



Postfeminist Contradictions of Womanhood: A Critical Study of Chetan Bhagat's *One Indian Girl*

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Abstract

This article analyzes how an Indian woman in Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* is in a state of conflict between empowerment and traditional social expectations. The female character in the novel is presented in such a way that she is economically independent, professionally successful and socially confident, but at the same time she faces various types of pressures from society. These pressures are mainly related to marriage, beauty, emotional behavior and male expectations and dominance. Feminist theory has long discussed women's rights, patriarchal oppression and women's social status, but how new control works behind the concept of "empowerment" in the modern context has been discussed less in many cases. The main problem of this research is that despite appearing powerful on the surface, women are bound by various social and cultural constraints in their real-life daily experiences. This article, primarily from a postfeminist perspective and through textual analysis, analyses how this dual reality is manifested in Radhika Mehta's life through personal relationships, family pressures, career and identity crises. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it reveals very clearly, the apparent empowerment of women in modern society does not always guarantee their full independence. Rather, patriarchal structures and psychologies remain equally active and influential even today behind this glossy veil of modernity. By bringing out this stark truth, the study further clarifies, defines and institutionalizes the deep and complex relationship between contemporary women's self-identity, acquired power and persisting social inequalities.

Keywords: Postfeminism, Patriarchy, Femininity, Neoliberalism, Beauty, Motherhood, Marriage, Chetan Bhagat, *One Indian Girl*

Introduction

Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* occupies a very important place in the field

of contemporary Indian popular fiction; because at its center is a female character who can be easily described as a meaningful form of “empowered” from an external and social perspective. The main character of the novel, Radhika Mehta, is highly educated, extremely successful professionally, completely independent economically and able to travel freely in the global arena. She is essentially part of the English-speaking elite and aristocratic Indian society of the corporate world, which is imagined as the ultimate proof or monument of women’s progress and overall progress in the contemporary era. Or despite this, Bhagat’s novel repeatedly and cleverly challenges this simple and one-dimensional concept of empowerment or women’s freedom. Radhika’s skyrocketing success cannot free her from the clutches of patriarchy; Rather, it draws her into a more subtle, invisible and psychologically complex web of gendered control. She is admired in society, but that admiration is never unconditional; despite being an incredibly successful and unique personality, she is ultimately judged by her acceptability or suitability in the marriage market. This is not the end; Radhika herself, despite being economically powerful and self-reliant, feels a kind of hidden psychological pressure to get a little recognition or approval from men. She is outwardly modern and progressive, yet society still searches for the traditional softness, homeliness, external appearance and the eternal and primitive glory of motherhood sacrifice within her.

This contrast makes *One Indian Girl* particularly suitable for discussion from a “postfeminist” perspective. Here, “postfeminism” does not simply mean “after feminism,” nor does it mean that gender equality has been fully achieved in society. Rather, as scholars such as Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie have shown, “postfeminism” is a cultural situation in which, while the achievements of feminism are partially recognized, the patriarchal structure persists in a new, individualistic, and apolitical form. Here, women are encouraged to be ambitious, confident, attractive, and self-reliant, but rather than fighting institutionally against discrimination, the responsibility for adapting to that discrimination in their own lives is placed entirely on the individual. In such a modern structure, empowerment and discipline coexist; The woman is “free” here, but only when she can fit herself into the mold of society’s idealized femininity.

According to Budgeon (2011), third-wave feminism helps to understand the inherent conflicts and crises in the lives of today’s successful young women. It creates a simple and realistic way for contemporary women to re-engage with feminism, which is a good fit for their complex modern lives. It transcends the boundaries of traditional or traditional feminist ideas to recognize new types of 21st-century femininity, celebrates pop culture, and integrates postfeminism (p.1). The main argument of this article is that Bhagat’s novel is profoundly “postfeminist” because it reveals how the life of a modern woman is still driven by the tensions of compromise, marriageability, the constraints of appearance, the expectations of motherhood, emotional dependence, and constant self-surveillance. Through a careful analysis of the original text, this article shows that the

author did not simply see the old patriarchy disappear, but rather showed how it was brought back in a new package through social norms, family advice, love, corporate culture, and the traditional idea of a helpless woman embedded in the mind. Radhika is not free from modernity; she is in fact “burdened by modernity plus tradition at once”—that is, she is burdened by the duality of modernity and tradition at once. And it is this multidimensional conflict that makes *One Indian Girl* an outstanding and fascinating “postfeminist” piece of literature.

Background of the study

This central idea is beautifully expressed through Radhika Mehta, the main character of Chetan Bhagat’s novel *One Indian Girl*. Radhika is a highly educated and internationally active woman who, on the surface, seems to be a successful symbol of women’s empowerment. However, a deeper analysis of the novel reveals that her freedom is by no means complete or unfettered. Despite such great external and professional success, she constantly has to live within the invisible chains of social pressure of marriage, specific standards of external beauty, emotional behavior, and family expectations. As a result, a kind of intense psychological conflict arises in her life between modern freedom and traditional gender roles. This conflict in Radhika’s life can best be explained in the light of the theory of “post-feminism” or “postfeminist”. This theory basically claims that although women are considered to be given equal rights on paper or socially in the present era, in reality they are actually controlled subconsciously by an invisible expectation, conditioning and personal choice of society rather than by any direct or direct authority. Radhika’s entire life in the novel is a perfect and clear reflection of this post-feminist conflict. Although she plays an incredibly powerful and decisive role in her professional or corporate life, the traditional customs and ancient rules and regulations in every layer of her personal and social life continue to deeply affect her existence even today.

In all the research or discussions that have been conducted on this topic so far, these two issues of ‘empowerment’ of women and ‘patriarchy’ have been discussed separately. This current research has basically filled that gap in the conventional discussion. It has shown how these two completely opposite forces can coexist at the same time, within a modern character. And for this very reason, the novel *One Indian Girl* has emerged as a very important and landmark text in the present day for understanding the psychological complexities and entanglements within contemporary modern femininity.

An Overview of the Text

The main subject of Chetan Bhagat’s novel *One Indian Girl* is Radhika Mehta—a highly educated, ambitious and financially successful Indian woman, who works in the

global corporate sector and who seemingly seems to be the epitome of a modern, independent and empowered woman. However, as the story progresses, the novel begins to reveal that her apparent professional success has not spared her from various personal, family, psychological and gender-based social pressures. The entire narrative explores in depth the psychological tensions created around arranged marriage culture, the various expectations imposed by society, her own experience of the corporate workplace, love, specific standards of beauty, motherhood and the intense psychological conflicts that arise around women's intense ambitions. Through the dissection of these elements, the text shows that femininity in the contemporary Indian context is not only governed by an overt or direct patriarchal domination; rather, much more subtle psychological pressures constantly play an active role behind it. These invisible social pressures essentially demand from a woman that she should appear successful without posing any threat to the patriarchal society; that she should be independent without losing her eternal and primitive femininity; and that she should maintain her acceptance within the known boundaries of traditional customs, even though she cherishes a strong desire for independence.

Significance of the Study

The main significance of this study is that it does not limit itself to a general feminist reading; rather, it specifically dissects the postfeminist womanhood of the novel *One Indian Girl*. The novel has often been discussed in the light of conventional themes such as patriarchy, gender inequality, and women's empowerment; however, when it is read through a postfeminist lens, its deep psychological and internal conflicts become more clearly visible. This study is also very important for another reason—it shows how, in contemporary society, while the external empowerment of women persists with dignity, an invisible control over women can also exist in parallel. And this control works through subtle means such as specific rules of external beauty, social pressure for marriage, emotional dependence on men, and family expectations. Thus, this article makes a very valuable and groundbreaking contribution to the fields of contemporary Indian English fiction, gender studies, and postfeminist cultural criticism.

Literature Reviews

Most previous studies of Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* have evaluated it primarily from a general feminist perspective, not from a postfeminist lens. These earlier works mainly dealt with issues such as manifest forms of patriarchy, gender inequality, women's external independence and a woman's visible struggle to establish her own existence and identity in a male-dominated society. That is, they focus on the direct conflict of women versus patriarchal society. But therein lies the need for this new post-feminist

reading; Which not only looks at this struggle at the top, but also exposes the subtle psychological traps wrapped around the edges of progress and success—which compel a woman to be modern yet unconsciously subservient to the old system. According to many critics, the novel shows how modern and highly educated women, despite being successful in their careers and financially independent, constantly face unfair gender roles, emotional stress and social judgment (Tripathi, 2017, pp. 105–107). Radhika’s mental anguish and social crises are largely seen as the result of patriarchal thinking and gendered expectations (Kaushik et al., 2021, pp. 2765–2767). Besides, the novel has also been interpreted as a narrative of gender inequality and women’s empowerment—especially where Radhika struggles to juggle her career goals, personal desires, and societal pressures simultaneously (Madhukar, 2023, pp. 20–24).

Another important aspect of the existing studies is patriarchal control and various sufferings and pains faced by women in the society. Critics often see the novel as a critique against traditional criteria for judging women—even when those women are powerful and independent in public social or professional life. From this perspective, *One Indian Girl* shows that patriarchal values are still deeply active in the workplace, marriage, family life, and notions of femininity (Ramasamy, 2019, pp. 278–279). At the same time, the novel also depicts Radhika’s struggle to resist these pressures and highlights how education and economic independence help women become empowered (Madhukar, 2023, p. 24). These readings prove that many feminist critics consider the novel as a story of women’s suffering, struggle and empowerment in a traditional Indian social context.

Another part of the research focuses mainly on female identity and the changing concept of femininity. Radhika is often seen as a modern woman—educated, career-successful, and self-aware, yet unable to fully break out of society’s conventional and traditional expectations of women (Baral, 2024, pp. 119–121). She represents a kind of “New Woman” who, though outwardly independent and self-confident, is actually trapped in the old social chains of marriage, tenderness of nature and socially-sanctioned appropriate feminine behavior. This idea becomes even more significant when the novel is read as a narrative of self-identity, where femininity is not simply something imposed by society—rather, it is an entity that is constantly questioned, negotiated, and reconstructed through sense of life and self-awareness (Pokharel, 2021, pp. 30–31). Thus, Radhika strives to transcend the limited boundaries of “woman” imposed by society towards a fuller self-realization, independence and dignity.

The socio-psychological side of the novel strongly supports this feminist reading. Radhika’s inner life is portrayed as a world full of depression, emotional conflict, and intense stress caused by gendered social expectations (Kaushik et al., 2021, pp. 2765–2767). His problems are not just presented as a personal crisis; Rather, they are embedded in larger structures of inequality and unequal power relations. Because of this, her every decision and choice is driven primarily by the desire to establish equality, dignity and

control over her own life (Tripathi, 2017, pp. 115–119).

Overall, these previous studies show that the novel *One Indian Girl* is a very important text for feminist analysis, as it deals with complex issues such as masculinity, stereotypes, discrimination, self-identity, empowerment and conflict of social expectations with women's aspirations (Ramasamy, 2019, pp. 278–282). At the same time, these studies also make it clear that Radhika is not just a passive victim of patriarchy; Rather, he is a very active person in the struggle to build his self-identity, dignity and independence even though he stands within a conservative and restricted society (Baral, 2024, pp. 119–124).

Problem Statement and Gap

There is still a clear gap in the existing studies surrounding the novel *One Indian Girl*. Most critics have discussed the novel in terms of feminism, patriarchy, empowerment and the concept of the 'New Woman'; but they have not fully explained how it represents postfeminist womanhood. Their focus has been on women's suffering and resistance, while the complex and mixed expectations of society imposed on Radhika have received relatively little attention. For her, society demands that she be ambitious yet tender, independent yet ready for marriage, modern yet elegant, and successful yet emotionally controlled. These stark contrasts and contradictions, although only hinted at in the previous discussions, have not been properly explored.

The main aim of this study, titled "A Postfeminist Reading of Womanhood in Chetan Bhagat's *One Indian Girl*", is to fill that gap in the conventional discourse. This study argues that Radhika's life is not only governed by traditional patriarchy; it is also controlled by a modern culture that, on the one hand, encourages women's independence and self-reliance, but on the other, indirectly controls them by entangling them in a web of invisible social expectations. Using a postfeminist perspective, this study has essentially explored the latent psychological tensions and conflicts between a woman's true self and the Objectives of the Study ideal form expected by society.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine how *One Indian Girl* represents womanhood through a postfeminist framework.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze how Radhika Mehta is represented as an outwardly empowered but inwardly disciplined woman.
2. To examine how marriage, beauty, family, romance, and motherhood shape the novel's representation of femininity.
3. To identify the contradictions between public success and private gender

expectations in the text.

4. To explore how patriarchal values continue through subtle, emotional, and socially acceptable forms.
5. To show why a postfeminist reading is necessary for understanding the deeper tensions of the novel.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does *One Indian Girl* represent womanhood in the context of postfeminist culture?
2. In what ways does Radhika appear empowered in public life but constrained in private and emotional life?
3. How do marriageability, beauty, maternal expectation, and male validation shape her identity?
4. How does the novel reveal the persistence of patriarchy in revised and normalized forms?
5. Why is postfeminism a useful framework for interpreting the contradictions in the novel?

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis or assumed conclusion of this study is that the novel *One Indian Girl* does not portray contemporary modern Indian womanhood as completely free or independent. Rather, it sees femininity as caught in a post-feminist contradiction, where women's visible empowerment and patriarchal discipline coexist. Although Radhika Mehta appears outwardly successful, independent and modern, the novel subtly demonstrates that her life is still driven and controlled by an invisible web of external beauty norms, social pressures of marriage, emotional dependence on men and familial and domestic expectations.

Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative textual analysis to examine how modern Indian women are portrayed in the novel *One Indian Girl* (2016). In particular, through the character of Radhika Mehta, postfeminist theory is used to explore how contemporary women face various social pressures in their private lives despite being very powerful and independent in public or professional life.

The analysis focuses on three areas: "outward empowerment" (career, education and financial success), "inward discipline" (social expectations regarding appearance,

emotions and family roles), and the internal conflict between the two. After a very close reading of the novel, it was divided into specific sections such as workplace, family and interpersonal relationships; and relevant and important passages were selected and arranged into specific themes or styles.

To ensure the reliability and acceptability of the research, the original text has been read repeatedly and an implicit comparison has been made with existing theories and research on post-feminism and Indian literature. Since this research is based on a published novel, there are no major ethical issues, and all sources and references used have been properly cited.

Scope, Focus and Analytical Lens

This study focuses on selected passages from the novel *One Indian Girl*, focusing on the representation of womanhood—particularly those moments that reveal the psychological tension between outward empowerment and inward gender discipline. This analysis does not attempt to cover every aspect of the novel equally. Rather, it focuses on themes such as family pressure, arranged marriage culture, beauty standards, workplace self-doubt, emotional dependency, love, and motherhood.

The theoretical and analytical lens of this study is postfeminism. This theoretical framework is chosen to explore more deeply how Radhika's life is simultaneously driven and defined by two opposing forces: freedom and control. This study reads the novel as a text that shows that the success of modernity does not completely eradicate patriarchy from society; rather, it often coexists with more refined, subtle, and emotionally internalized forms of patriarchy.

Conceptual Framework

This study has developed a conceptual framework to understand the nature of modern femininity in Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl*. Its basic premise is that modern femininity is mainly developed through the interrelationship of three main concepts. These three concepts are: empowerment, social expectations, and identity conflict.

Key elements of the conceptual framework:

1. Empowerment: The first concept is women's empowerment. This means women's higher education, career success, economic independence, and social confidence which establish a woman as modern and self-reliant in society.
2. Social Expectations: The second concept is the various expectations imposed by society. These include social pressure for marriage, specific standards of beauty,

family approval, emotional behavior, and traditional gender roles—which society constantly imposes on women.

3. Identity Conflict: The third concept is identity conflict. This crisis arises when a woman struggles to balance her personal empowerment and the traditional expectations of society at the same time.

The duality and influence of opposing forces are found here. In this conceptual framework, empowerment and social expectations are seen as two completely opposite forces. While empowerment encourages a woman to move towards complete independence, social expectations keep her within traditional and conventional boundaries. The intense tension between these two forces gives rise to the ‘identity crisis’, which has become one of the main characteristics of contemporary modern femininity. Therefore, using this specific framework, this study dissects the character of Radhika Mehta—showing how her entire life has been shaped by a constant compromise and adjustment between independence and social pressure.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, post-feminism or post-feminist theory has been chosen as the main theoretical framework to deeply understand femininity in the novel *One Indian Girl*. This theory basically explains that, while women in modern society seem to be highly educated, successful and free to live their lives as they wish, society actually controls them in an invisible way. In parallel with this outward freedom, women are forced into a net of indirect control, with a variety of transformed social expectations such as specific rules of grooming, marriage, family responsibilities, and emotional behavior.

In the light of this theoretical framework, Radhika Mehta, the main character of the novel, is dissected as a symbolic form of modern Indian femininity. Radhika is extremely successful in her corporate career, financially self-sufficient and extremely confident and assertive in her public social life. Nevertheless, she continues to be judged and regulated in her personal and family life by the archaic criteria of marriage, relationship equation, emotional behavior and traditional feminine roles.

Hence, the novel does not present modern womanhood as a completely independent or free entity; Rather, it is seen as a highly complex and psychological combination of visible empowerment and invisible social pressure. Radhika’s life struggle is a perfect reflection of the post-feminist paradox, demonstrating how modern progress and patriarchal discipline can seamlessly coexist within the same character.

Analytical framework

The analytical framework of this study is based on three main pillars: external empowerment, internal social pressure and inherent contradictions of femininity.

Three main pillars of the analytical framework:

1. External Empowerment: The first part delves into Radhika's external empowerment through higher education, incredible professional success, economic self-reliance and a strong social position.
2. Internal Social Pressures: The second part deals with the invisible and latent psychological pressures that control Radhika's life from behind the scenes—including unrealistic ideals of appearance, perpetual social pressure to marry, sense of familial responsibility, emotional control, and constant longing for approval from others (especially men). Together, these two pillars prove that outwardly highly successful women are not outside of this invisible control system of society.
3. Contradictions inherent in femininity: The final stage of the analysis deals with the intense psychological conflict caused by this achieved freedom and repressed social pressures. The novel shows how the modern and independent Radhika is constantly in a never-ending conflict with traditional expectations of marriage, family boundaries and society-defined molds of 'ideal femininity'.

Key Significance: Through this three-dimensional framework, the study clarifies that women's power and social discipline are not separate issues in the contemporary post-feminist era, but are two sides of the same integral reality. Overall, this study has demonstrated that the novel *One Indian Girl* portrays modern womanhood as a complex, multidimensional condition; where women, despite achieving success and independence, remain repressed or constrained by cultural expectations and deeply rooted patriarchal values.

Discussions

The Normalization of Patriarchal Adjustment

The novel's tendency to accept this forced compromise or compromised by women within the culture of marriage as normal is one of the strongest aspects of postfeminist theory. Radhika's father tells her, "Beta, these are norms. You don't understand. We have to keep them comfortable. Girl's side is expected to adjust" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 15). Society accepts these unequal norms as normal. Radhika's mother explains that it is an unwritten responsibility of the bride's family to ensure the comfort of the groom's family. This clearly indicates that in marriage, women and their families are always expected to adapt

and see themselves in a lower position. This statement clearly illustrates how patriarchal thinking is taught and accepted as part of tradition (Nirmalawati, 2018, p. 16). As a result, Radhika is forced to admit, despite her own reluctance: “I had to soften. And do what was necessary from the girl’s side—to adapt” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 15). The main significance of this particular moment lies in the implicit use of the word social “norms”. Here, patriarchal discrimination is not presented as an overt injustice or coercion, but rather as a very natural social process. The woman is not being forced into submission in any dramatic or violent way; rather, she is being subconsciously taught that this “adaptation” or “adjustment” is one of the main conditions for acceptable and elegant femininity in society. In this way, patriarchy is so cleverly woven into the language of tradition, family expectations, and social behavior that it becomes all the more difficult to identify and challenge it. What is actually extremely discriminatory and unequal is skillfully presented as “normal” or “natural”; and whatever is natural naturally remains unquestioned.

This is a very specific postfeminist configuration. Here, patriarchy is not simply maintained through overt force, but through a kind of ‘soft normalization’. Society does not express this dominance as direct or brutal rule; rather, it appears in the guise of admonitions, well-wishes, care, and social guidance. And that is precisely why it is so powerful and deadly. Radhika is not being directly ordered in any authoritarian way; rather, she is simply being reminded of what society actually expects of her and what behavior is realistic and appropriate for her as a woman. Despite being a highly educated, modern, and globally successful woman, society ultimately reduces her to “the girl’s side”, a single identity whose main function is to constantly compromise. Her professional identity, economic independence, or experience as a global citizen—nothing can save her from being trapped in the labyrinth of this traditional gendered script. Chetan Bhagat essentially reveals that modernity has not completely erased this gendered hierarchy from society; rather, it has made it more natural, familial, and rational. It is not that this oppression has disappeared from society and is unrecognizable, but rather that it is cloaked in a cloak of culture and duty that makes it difficult to recognize or identify it separately. This patriarchal logic of compromise is further reinforced and entrenched in society by women themselves. Radhika observes, “The supportive ones, according to mom, were those who understood what it was like to be the girl’s side” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 16). Here, mutual sympathy or so-called ‘female solidarity’ between women does not offer any path to liberation. According to the definition given by the mother, “supportive” women are those who know how to bow down to this patriarchal system, to endure it silently, and to adapt to the situation. Their mutual cooperation or support does not challenge the discriminatory structure; rather, by teaching how to accept everything beautifully and survive within this structure, they in a way perpetuate this exploitation. This is very important; because it shows that patriarchy is not only run or sustained by men. Rather, when women silently accept these inherited gender roles and continue to pass them on to other women in the next generation, patriarchy

is repeatedly reproduced in society. This entire system is not only sustained by the power of patriarchal authority, but rather is rooted in women's own psychological surrender to traditional feminine duty.

Chetan Bhagat's style of presentation is precisely post-feminist for this reason; because control here does not come through direct or overt domination, but rather through the subtle process of emotional conditioning and social acceptance. The novel shows that in a seemingly modern context, patriarchy does not always have to appear as a direct force; it can very easily work its way through the language of compromise, mutual understanding and social politeness. Women are subconsciously taught that this compromise is not a 'loss' or 'defeat', but rather an expression of maturity and refined behavior. As a result, this structural inequality becomes normalized as a very intimate part of family and personal life. Chetan Bhagat here reveals how a post-feminist culture can create an illusion of progress for women, yet deep down, the old patriarchal expectations remain intact. Radhika may present herself as very independent and powerful in the external or professional world, but in the sphere of personal and marital relationships, society still demands of her that she adapt to the situation, soften her own stubbornness or rigidity, and maintain the comfort of others. Therefore, the very mentality of accepting this compromise as "normal" proves that patriarchal power has not disappeared from society; it has just become more subtle, more acceptable, and more firmly internalized in the depths of the human mind.

Postfeminist Illusions: Beauty, Power, and the Persistence of Patriarchy

The novel also perfectly captures one of the main characteristics of post-feminism which is the tendency to reject and outright reject feminist ideas; Where Radhika laments, "All the women's empowerment and feminism bullshit didn't really take me anywhere, right? Maybe Kamla bua and mom's way was the right way" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 17). This is not simply an expression of misogynist anger, but rather reflects a larger post-feminist mindset in which feminism is seen as redundant, outdated, impractical, or irrelevant—in a society that already claims to empower women. But this part in *One Indian Girl* shows that Radhika is actually beginning to suffer from a kind of ambivalence about feminism; Where feminism speaks of equality between men and women, she is not seeing any real benefits in her life and without enough support from around her, she is forced to think that the traditional path shown by her mother might have been better. It is clear from this that when women do not receive adequate emotional support from society or family, they start to doubt the validity of their own ideals and beliefs. As a result, they are gradually forced to accept the old social norms and precepts again (Tripathi, p. 107). In the post-feminist context, this mental doubt or self-doubt works as a very effective tool. When an independent woman constantly faces isolation or loneliness from her surroundings, society starts to convince her that the reason for this loneliness is her independent spirit. Unable to

survive in the face of this mental pressure and for the sake of her own mental security, modern women like Radhika eventually surrender to the 'soft normalization' of the patriarchal system and choose compromise as their destiny.

This sentence is very significant; because it reveals how a post-feminist culture creates a kind of disillusionment or disillusionment among women. Radhika, despite all her external privileges and theoretical ideas of empowerment, ends up spending her life dragging a heavy burden of patriarchy. And this contradiction, instead of building any collective resistance, creates a kind of mental fatigue in her; which makes her think that perhaps this "accommodation" or compromise is easier and more realistic for survival than the feminist struggle. Chetan Bhagat here depicts one of the main characteristics of post-feminist culture: where women are constantly told that they are already completely independent and free, so that later when they face any real difficult situation or suffering, feminism seems 'futile' to them and they consider it more intelligent to adapt to the situation.

Underneath this apparent glamour of modernity, the issue of son preference shows how deeply rooted gender-based violence is in society. Radhika recalls the past: "It is rumored that they tried again twice; both times my mother had an abortion because it was a girl" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 18). When asked about this, her mother replies: "You will judge me, so no point telling you. You don't know what it is like to be without a son" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 18). These lines clearly reveal how the life of a girl child or woman remains undervalued and neglected within the patriarchal family structure even in this modern era. It is not 'modern' in any sense of progress, but rather post-feminist because it exists in parallel with the visible progress of women in society. In the present era, daughters may be pursuing higher education and working, but the true value of women in terms of reproduction is still determined by the desire for sons. This self-defense of the mother is very significant: she does not present her actions as cruelty, but as a social obligation and a struggle for survival. That is, patriarchal violence is rationalized and normalized from within. Chetan Bhagat here reveals how this gender hierarchy of power is inherited, normalized and emotionally internalized by women themselves.

The most prominent postfeminist contradiction in the novel *One Indian Girl* is most clearly visible here, where Radhika's unique and extraordinary professional success becomes her biggest obstacle or liability in the traditional marriage market. The post-feminist society encourages women to achieve economic independence and reach the top in their careers, but on the other hand, those same achievements subject her to a punitive isolation in social and family circles. Radhika's situation proves that even though modern capitalist society is ready to see women as successful in the corporate world, the patriarchal marital structure still cannot easily accept a woman who is more successful or more profitable than herself. As a result, this external empowerment of the woman pushes her to an extreme psychological crisis, where instead of being proud of her own merits, she

suffers from a sense of guilt or social insecurity.

His mother's immediate concern is very real and suggestive: "How will I ever find a boy for you?" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 19). Radhika's astonishing achievement—"a job at one of the world's largest investment banks"—is completely dwarfed by the tension of the "groom-hunt" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 19). His mother explained very clearly, "Who wants to marry a girl who earns so much? If the boy earns less, he won't consider you. If he earns more, why would he marry a working girl?" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 19). Devu's compliments make Radhika happy and she starts to feel a kind of closeness towards him, but still she hesitates within herself and does not make the first move on her own. Although she is completely independent and earns a handsome salary, her mother's main concern is that no man may agree to marry her because she earns so much. This makes it clear that a woman's success can still lead to many problems in the marital relationship and it eventually leaves her in a kind of mental stress and confusion (Kaushik, p. 2769).

This is the postfeminist double bind at its most obvious. In today's society, a successful woman is encouraged to achieve great things, but only up to a certain point. If she surpasses men economically, it threatens male superiority or dominance; if she tries to find a man who is equally or more successful than her, she may be rejected as "too career-conscious." As a result, the symbols of women's empowerment that neoliberal culture celebrates—such as high income, ambition, and social status—become major obstacles in the heterosexual marriage economy. Chetan Bhagat here exposes the cruel paradox in which women's public social success is ultimately forced to submit to the patriarchal structure of their private lives.

The novel also shows that no matter how successful a woman is professionally, her body or appearance still remains a major site of evaluation by society. For example, a sales assistant compliments Radhika, saying, "Hi, miss. God, you have a gorgeous colour" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 44). However, Radhika immediately regrets, "Say that to my mother. She stays up at night wondering who will marry me with this skin colour" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 44). Here it is clearly seen that skin color acts as a very influential 'social capital' in the traditional marriage market. In the post-feminist or postfeminist reality, skin color is not just a physical characteristic, but it becomes one of the criteria for determining the social value, acceptance and status of women. Even though Radhika is highly successful and financially independent in the international corporate arena, her complexion or looks are given more priority than her achievements in the marriage market. This proves how deep the traditional mentality of viewing women's bodies as commodities and evaluating them according to racist and patriarchal standards is still deeply embedded in the social system under the veneer of modernity.

This is a very clear postfeminist dynamic; while women are on the one hand able to freely enter the global sphere and the world of modern professionalism, but on the other hand their bodies are still subject to the traditional standards of local and patriarchal

desirability. Beauty here is not incidental or secondary, but has become an integral part of the social evaluation of femininity, which demands that a woman be both professionally competent and physically attractive. Chetan Bhagat's style of presentation essentially reveals how women's self-identity or 'selfhood' in post-feminist culture is intertwined with self-surveillance, the latent desire to be the center of attraction and an intense psychological pressure to view one's body from the point of view of possible social acceptance.

Radhika's experience in elite corporate life further exposes the matters of postfeminist contradictions. She initially tells Debu, "So I am thinking, I won't apply to distressed debt. It's quite difficult to get anyway. Plus, the job seems too difficult" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 53). Later, when the golden opportunity for this job comes up, the male colleagues immediately respond positively: "Yes, of course, I accept," "Am going to kill it," and "Totally accept" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 58). But Radhika hesitates: "Yeah. Well, I am thinking" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 58). Her inner monologue reveals a naked form of gendered structure of self-doubt, where she thinks: "Has there been a mistake? Can I do this? Is this too difficult? This is what girls like me do. The boys in front of me jumped up in confidence. I, on the other hand, triple-guessed and quadruple-guessed myself" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 58).

This is a purely postfeminist trait, because the obstacles here are no longer limited to matters of the external world. As a woman, Radhika has the formal door of equal rights and opportunities open to her male colleagues; But still she has internalized an invisible pressure to self-police, self-question and self-correct. Simply put, patriarchy is no longer just outside, but inside the female psyche. Rather than seeing this ambivalence or emotional inertia as the result of structural gender conditioning or socially determined behavior, post-feminist culture uniquely identifies it as a woman's personal inadequacy. Chetan Bhagat's text very strongly portrays the inward turn of gender discipline that is ingrained in women's minds.

Gendered Recognition and the Emotional Burden of Success

Radhika's reaction to the compliment once again clearly illustrates how any great achievement of a woman ultimately depends on masculine recognition. When Debu reassures her, "Relax. You can crack anything. You are really smart. One of the smartest people I've met," Radhika's immediate reaction is one of extreme tragic irony: "Wow, a man who acknowledges a woman's smartness" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 59). When even such a simple recognition from a man seems incredible or exceptional to Radhika, it reveals a corporate and social reality where women's intelligence or talent is still not accepted as normal or normalized.

A similar gender discrepancy is observed when Radhika herself ambivalently states, "Also, there are hardly any women in the team. It's a man's job" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 59). In response, Debu counters, "What nonsense... It's all this bullshit men spread. "To

scare women out of a role or position. Fact is, men are shit-scared of talented women like you” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 59). This passage is highly suggestive; for it simultaneously exposes the repressed patriarchy embedded in women’s psyches, and also makes clear the need for a kind of validation or recognition (male authorization) from men for women’s self-confidence even today. While Radhika is subconsciously reproducing the idea that certain workplaces are reserved only for men, Debu appears as a voice that recognizes and celebrates Radhika’s own abilities and skills. That is, this progressive or positive encouragement for women is ultimately being realized and solidified through the spoken word of a man. This shows the subtle trap of post-feminist culture, where a woman, despite being extremely successful, remains implicitly dependent on patriarchal approval for her ultimate psychological assurance of her worth or sense of self-worth.

Later when Debu raises his glass and says, “To my talented friend Radhika, who will kick ass at distressed debt and show the men how it is done” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 60)—then this particular moment may seem very empowering. But on closer inspection, it actually turns Radhika’s professional success into an exhibition/spectacle. Here he is no longer just a professional worker like ten ordinary working people; Rather, in the society, she has to stand as a living witness or document of this proof that a woman can be equal to a man or can surpass a man. And this is the additional psychological burden of gendered representation, which the post-feminist or post-feminist culture always puts on the shoulders of unique and extraordinary women like Radhika.

When Debu comments, “It’s really important that women do well. It sets an example for other younger women. It inspires them” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 61), Radhika counters by asking, “Who am I inspiring?” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 61). This conversation perfectly illustrates another deep contradiction of the post-feminist or postfeminist reality: where a successful woman is symbolically given great status, but in reality she is not given any collective social support.

Instead of radically changing society through feminist politics, post-feminist culture often prefers to celebrate single or individualistic women as “role models”. Despite the fact that structural gender inequality persists in society, these handful of successful women want to prove that society can overcome all gender-based barriers. Here Radhika is expected by the society to inspire other women, while she herself suffers from extreme mental insecurities and carries a multifaceted burden in her personal life. Chetan Bhagat uncovers how this catchy slogan of women ‘becoming an inspiration’ ultimately hides the extreme loneliness, emotional pain and pent-up stress behind a single woman’s success.

The novel becomes directly aware of beauty culture when Debu asks Radhika, “Have you read *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf?” And explains herself, “A landmark feminist book. It talks about how women are culturally bullied into feeling conscious about their looks all the time” (Bhagat, 2016, pp. 64–65). The main point of mentioning this famous book in the text is that Chetan Bhagat rightly incorporates the feminist critique in

his novel, but fails to give his heroine any real liberation from the criticized patriarchal social structure.

This is the purest form of postfeminist reality: where awareness alone does not guarantee liberation. Women may know very well that this beauty culture is imposing a kind of discipline on them, but they are forced to live within it. As a result, the female body ultimately becomes a major field of self-monitoring. This same dilemma is beautifully illustrated in Radhika's later life—where even her immense career success cannot hide the deep psychological insecurity that has developed around beauty.

One of the most powerful postfeminist moments in the novel comes when Radhika recalls her professional success: “Like make a ton of money for a girl my age. Heck, I make a lot of money for anyone any age. I also got a top rating in my reviews. Can you at least praise me a little for it?” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 88). However, it is seen that Debu shows much more enthusiasm for the dinner menu than for the news of Radhika getting this bonus. Then Radhika asks herself, “Why am I so keen for his praise? ... Still, I want Debu to also acknowledge it. Why? Why do we girls have this defect? Why do we need our men to praise and validate us for us to feel accomplished?” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 88). This part makes clear the intense psychological struggle within Radhika. Despite being successful herself and earning a huge amount of money, she craves for the praise and recognition from Debashis' face for her success. This shows that women are subconsciously conditioned by society to always expect approval from men. At the same time, Debashis wants his future wife to quit her job and become a full-time housewife; This demonstrates how powerful and unchanging the traditional and archaic ideas of society regarding the role of women in marriage remain (Rawat, 2022, p.29).

This is an eternal post-feminist paradox. Material success, corporate status, or institutional recognition—none of these automatically create emotional self-sufficiency in a woman. A woman may have all the external achievements in her life, she may have it all, yet at the end of the day, her sense of self-worth and the meaning of her existence are trapped in the labyrinth of psychological and emotional approval from men of the opposite sex. Although post-feminist society teaches women to be completely independent economically and professionally, it also conditions their subconscious minds in such a way that all the material achievements in their lives seem meaningless and incomplete without the love, attention, or approval of a man. This psychological dependence on patriarchal relationship structures for the fulfillment of one's personal life outside the professional sphere is the greatest limitation of modern empowerment.

Chetan Bhagat has uncovered a very important insight here: patriarchy is not only sustained by the external social structure, but it is sustained by women's repressed desires, emotions, and a strong desire to see themselves as successful in the eyes of men. Even when the desired recognition comes in the workplace, it is captured within the frame of some relationship. For example, when Craig introduces Radhika to Debu, he says, “the

boyfriend of our superstar associate,” and then admits, “You are good. I hate to admit it, but you are better than me. They will make you VP in six months” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 92). Although this scene seems very empowering on the surface, it ultimately confines this incredible talent and brilliance of women to the familiar circle of heterosexuality. In other words, this glorious celebration of women cannot ultimately break out of this circle of gender coding or gender-based identity.

Amanda, Beauty Hierarchies, and the Failure of Achievement to Replace Desirability

When the desired recognition or appreciation comes in the professional field, it is still captured within the frame of some social or family relationship. In the post-feminist reality, society feels somewhat uncomfortable accepting a woman’s unique achievements directly. Therefore, even when evaluating her unique talent, a patriarchal or relational structure is placed in the background. We also observe this same trend repeating itself in the moment of Radhika’s celebration of corporate success in Chetan Bhagat’s novel.

For example, when Craig goes to introduce Radhika to Devu, he addresses Devu as “the boyfriend of our superstar associate” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 92). Here, Radhika is identified through the relationship with her male partner, rather than being presented directly as an independent, successful worker. Craig then adds, “You are good. I hate to admit it, but you are better than me. They will make you VP in six months” (Bhagat, 2016, p. 92). Although this statement is a formal recognition of Radhika’s incredible talent, it is wrapped in a relationship atmosphere.

Chetan Bhagat has masterfully exposed the limitations of postfeminist empowerment here. Postfeminism often promotes the idea that a modern woman can perfectly achieve or “have it all” in her life through education, employment, high income and proper self-management. However, the comparison of Radhika with Amanda makes it clear that these new achievements have not completely erased the traditional and traditional social expectations of femininity from society, but rather they exist in parallel with that old mentality. A woman can be sky-highly successful professionally, but society still demands from her external beauty, physical attractiveness and effortless desirability. And whenever he falls short of this standard, all his great achievements begin to seem ‘incomplete’ or ‘inadequate’ in society and in his own eyes. This is precisely why Radhika’s inner despair is so deep and intense; Because he perfectly fulfills everything that neo-liberal modernity expects of him, yet at the end of the day he feels a kind of incompleteness and deficiency within himself.

This episode also shows how this beauty culture creates a kind of gender discrimination or stratification within women itself. Amanda is not just another ordinary woman here; Rather, she has become a symbol of ultimate beauty, against which Radhika

constantly measures herself and subconsciously belittles herself. It does not give rise to any healthy competition in women's talent or merit—where Radhika could easily have won; Rather, it creates a competition centered on appearance and body composition—the standards of which are highly cynical, gendered, and socially punishing for women. This kind of comparison makes it clear that patriarchal femininity actually perpetuates society by instilling this division of superiority and inferiority in women and applying it to other women. Consequently, Radhika's psychological suffering does not come from any direct domination by men, but from a complete assimilation of the patriarchal system deep within her own mind—where a woman's external appearance remains the main tool of her true evaluation.

Above all, Chetan Bhagat suggests here that the immense success of women in the contemporary global corporate world does not erase patriarchal norms from society; rather, it coexists with those old norms in a very fragile and unbalanced way. Radhika's professional identity gives her power and freedom, but her emotional and personal life is still governed by the belief that external attractiveness or beauty is actually much more important than work efficiency. And this is what makes her overall situation specifically postfeminist: although she seems outwardly very independent, successful and modern, she still evaluates her existence through the eyes of the old patriarchal grammar of beauty, comparison and male approval. The ultimate result is a self-identity or 'selfhood' in which great professional achievements can never fully replace a woman's desire to be desirable or attractive, and in which even the most successful woman in the world finds herself in a cycle of utter defeat—unless society deems her externally attractive or "hot."

Romance, Softness, Motherhood, and Conditional Equality

The romantic relationship between Radhika and Debu essentially exposes the limits of male progressiveness in the face of true gender equality. When Radhika expresses her love for her job—"Yeah, Debu. I love it. I am good at it. It's exciting. I am learning so much. It's a great firm. I am paid well". "I don't know. Just doesn't feel right. I hope the job doesn't harden you" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 101). (Bhagat, 2016, p. 101)—she is essentially speaking from a place of professional satisfaction, confidence, and self-esteem. For him this job is not only a source of income; Rather it is inextricably linked to his competence, personal development and self-identity. But Debu does not respond by applauding her ambition or acknowledging her sense of achievement. Instead, he says, "I don't know. He elaborates, "You were this sweet, innocent girl when I met you. You had a soft side" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 101). Radhika, however, resists his label and responds, "I still do. I am the same person. This is a job. I am more than that" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 101). The main point of this conversation is that Debu is not directly opposing Radhika's job for any real or logical reason; rather, he is transforming his discomfort into a kind of emotional and moral

form—indicating that this professional success may be destroying the feminine qualities within Radhika that he likes to see in her.

This exchange is profoundly postfeminist, because it exposes the implicit demand of society that a woman's ambition should not in any way disrupt her traditional femininity. A woman can work, but her work should not make her "hard". She can be successful, but she must also maintain her humility, her sweetness, and the eternal responsibility of maintaining the emotional comfort of others. In this way, Chetan Bhagat exposes the double burden that weighs on the modern woman: where you have to be strong, but at the same time soft and gentle; be ambitious, but never be a threat to men. At this point, Debu is not asking Radhika to give up her job altogether; rather, he wants Radhika to ensure that her work does not change her in any way that challenges men's traditional expectations of femininity. So, the problem here is not about ambition; The problem is with ambitions that have the power to upset the emotional balance of gender relations. Debu's concern shows that even in modern romantic relationships, women are only accepted as successful if they are soft and non-submissive enough to reassure men. As a result, equality is tolerated only up to a certain point, and that limit is determined by society's persistent expectation that women must ultimately live up to their emotional expectations of men.

This emotional tension takes its most extreme and intense form in the conflict of motherhood. Debu directly states, "I love you. But I want my kids' mother to be at home for them" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 103). In protest, Radhika firmly says, "My job will have nothing to do with my commitment as a mother. Do you get it?" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 103). But Debu withdraws from there and says, "I don't think I can do this. Really, I can't" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 103). It is here that a seemingly progressive man fails at the very point where the family or household roles need to be rearranged to protect women's equal rights. While Debu can accept Radhika as an educated, modern and loving woman, he cannot accept her as a mother-to-be whose professional identity will remain intact even after marriage or the birth of a child. In his view, an ideal mother is one who is always physically present at home, engaged in household chores and primarily responsible for raising children. On the other hand, Radhika insists that motherhood and professional responsibilities are never contradictory. Her response challenges the traditional notion of society that a mother's love or self-sacrifice can only be proven by giving herself within the four walls of the family. As a result, this conflict reveals how fragile modern love becomes when it is confronted with true gender equality in the sphere of personal life.

Chetan Bhagat here shows that a woman's ambition is acceptable to society only as long as it overturns the traditional family structure or norms. Debu's withdrawal is highly suggestive, as it proves that there were conditions attached to his love. He loves Radhika, but within a version of womanhood that conforms to the archaic expectations of humility, service, and being constantly engaged in the world. When Radhika's independence begins to suggest an equal sharing of family responsibilities, Debu's facade

of apparent progressivity collapses. And it is precisely this particular moment that makes it specifically postfeminist: where the relationship may seem very modern on the surface, but inside it is dominated by the old gender logic. In today's era, a modern and successful woman may be admired by society, but at the end of the day she is expected to fit into the familiar family structure. As a result, when a woman demands full equality not only in the workplace, but also in her personal life, these tight bonds of romantic relationships begin to break.

Radhika's final self-doubt provides one of the sharpest and most profound insights into post-feminist reality: "Or did I want to prove that I could be sweet and innocent, which probably translates into docile and submissive?" (Bhagat, 2016, p. 104). This line is very significant; Because it reveals how femininity is repackaged in a more tender and attractive way in the modern era. Patriarchy no longer always directly commands women to be submissive or obedient; Rather, it calls on women to be sweet, tender, innocent and lovable. These positive adjectives do not seem harmless, and may even seem desirable; But hidden behind them is the old demand of that obligation. What appears to be love or affection for femininity is actually a subtle demand for female submission. Radhika shows that this psychological pressure does not only come from external society, but is deeply rooted, emotional and self-directed within the woman herself. She begins to realize that this intense desire to endear herself in the eyes of others is actually unconsciously pushing her toward a form of femininity that ultimately undermines her own autonomy.

Chetan Bhagat's style of presentation is very powerful; because it proves that this conflict is not just a simple conflict of love versus career, but a deep psychological struggle for true equality with the ever-familiar emotional codes that value femininity. Radhika is not rejecting love, motherhood or the intimacy of relationships here; She is rejecting the primitive notion that in order to maintain a relationship, she must sacrifice her ambitions or limit her identity. The novel exposes the limitations of modern love in a post-feminist world: men may theoretically admire independent women, but they resist it whenever that freedom threatens their inherited gender structure. Here, 'submissiveness' or 'tenderness' becomes an acceptable modern form of submission, 'motherhood' becomes the ultimate test of patriarchal expectations, and 'love' becomes a kind of conditional contract—where women must always maintain the mentality of being emotionally manageable by men. In this way, Chetan Bhagat shows that patriarchy no longer survives by directly or openly denying women's freedom; Rather, it redefines the concept of ideal femininity in such a way that women's true freedom eventually seems 'unfeminine' or anti-feminine.

Findings

Research has shown that femininity in the novel *One Indian Girl* is presented through a sharp postfeminist contradiction. Radhika Mehta emerges as seemingly impossibly powerful and independent through higher education, a global corporate job, and unprecedented economic success, but at the end of the day, she remains controlled and chained by the expectations of society-imposed compromises, acceptability in the marriage market, external beauty, emotional dependence on men, and the traditions of motherhood. It is also clear from this analysis that the patriarchy displayed in the novel is not always directly or openly violent. Rather, it cleverly survives behind family advice, social norms, emotional conditioning, subconscious self-doubt, and male-centered social acceptance. The novel conclusively proves that the so-called freedom found at the dawn of modernity does not completely remove the patriarchal pressure from society; Rather, it makes that invisible stress more subtle, intense and psychologically embedded in women's existence.

Implications of the Study

The literary, theoretical and social implications of this research are profound. From a literary point of view: This takes *One Indian Girl* beyond the traditional notion of being just a simplistic story of women's empowerment. It helps to establish the novel as a more meaningful and multidimensional literary work by revealing the deep psychological conflicts and contradictions within it. From a theoretical point of view, it proves the usefulness and necessity of post-feminism theory in analyzing contemporary Indian English fiction. This theory is especially relevant in those books or novels where women appear to be successful and independent, but in reality, they carry the burden of an invisible gender discipline (gender discipline) behind the scenes.

From a social point of view: This research strongly highlights the fact that we should never confuse women's visible progress in education and work with their 'full equality' or real emancipation. The constant pressure of marriage, archaic standards of skin color and beauty, emotional dependence on men, and traditional expectations of family responsibilities that persist in society make it clear that patriarchal values are equally active in a modern and globally connected environment.

Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitations, which characterize its literary and theoretical scope. First, this study is limited to a qualitative textual reading of Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* and the analysis of selected excerpts from the novel. There is no detailed or comparative discussion of this text with Chetan Bhagat's other novels or with the vast

range of contemporary Indian English fiction.

Second, another major limitation of this study is that it focuses exclusively on postfeminist interpretations. The use of other theoretical perspectives—such as psychoanalytic, sociological, Marxist, or intersectional feminist readings—in the analysis and evaluation of this novel is absent here. Applying those different perspectives could have revealed some new and deeper meanings of the novel that could not be fully explored in this study.

Future Research Directions

This area is very promising for future research and there are some excellent opportunities to expand its scope. First, future research could compare *One Indian Girl* with other contemporary Indian novels that feature highly educated and professionally successful women. Such comparative work would help to understand whether the contrasts and contradictions seen in Radhika's character are specific to Chetan Bhagat's novel, or part of a larger and more familiar pattern of Indian popular fiction as a whole.

Second, future research could explore in more depth how important issues such as social class, urban modernity, neoliberal culture, and intersectionality operate alongside postfeminist femininity. Above all, through a reader-response study, it is possible to explore how readers from different strata of society and different genres personally interpret and evaluate Radhika's so-called empowerment, her inner mental struggles, and emotional conflicts.

Conclusion

The novel *One Indian Girl* is a very powerful postfeminist work of literature, because it clearly shows that even in this modern era of women's higher education, self-employment and free movement in the global arena, patriarchy has not disappeared from society. Rather, it has become much more subtle, intensive and psychologically embedded in the depths of women's existence than before. Through the character of Radhika, Chetan Bhagat presents a modern woman who, although incredibly powerful in terms of the external world and career, is still equally disciplined in her internal psychology and society. She is subconsciously taught to adjust in the marriage market, she is negatively judged in the marriage market for earning too much, she is evaluated according to the old standards of appearance and skin color, she constantly suffers from gender-based self-doubt in the elite corporate workplace, she looks to men for her mental and emotional fulfillment like a chatak, and despite her sky-high professional ambitions, at the end of the day, society expects her to always be soft, maternal, and completely risk-free for men.

What makes this novel uniquely post-feminist is the strange and complex

coexistence of this visible empowerment of women and the invisible social constraints. Radhika, however, is not deprived of the privileges of this modern age; rather, she is burdened by the invisible expectations wrapped in this modernity. She is completely free to succeed, but she is not free from the eternal urge to make her success acceptable to the patriarchal society. And here Chetan Bhagat's presentation of femininity perfectly captures the central paradox of postfeminism: where a modern woman is constantly told that she is completely free and independent, while at the same time the invisible discipline is imposed on her that she must shape herself in the mold of external beauty, physical attractiveness, emotional tenderness, approval of the opposite sex and, above all, adapt to the family structure. As a result, *One Indian Girl* is not limited to just the story of the rise of a successful woman; rather, it emerges as a very subtle and realistic document of how contemporary patriarchy still survives very cleverly behind the chic language of women's personal choice, progress and self-management.

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