas that globalization caters to the interest of “those who own and control” (9) the media. However, this emphasis on depreciating the local culture is akin to showing that Pakistan is ‘culturally bankrupt’ (to use Hassan’s phrase) and has nothing to share with the world.

Similarly, the homogenization of culture and endorsement of consumerism is also shown through the mentioning of brands in the selected Pakistani texts. Characters in *KYKM* and *BFTA* are shown using international products such as “Chanel” (Philips 118), “Prada” (Philips 221,8), “Gucci” (Philips 79), and “Birkins” (Imtiaz 101), etc. With the presence of international products in these novels, they show their links with globalization and consumerism at the same time.

Dirlik observes that, at present, local is being emphasized globally. This focus seems to be giving hope to countries and people which were once colonized that local would be a “site of promise” (85). However, the hope that they would be able to share their culture with the world, which may help them decolonize themselves, seems to be a pseudo-reality. The analysis of the Pakistani texts has divulged that the local Pakistani authors are promoting the dominant Western culture rather than their own.

It may even seem that at some points, Imtiaz and Philips are apparently satirizing Western crafty behavior, their perceptions, and portrayals of Pakistan and Islam. For example, Ayesha states Jamie's deception as "East India Company's" (Imtiaz 176), overtaking the local government of India. Philips also ridicules Western media at various points in the novel with the exemplification of a fake terrorist camp in Pakistan to be depicted in a reality show called "Who wants to be a terrorist?" (Philips 9), which is funded by the US. However, besides criticizing the Western notions about Pakistan with few examples, Imtiaz and Philips, in their respective texts, provide more examples of the negative portrayal of their country and people. In this way, they prove Dirlik's views about the manipulated representation of local cultures in the global arena "to disguise oppression and parochialism" (Dirlik 85).

Imtiaz and Philips portray their local culture in a negative light. The physical description of Pakistan in *KYKM* and *BFTA* includes details like roads with "plastic" (Philips 190) thrown all over, "overflowing gutters" (Imtiaz 140), and "rubbish-clogged drains" (Imtiaz 196). Both authors criticize different sectors of government and also highlight issues in the country like child labor (Philips 171) and "paedophilia" (Philips 70). Imtiaz talks about several mugging incidents and writes it is "easier to hire an assassin than meet an attractive, intelligent, normal single" (Imtiaz 15) guy in Karachi. Though these may be local realities, we also need to see that these are not the only realities, besides the fact that these realities are not only local and specific to our part of the world but are increasingly glocal as they are inherently found in many societies of the world.

Other parts of the country are also described in a similar manner. For example, Philips describes the countryside of Punjab as very quiet and calm due to the silence of victims of cruelty (Philips 56). Moreover, later in the novel, a famous terrorist is also found in this area. Besides Sindh and Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also mentioned in a similar way by Philips. She describes the people living there as racist by typecasting them as "long-bearded, turban-wearing, Kalashnikov-wielding" (Philips 118) people. Thus, both Imtiaz and Philips present a bleak picture of the country by giving different examples.

Moreover, to show unrest in the country, scenes of blasts are exaggeratedly described by both authors. The characters in *KYKM* and *BFTA* have to go through various experiences of blasts (Imtiaz 249). They explain these scenes in detail like Aynah explains one of the blast scenes as she and her friends could see "human body parts flying through the air" (Philips 96). She also explains another blast scene which becomes a

significant event in the novel. This scene includes the death scene of her friend Mumtaz and a famous Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto (Philips 180). In this way, Philips blends fact with fiction in her novel.

It seems that both Imtiaz and Philips are re-orientalists because of their consistent negative portrayal of the Pakistani nation. For instance, Imtiaz giving a list of examples in *KYKM* to show that the people of Pakistan are work shirkers (Imtiaz 3) and not concerned about punctuality (Imtiaz 6) is similar to the Orientalists' description of the Eastern identity as "lazy" (178) that Said mentioned in his book *Orientalism* in 1978.

Both Imtiaz and Philips discuss the condition of women in the country in a very pessimistic manner. Imtiaz mentions that "thousands of girls are raped every day (Imtiaz 45)" in the country. Philips also talks about the condition of women giving facts and figures (Philips 72). Besides this, she mentions a well-known incident involving "Mukhtaran Mai" (Philips 32), who was sexually assaulted as a penalty for her brother's crime in 2002. However, Philips also adds that more cases of abuse are happening against women in America, yet it is presented as a serious issue for Pakistan (Philips 147) in Western media. In this regard, I have argued that while talking about such crimes in Pakistan, Philips gives figures and adds a true example of Mukhtaran Mai to give more credence to her views about crimes in Pakistan. However, while discussing crimes in America, she talks in vague terms to diffuse the severity of such crimes.

Both Imtiaz and Philips also talk against Islam, which is practiced in Pakistan by the majority of people. They associate Islam with terrorism in their respective chick lit texts. For instance, in *KYKM*, when Ayesha gets nervous about visiting a famous prisoner, she consoles herself, saying she should not be scared of a visit to the prison as she is not going to a mosque known for provoking "violence in the Friday sermons" (Imtiaz 139). Similarly, in *BFTA*, Philips while describing activities of the participants in a terrorist camp, integrates religious practices with terrorist activities such as reciting and memorizing the holy book "Koran" (Philips 9) and learning how to use "Ak 47" (Philips 125) guns. She shows that with these practices, people are brainwashed and get involved in terrorist activities.

Imtiaz and Philips criticize fictional religious leaders of Pakistan and show their hypocrisy. For example, in *KYKM*, a "Sipah-e-Sahaba spokesperson" (Imtiaz 83) is described as a person who maintains a respectful demeanour toward Ayesha in public by

avoiding eye contact with her but contradicts this behavior by calling her late at night for casual conversation. Philips also criticizes religious leaders who confine “their wives at home in purdah” (Philips 103) while they engage with other women outside.

Moreover, Imtiaz and Philips describe the people of Pakistan as violent, just as Said explained that an Orient is described as “violent” and “murderer” (287) in Western discourses. Characters in *KYKM* and *BFTA* are shown fighting at parties (Philips 170) and on the streets (Imtiaz 2,196). Moreover, both writers show sectarian violence practiced in the country. Philips gives a passing reference to a murder of a Shia leader (112), while Imtiaz not only gives a passing reference to sectarian violence (45) but mentions a religious group responsible for this violence called as “Sipahe- Sahaba” (Imtiaz 74). Thus, both Imtiaz and Philips, in their chick lit texts, make a point to underscore religious intolerance and sectarian violence practised among the people of Pakistan.

Imtiaz shows that the people of Pakistan are immune to violence, despite experiencing it. For example, she mentions a woman drying her laundry and a group of children playing in the same playground a few minutes after a heavy exchange of fire between two groups of people at the same venue. She explains people of Pakistan are immune to these incidents because every now and then, people are “blowing themselves up” (Imtiaz 176) in Pakistan.

Philips seems to be also giving an offhanded anti-state narrative of relating her country with terrorism. Her fictional terrorist, “Maulvi Mian Nawaz Hussain” (Philips 92), is found in the countryside of Punjab. She describes this terrorist as an important member of “Al Qaeda” (Philips 135) and a wanted criminal in relation to the 9/11 attack. This is a very significant political issue that this light read is raising because Philips points out a key perpetrator of the 9/11 attack found in Pakistan in 2005. Her referral may be to Bin Laden, who was not yet found till 2005 and was (if at all) found in Pakistan in 2011.

Likewise, to add more drama to the fake documentary of Nilofer, which Aynah is making along with her friends, Aynah suggests making a poster of Nilofer’s abusive husband, portraying him as “a jihadi... in the snowy mountains of Kashmir” (Philips 92). In this way, Philips juxtaposes a freedom fighter of Kashmir with a fake story of an abusive husband, which undermines the struggle of Kashmiris. This shows that the writer is somehow promoting the Western narrative and is a part of the consciousness-raising

journey against Pakistan to associate it with terrorism. In Dirlik's words, this is called "political manipulation" (89) while presenting local.

Both Imtiaz and Philips give anti-army narratives as well in their works. For example, Imtiaz writes that Ayesha feels astonished at people applauding their army while she questions it because she views the Pakistan army as responsible for "genocide in Bangladesh, hundreds of extrajudicial killings, and for torturing activists and journalists all over the country" (Imtiaz 118). Philips also criticizes the army through the character of Kamal and Rizvi in *BFTA*. Rizvi, presented as an army officer in the novel, confesses different crimes done on behalf of the Pakistan army. For example, he asserts that to give a good impression to the American government, the army once randomly picked four innocent people to admit a crime they did not commit because the army could not find the real culprits (Philips 204) of the incident. Aynah accuses the army of knowing about the murderer of the Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto because she says they "know everything before it happens" (Philips 222). Although "self-deprecating humor" (Ferriss 4) is a striking feature of Chick lit, the protagonists of *KYKM* and *BFTA* are not only deprecating themselves but they are also deprecating their country.

Thus, I have argued that Imtiaz and Philips are performing the role of native informants. By presenting local stories and subscribing to Western discourses about the country, Imtiaz and Philips are defaming their own country, which was missing in the *BJD* and *SA*. We hardly find any reference to any political exploits of their country in *BJD* and *SA* when there can certainly be some that they could have referred to, but they steer clear of any such claims. The Pakistani authors include very sensitive issues of the country in their novels which are supposed to be light-read novels. Suleri is right in saying that the issue of identity formation should not be dealt with nonchalantly, but it needs to be addressed by the "academy" (Suleri 757). Therefore, these local stories harm the country more than empower it.

These novels are written primarily for female readers and are written in English; however, only 49 percent of females in the country were educated enough to read these novels at the time of publication of these novels. This endorses that *KYKM* and *BFTA* are written to cater to the international community. Thus, the derogatory depiction of the country is being presented to the international audience through these novels.

The empowerment which is given to the local Pakistani authors is loaded. These writers are given a chance to write their local stories and get their works published by renowned publishers like Penguin and Random House India but upon conditions of subscribing to the sensibilities of the Western audience. Imtiaz and Philips are allowed to present local stories and express themselves, but this empowerment and liberating experience is helping them to reconstruct their identities according to the motives of the West. They are putting forward the Western perception and agenda in these chick lit novels, which are supposed to be light reads. Negra is right in asserting that this kind of literature is not written purely for “entertainment and without cultural agenda” (7). The selected Pakistani texts are a typical example of such an exposé.

Moreover, as Capitalism is “decentered” due to globalization, therefore, no particular nation “can be pointed out as the center of global capitalism” (Dirlik 91). There is an international division of labor, under which we may say that Pakistani writers are writing novels, putting forward the Western agenda, and getting their works published in India. This is leading to economic, social, and cultural “homogenization” (Dirlik 91) and “fragmentation” (Dirlik 91) at the same time as the center of capitalism cannot be pointed out. However, capitalism is flourishing under these conditions.

These novels are able to tap a lot of readers. Despite the great attention these novels are receiving, there is a lack of academic and serious intelligent discussion on them, which I have tried to do in this project. I have worked to develop an objective analysis with textual evidence, without taking any essentialist positions. Although not considered final and binding, the findings address my thesis statement and research questions. I have tried to show that capitalism is increasing its grip over consumers and is now present even in these light-read chick lit novels. While presenting postfeminist and glocalist concerns, these novels reveal links with capitalism, although it is present in different forms in these texts.

The problem I wanted to address in this project was that empowerment given to the women in the postfeminist discourses and the empowerment of these female chick lit authors, in particular, is manipulated by consumerism in both Eastern and Western texts in different ways.

6.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of this research project may be significant for women to reanalyze their definition of empowerment as it seems to be entangled with consumerist ideals in

various ways in contemporary society. The paradigmatic shift from the prevailing constructs surrounding empowerment towards a focus on personal agency may help women recognize their full potential as human beings.

6.4 Further Research Endeavors

A study of this kind may be expanded by incorporating various ideas. Any future research may include other chick lit novels. Sophie Kinsella's Shopaholic series has a lot of content for research from the perspective of the combination of postfeminism and consumerism. These series include *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2000), *Shopaholic Takes Manhattan* (2001), and *Shopaholic Ties the Knot* (2002), to name a few. Besides the Shopaholic series, other books may include novels like *Good in Bed* (2001) by Jennifer Weiner and *The Kiss Quotient* (2018) by Helen Hoang as the sexualization of culture through female characters may be an important dimension for study. Similarly, *Jemima J* (2000) by Jane Green and *The Cinderella Pact* (2006) by Sarah Strohmeyer also offer promising content for research from this perspective, as they are about women's appearance.

However, these are just a few books, the list may go on because the market is full of these novels, and the books from this genre can easily be spotted at a glance in a bookshop because of their similarly patterned covers. I have already argued that these books not only have similar book covers but also offer similar stories to a greater extent. Therefore, any book from this genre may be picked up for research to prove the element of consumerism, as I have done with the combination of theories of Gill, Jameson, Robertson, and Dirlik. The chick lit texts can also be studied to find similarities among them. Ritzer's idea of the McDonaldization of Society may also be used to prove the similarity of these texts. I lightly touched upon this idea to discuss novels under study in Chapter 5, section 5.3. Moreover, these novels can also be analyzed to compare the representation of women done by men and women as at present, not only women but men are also writing chick lit novels such as *Typically Tania* (2018) is written by a male author, Taha Keher.

Pakistani and Indian chick lit novels such as *Piece of Cake* by Swati Kaushal (2008), *Almost Single* (2007) by Advita Kala also provide room for research. These novels may be analyzed from a postcolonial perspective, considering how chick lit influences the prospects of self-realization of subjects living in postcolonial regions. These novels can

also be studied from a glocal perspective, and a comparative study of Eastern and Western novels can also be done using these novels and Western novels.

I included the discussion of publishing houses in my research; however, a detailed study of publishing houses of chick lit texts can also be done to analyze their published texts' patterns.

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