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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Investigating Gendered Binary Oppositions in Indian Society in the Novels of Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga through a Feminist and Comparative Approach

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This study aims to investigate the binary oppositions existing in the novels of Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga. As Hellen Cixous and Luce Irigaray, two French feminists argue, gender binaries are designed in a way that women are always placed at a lower position than men. Desai and Adiga's novels are chosen for this study because they are from a new generation of Indian writers and their booker prize winner novels suggest their popularity and prominence in Indian English literature. Choosing a male and female writer provides the opportunity to compare the works of authors of each sex as well. Finding the patriarchal binaries existing in the novels and highlighting the parts where these structures are broken by each writer based on Cixous's theory is the first step in analyzing the novels. Then comparing how the authors posited female characters in relation to the male ones is the second step taken in this analytical study. This study applies thematic analysis on two novels i.e. *The White Tiger* and *Selection Day* by Aravind Adiga and *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* by Kiran Desai. Based on the findings, Desai and Adiga both suggested the existing binaries; however, Desai did it with detailed depiction of characters and relations while Adiga had a more comprehensive way to show the issues related to women and were considered so peripheral that did not worth depicting.

**Keywords:** Gender Binaries; Desai; Adiga; Feminism; Cixous, Irigaray.

## Introduction

The situation of women in India has changed considerably in recent decades, yet they have many challenges to face with in the male-dominated society. The Hindu Code Bill has given the daughter and the son equal inheritance right (Chaudhary, 2016). According to 'the Marriage Act', women are not considered as the property of men any more. One of the advantages of enlightenment and modern thinking was giving importance to humans and centralizing them on the global stage. This led to human rights and anti-discrimination movements which emphasized equity among all sexes and genders of human beings around the world. The result

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of the struggles for equity also affected the perception of women of themselves and of their lives; moreover, the discrimination women face was highlighted. This was a dawn to the history of feminism around the world which continued for a long time. The main goal of feminists was to eliminate or moderate the previously created structure which affected them, mostly decreasing the quality of their lives and limiting their activities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century can be considered the time when feminism flourished, and in the course, many dimensions of it were analyzed and mingled with other theories.

In 2020, almost 48 percent of total 1.353 billion population of India were female (The World Bank, 2020). Having been nearly half the population, women have had important roles in the Indian society in both rural and urban regions throughout history. In the Vedic times, women were considered as important agents and had equal status with that of men. However, these roles changed over time and women were suppressed and turned into a subaltern group. During the colonial period, the British rule affected the perception toward women and some were provided with education and during the freedom struggle, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi defined them as important factors in the country's non-violent movements against colonizers (Chander, 2015).

On many occasions, Indian women's abilities have been proved to be, if not more, equal with men. In India, women are the core of the family and they are the main designers of the culture due to the impact they have on children and new generation. Therefore, for a society that is moving toward development, it is important to have empowered women, who can be consequently a factor to reckon with. At times, women have been the determinants of history and after independence played key roles at all levels. In politics, education, science, technology, arts, literature and agriculture and in paid and unpaid jobs, women have been of much efficiency and impact. This is very important to take into account that the identity of Indian woman, the norms regarding femininity and their rights affects their efficiency. If half a population is muted or suppressed, in fact, half the potential talents are killed and this is a hindrance to the development.

After independence, Indian women were empowered and educated enough to defend their rights. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian women needed a chance to be empowered in family levels as mothers, wives, sisters or daughters, and required a tool to get themselves free from limitations. On 18 December 1979, "the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981 following its ratification. By the tenth anniversary of the 1989 Convention, almost one hundred nations agreed to be bound by its provisions. India signed CEDAW on 30 July 1980" (Status of Treaties, 2020) and that can be considered as an official date for empowering women in India. Then, the question comes to the fore that how the situation of Indian women was after CEDAW.

With the aforementioned events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is expected that the culture and society have gone through much transformation. If what is being claimed regarding feminist

movements is true and the situation and position of women have changed considerably in recent decades, then two issues are hypothesized. The first is that the literature must have gone through much transformation parallel with the society and the second is that the writers must be too conscious about gender-related issues. In short, the way writers have depicted the issue suggests a change in the position of women compared to men. Therefore, the writers need to deconstruct patriarchal structures. In a country which is moving forward in the path of human rights and equity, the literature as one of the aspects of culture must have changed too. Therefore, the main aim here is to see if literature has reflected the consciousness of reforming the patriarchal traditions in India or not.

Literature is really effective in this case, since by means of literature, the tradition and false beliefs can change gradually and the possibilities can be demonstrated better. It is globally accepted that literature as a part of culture is both affected by and affecting the society. The social norms and events are reflected in literature and any changes in it can reflect in the society as well. Therefore, the need for analyzing the literary works focusing on feminism-related aspects and highlighting discourses which helped women gain power is of much importance. Throughout history, women were reflected as weak and passive beings in the dominating patriarchal literature and women did not have any voice. Major literary works around the world, including in India, empowered men and were created according to the desires of one gender. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the empowerment brought many women into the realm of literature and there came a new taste, in which, women were described differently. After passing through post-independence economic crises and through the 1990s, at last Indian women practically came into the fore in different aspects, becoming writers at par with men, consciously or unconsciously, depicting women as more active than before and to some extent gave them a voice.

Considering all the mentioned points, the need for feminist readings of different literary works is strongly felt. Many of the Indian and Indian English literary works have been read through the lenses of feminist theories. But, there is an absence of a comparative reading of Indian writers of both sexes focusing on gendered binary oppositions. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to compare the two contemporary Indian writers with the same age but from opposite sex. Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga are both Indians who experienced living and studying abroad, both won Booker Prize for their works. They are of significance in Indian literature since their works are in English which could have immense effect on the Indian culture. Therefore, two novels are chosen to be analyzed and compared.

### Literature Review

This study takes into account gender in four novels by Desai and Adiga. Previously, some research has been done regarding gender in the novels and they have been useful and informative for this research. A master dissertation entitled “Race, Gender and Class in *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Brick Lane*: A Comparative Study”, Sissel Marie Lone (2008) compares

race, gender and class through the lens of migration and multiculturalism in a postcolonial setting. It discusses discrimination, oppression and the reason why some people are discriminated against, and how literature represents this discrimination. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in the novels is discovered too. The main focus of the study is on discrimination but the sources which legitimize discrimination are not found (Lone, 2008).

While feminism is mainly related to sex and gender, the relationship between queer theory and gender theory connects these two topics. “Queer Transgressions: Same-Sex Desire and Transgendered Representation in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*” by Fernando Sánchez (2012) sees Adiga’s novel from the perspective of the queer theory. Adiga rarely focuses on the role of women in his novels which largely depict neoliberal India. Sánchez (2012) believes, “femaleness and femininity seem to function only as a mechanism for eliding intimate same-sex moments and making heteronormativity an acceptable option—or imposing it on the text as the only acceptable option.” When the *The White Tiger* starts, Balram is in the position of a person who listens to other characters’ conversations and has a passive role while at the end of it he occupies a speaker position and plays an active role. Like his taking these two spaces of listener and speaker, passive/active, Adiga’s novel provides much opportunity for investigating presence along gender and sex lines. Same-sex spaces, Sánchez suggests, can be analyzed as situations including “queer desire and hidden transgression”. Authorized heterosexual norms can be linked to the historical forcing of heteronormative behaviors. Feminization and Americanization cooperate to signal that weakness is different from the neoliberal India. While referring to gender, this paper mostly focuses on homosocial spaces in Adiga’s novel and there lacks direct discussions on gender and femininity (Sánchez, 2012).

Another comparative study of the two said writers is, “Self and Culture in the Select Fiction” of Aravind Adiga and Kiran Desai (Manohar, 2020). This book aims at bringing out the depiction of self and culture while carrying out a comparative cultural study of their fiction. This book is an analysis of *The White Tiger* and *Last Man in Tower* and a collection of stories “Between the Assassinations” by Aravind Adiga and two novels by Kiran Desai, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. These writers have accurately brought in details about the composition of self by uncovering the social, political, financial, psychological, historical and cultural forces which affect it. The book focuses on the major characters in the select fiction of Adiga and Desai, and gives a comprehensive study of their personae. Indeed, the character analysis was of use for the studies like the present one. The other side of the book is comparative culture study, represented by an analysis of cultural components. While the work is a comparative and it is really of use for learning about characters and culture, there still exists a lack of focus on women and gender as the objects of study (Manohar, 2020).

Another study also focused on Indian booker prize winning authors approaching the issue with postcolonial theories. *The Subalterns Can Speak: A Study of the Protagonists in Booker Prize Winning Novels of Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga*. Subalternity is a work

in which literature is seen as a medium to highlight the sufferings of the subalterns (Nagannawar & Naik, 2018). While this work could be considered as a suitable source of knowledge about Desai and Adiga, this does not consider gender and it merely focuses on the Indian society as a colonized one.

While Desai and Adiga and their works have been the subject of studies for many literary critiques, no comparative study with an insight into gendered binaries in their works has been done. Therefore, this paper could fill the gap in the literature for its analysis of their works through feminist and comparative lenses.

### **Theoretical Framework: Gender and Gendered Binary Oppositions**

Under the title feminism, there exist several theories focusing on different issues related to women. Therefore, it is important to determine from which point(s) of view the previously introduced novels are going to be approached and analyzed. With this purpose, two theories are utilized that are the gender theory of Judith Butler and the post-structural feminist theory of the French feminists, specifically on gendered binaries. The most crucial keyword of this paper is gender, the core around which, the theoretical framework of this research is gathered. Patriarchal binary oppositions, as a term used by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir, is the other concept which is going to be focused. It is important to mention that the concept is significant as it can provide the feminists with a platform for analyzing discourses

### **Gender**

Most feminists used gender as a term identical with women, sexual difference, or sex roles until the late 1980s. But this descriptive role of the term 'gender' changed in previous decades and it became "more as a complex category of analysis". Within feminist theory, gender is now commonly defined as what Joan Scott calls, a word that "offers a way of differentiating sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men". (Scott, 1986) However, gender is more than a single piece of empirical data whereby we distinguish between people on the basis of their sex. As Teresa de Lauretis writes, gender is "the product and the process of a number of social technologies" by which men and women can differentiate them as gendered beings rather than human beings. This has moved gender to the realm of culture and considered as a socially constructed and historically object of study. In feminist theory, gender is of much importance since people must know their position in the sex/gender system in order to change it. The process through which gendered identities are created and the way discourses and disciplines inscribe gender must be discovered. (Kowaleski-Wallace, 2009)

### **Gendered Binaries**

Gendered binary oppositions are considered and defined in different ways by the three waves of feminism. The first wave included a tendency towards sociological issues while examining the binaries. The second wave took into account the language and biological differences existing in men and women. And the third wave had the view that gendered language and



ideological constructions make the binaries and need to be reformulated. The point which is noteworthy is that the gendered binaries are questioned by the three waves of feminism, however, there is a lack of agreement among them in terms of interpretation of the power dynamics existing in the oppositions (Napier, 2006).

Simone de Beauvoir further discusses the “otherness” of women in society and sees them as a result of the power created by the society. She believes, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir, 1953). She asserts that gender roles are, in fact, sociological obligations. Beauvoir continues with the claim that civilization is responsible in creation of the feminine creature while biology or innate psychology do not necessarily affect it. In her opinion, women learn femininity and are made to adopt it while not having it as a biological imprint. But one cannot think of Beauvoir holding a belief that gender is merely performance. According to her, men and women are different in terms of biology. However, she is against relating gender to sex and using differences as a basis over which sex-oriented superiority is legitimized. She uses the similar behavior of kids as a proof of this point. Children of male and female sexes usually start to differ from their puberty. Girls start to adopt a passive position and lose their self-confidence and Beauvoir believes it to be the result of the social context which links femininity to passivity. Gender binaries are illogical structures by which men are set over an invisible other.

Luce Irigaray, as a second wave feminist, does have a totally different point of view about the idea of gender binaries. She focuses on woman’s language as the core theme of her theory and believes that gender binaries highlight the real differences between men and women. Her idea that biological gender differences result in what might be considered binary opposition between the sexes attacks some feminists as implicit agreement with patriarchal norms. Actually, Irigaray to some extent tries to reverse the power forces which de Beauvoir considered imbedded in the binary opposition. Irigaray is conscious that concepts related to femininity have all through history been defined according to patriarchal views. But she sticks to the idea that sexuality has an important role. Female sexuality is influential since it is a source of joy and pleasure that man can never experience. According to her, gender binaries are facts of human life. She reverses power dynamics aiming at privileging women’s side of the binary.

Irigaray sees gender binary as a result of a lack in males rather than their power. She sees “male brutality” as an outcome of the jealousy men feel toward women for their ability to get pregnant. Moreover, their ability to nurture a fetus makes them a more emotional and artistic life.

Their biology provides women with autoeroticism in a way that they have “sexual” organs all over their body. This concentration on female bodies is apt to be negatively labeled as “gender essentialism.” In this second-wave conception, binary oppositions constitute an unusual type of female privileging (Irigaray, 1981).

All the novels under this study have been written after 1990s and they are supposed to reflect a transformation in the way men and women are placed in relation to each other. Cixous, following the deconstruction theory of Derrida, introduced the term phallogocentrism for the act of privileging man over woman in society. On the other hand, Cixous’ theory of *Écriture*

Feminine discusses the need for women to write themselves as they are not as the patriarchal society expects them to be. Therefore, this chapter is an analysis and comparison of gender hierarchies existing in Kiran Desai and Aavind Adiga's novels. Moreover, this paper is a discussion of the way Desai is different from Adiga, in positioning male and female characters, the way gender binaries are reversed, the changes in Desai and Adiga's depiction of gender through time and the way identity is affected by the sex.

### Research Methodology

As mentioned before, the purpose of this paper is to have a review of four novels by two Indians from the new generation of writers in English and their works were published after 1991 reforms in the country. Therefore, this research is a case study of the novels through an in-depth analysis of the text and characters to find reflections of the Indian culture which affect the situation of women in India. This is a type of qualitative and comparative research and because of scrutinizing the text and analyzing the structure of the writings, it is a thematic analysis, in which, the main themes are analyzed in the said novels. In other words, the novels are analyzed by highlighting the writing style and the extent to which femininity exists in relation to masculinity and the effect of patriarchy or elimination of it in the novels' structure. The characters and features attributed to them are examined, as well. Male and female characters, their roles, features and position in society are compared and contrasted. The gender-related binary oppositions and gender stereotypes and the deconstruction of these structures, if there is any, will be highlighted and compared too.

Novelists, Adiga and Desai, are booker prize winners and are of the same generation. They are both educated in developed countries but raised in India, and therefore, are being familiar and in contact with India. Desai's novels are *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and Adiga's novels are *The White Tiger* and *Selection Day*.

### Case Studies

#### The Inheritance of Loss

The novel depicts the Indian background in the mid-1980s and focuses on a Cambridge-educated Indian judge, Jemubhai, who is spending his retirement in Kalimpong, near the Himalayas, with his granddaughter, Sai, his cook and dog Mutt. The story of the son of judge's cook who is an illegal and undocumented immigrant in the United States is another character of the novel. The novel shows the internal conflicts in India between groups, Nepalese insurgents and a conflict between the past and the present. Jemubhai is highly disgusted by Indian ways and customs. He hates all Indians, including his father whom he has broken ties with and wife who he abandons after torturing (The Inheritance of Loss, Desai, 2007).

#### Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard

This novel is about a young Indian man, Sampath Chawla, who abandons an easy post office job and begins living in a guava tree that he climbs in the search of peaceful contemplation. He becomes unexpectedly famous as a holy man and makes oracular pronouncements to locals. He

knows of their lives by going through their mail and not being aware of it, still people hail him as a prophet. After years of failure in different livelihood aspects, Sampath's life changes exactly what his grandmother had predicted. "But the world is round," says his grandmother. "Wait and see! Even if it appears he is going downhill, he will come up on the other side. Yes, on top of the world. He is just taking the longer route." His father attempts to turn the orchard into a highly profitable carnival scene; and an overzealous spy determines to get to the bottom of it all and, to his bewilderment, achieves this goal. All the characters are affected as the things go increasingly out of control (Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard, Desai, 1998).

### **The White Tiger**

In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai, the protagonist, writes a series of unsent letters to Chinese premier Wen Jiabao. Balram writes his life story to show him the truth about India because he thinks of all himself. As the son of a rickshaw-puller, Balram was from a poor background. He leaves his hometown to work in New Delhi as a servant and driver for Mr. Ashok and his family including his wife Pinky Madam, his brother Mongoose, and his father Stork. Balram says how he tried to win Ashok's approval and affection. In Delhi, Balram sees the extensive corruption, especially in the government. He sees the gap between the poor and the rich and also between himself and Ashok. Ultimately, he takes advantage of Ashok's weakness as a master. He concludes that killing Ashok is the only way for escaping the system of the oppression of India's poor. Balram usurps Ashok's wealth and identity. He escapes a life of servitude to become a successful businessman and considers himself as an entrepreneur (The White Tiger, Adiga, 2008).

### **The Selection Day**

This is a story narrated by a boy, Manju, who is a cricket player living with his family in Mumbai. Manju and his brother, Radha, are both encouraged and even forced by their father, Mohan, to play cricket. Mohan prays that his sons become the best cricketers of all times. The boys excel and are accepted to study in Ali Weinberg International School to play in the school's cricket team. Meanwhile a rich man offers to support Radha and Manju financially in exchange for having a share of their future earnings. Mohan accepts and their life changes. In *the Selection Day* Manju performs wonderfully and Radha, enraged by his not being as good as Manju, performs awfully. Radha attacks a player and runs away and Manju stays and continues playing cricket while not being interested in it at all. Javed, a cricket player suggests Manju to pursue his goals instead of his father's. But he continues to play cricket. The story includes Manju and Javed's interest for each other and the way they chose their careers (The Selection Day, Adiga, 2016).



## Findings

Gender, according to what Butler and other feminist theorists define, is a product of society, and the baby is not born with it. Gender hierarchies are structures which define the position of men and women according to their sex and mostly privileges men over women. Reading the novel through the lenses of gender theory and considering the gender binaries and hierarchies affecting the way male and female characters are defined by Adiga and Desai clearly reflects how they are reflected in the Indian society. This section firstly includes an analysis of the way gender is attributed to the characters in the novels and in the second section gender hierarchies are discovered and discussed thoroughly.

### Gender: Standing at Two Opposite Poles

Adiga's protagonists are male characters with lots of flaws whose main aim is to be a man. In both novels being a man is the main goal of the main characters and the way he depicts women is a reflection of marginality of women in Indian society and culture. In fact, women do not exist as social agents in Adiga's novels. Life is about men in Adiga's fictional world. Their goals, their games, their ambitions and their expectations is what Adiga's novels are about. On the other hand, women are objects of pleasure or causes of misery who are not elaborated as much as men.

In *The White Tiger*, Balram struggles his whole life to become a man which seems to be the ultimate goal of his life. All his efforts, for being rich, for having power, for moving out of his humiliating situation was due to his dream of becoming a man, a privilege one, which is considered a positive point in India. Both Manju and Balram need to prove themselves as real men by gaining a real status. In *the Selection Day* Manju is an instance of senses and sensitivity. He is different, his sense of smell in childhood is not ordinary and he lives under the shadow of his older brother. Balram also is a lonely boy fearing lizards, a characteristic of women. He is passive and womanized at Ashok's home. Despising his roles, which are commonly associated with women duties, and feeling humiliated because of that he wishes to move up to an active position which is related to men and traditionally seen as higher.

Desai, on the other hand, creates a world in which Indian women have active roles. They live, love and dare. There are also women who are passive but the way Desai depicts them also reflects her criticism of the situation of women. Actually, there are parts, in which, Desai reflects the patriarchal perception of women in her novels. Although the main characters of her novels are defined as slightly powerful women, there are many female characters suggesting the patriarchal view and the way their sex affects the expectations they encounter with. This may be due to the fact that novels are reflections of reality; no matter how norm-breaker a novelist is, there are cases in which the characters need to be defined according to the prevailing gender constructions.

Overall, there are two types of male characters in novels. Those who are educated, powerful and of mainly features and others who serve the powerful men. The point which must be

emphasized is that men who are assigned with subordinate jobs or have jobs containing activities which are stereotypical and attached to femininity are weak and have some female characteristics. They are obedient. Balram in front of Ashok or his masters is fearful and dependent, like the driver in *The White Tiger* or the cook in *The Inheritance of Loss*.

### Gender Binaries and Hierarchies

One question which is emphasized by Cixous is “where is the woman”. She believes that language can be used for discovering the role of patriarchal binary thought. By examining the binaries which have been defined based on patriarchal norms, the position of women could be discovered. Also reversal of the binaries is a step towards emancipation of women from the patriarchal norms and hierarchies.

Desai perfectly reverses the binaries in her novels. Pinky who is proved to be able to take care of herself and is more independent than her brother is worried about being attacked by a monkey when she goes to the town. When her grandmother says that Sampath can take care of her, Pinky rejects this saying that he will be the reason she is attacked. “‘Why don’t you take Sampath with you?’ ... ‘He can protect you.’ ‘Sampath!’ tells Pinky. ‘What good will Sampath be! The monkey will probably choose me as the best person to target if Sampath is with me’ (Desai, *Hullabaloo in the guava orchard*, 1998: 21). The traditional role of man is changed here and his protective and high position is denied. The binary, in which, man stands at the position of strength and woman is at the side of weakness is reversed. “Gender is the mechanism, by which, notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized” (Butler, 2004:42).

Pinky attacks the Hungry Hop ice-cream boy too. And this again is another reversal of patriarchal binaries. She, who is supposed to be passive and silent, is the agent of an action of harming him who is supposed to be active. “Since when do ladies in the town bite gentlemen?” the policeman asked of Pinky, fierce and seemingly unrepentant, smoldering upon a bench back at the police station. ‘You will end up in the mental home if you persist in demonstrating that that is where you belong’ (Desai, *Hullabaloo in the guava orchard*, 1998:96).

There are parts in Desai’s novels where binaries still exist. Gyan feels miserable while thinking about his family and one of its reasons is his mother’s lack of ability in decision making and management. “He hated his tragic father, his mother who looked to him for direction, had always looked to him for direction, even when he was a little boy, simply for being male” (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007: 282). This perfectly shows how a woman believes that she is in a lower level of logic and intelligence that she does not dare manage the life without a man’s direction. This is also a reflection of the mind/body patriarchal binary by which men are the ones who can think and decide.

How is a woman without her husband? The answer is given by Desai, “She had fallen out of life altogether” Nimi is nobody when Jemubhai is not at home. This is what remains of a woman

in absence of her husband; an inferior creature not deserving respect and attention. Sati is claimed to be abolished but an exact look into the lives of women shows that although they do not die without their husband, they do not live a real life in his absence. Nimi's life in Jemubhai's absence is described as follows, "Weeks went by and she spoke to nobody, the servants thumped their own leftovers on the table for her to eat, stole the supplies without fear, allowed the house to grow filthy without guilt until the day before Jemubhai's arrival..." It does not mean that life is better for her when Jemubhai is present. Since, Jemubhai himself does not care about her at all. She just enjoys the respect people show her husband, not her. Here there is a patriarchal binary in which a man is privileged over his wife and the worst is that the wife does not question anybody. Even the behavior of the servants has an inherent binary. Two types of behavior for when the master is a woman and when the master is a man, "...suddenly it was brought to luster again, the clock set to a timetable, water to a twenty-minute boil, fruit soaked for the prescribed number of minutes in solutions of potassium" (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007:186),

Desai simply shows the marginal position of women in Indian society in the relationships in her novels. Sai realized "that, for him, she was not the center of romance. She had been mistaken—she was only the center to herself, as always, and a small player playing her part in someone else's story" (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007:189). Sai's difference with her grandmother, Noni, is in her sense of dignity and self-esteem. A devastating moment in her love relationship is when she realizes that she is just in the margin not the center of Gyan's life. However, the part which the woman is a small player in man's life is common in both. This suggests the continuity of ignorance and patriarchal hierarchies, even in new generations, prevalent in Indian culture.

Sai and her grandmother, Nimi, have similar stories although their personalities and the context in which they live is different. Being objects of desire for men who both think of these women as inferior, they experience a common situation. Gyan is in a lower social position than Sai. When he falls in love with her he does really appreciate her but after a while he gets critical of everything related to her. While thinking of himself he reminds himself of his male superiority over Sai. He hates his being lectured by Sai.

...Who was she to lecture him? 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army.' He was a martyr, a man; a man, in fact, of ambition, principle. 'I don't have to listen to this,' he said jumping up and storming off abruptly just as she was in powerful flow. And Sai had cried, for it was the unjust truth (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007: 270).

The emphasis on the man as an important agent and as a person of higher worth in the hierarchical structure reflects the way women are considered inferior. In fact, the goals and ambitions of men are also considered of higher value in the Indian society. However, women are considered as subjects with no real objectives. One reason Gyan leaves Sai is that he could not stand the reversed relation between them. He felt that Sai was in position of power over him. That is why he decides to insult her.

Sai is different from her grandmother in her sense of self-esteem. She does not accept her being humiliated by Gyan and decides to stop her efforts for having him back. One day she thinks of all the common reactions an Indian boy's family show to his insulting behavior towards a girl and she finds how this is seen a positive point for him. This is a kind of victory when a boy humiliates a girl and proves to be more powerful than her. This is when Sai proves to be the symbol of the modern Indian girl who is learning to reverse the patriarchal binaries in which women are always in need and men are in power. "Sai began to follow brother and sister but then stopped. Shame caught up with her. What had she done? It would be her they would laugh at, a desperate girl who had walked all this way for unrequited love." She takes a logical look at her situation. Here, she is a free woman. Sai does not want to give him the opportunity of taking himself in a higher position in the man/woman hierarchy. She wants to demolish whatever will make him feel proud of himself.

He had hit on the age-old trick that remade him into a hero, "the desired male" .... The more he insulted her behind her back- "Oh, that crazy girl is following me..."—the more the men would cheer, the more his status would grow at Thapa's Canteen, the more Sai would be remade behind her back into a lunatic female, the more Gyan would fatten with pride.... (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007: 287).

Nimi is a typical Indian woman from the times when women were supposed to be silent and passive. They were not supposed to show any resistance or have a voice. Here again Desai is showing how Nimi's harsh situation is to some extent due to her own passivity. She is not the type of daring and active woman and she did not have a voice of her own. Only accepting her destiny and not trying to change anything.

For the first time he hit her, although he had wanted to before and fought the urge for some time. He emptied his glass on her head, sent a jug of water swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful, filled her ears with leaping soda water. Then, when this wasn't enough to assuage his rage, he hammered down with his fists, raising his arms to bring them down on her again and again, rhythmically, until his own hands were exhausted and his shoulders next day were strained sore as if from chopping wood. He even limped a bit, his leg hurting from kicking her" (Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2007: 327).

Jemubhai throws his wife down at the bottom of the gender hierarchies and dehumanizes her totally. He hits her hard and shows a huge amount of hostility and rage towards her. Actually he hates her because she is conforming to what in India is acceptable and she does not have the power and courage to reverse it. She is not like the queen whose photo was at his school, simple and powerful.

In the Indian culture, having a daughter in some families is regarded as having a trouble. Finding a good husband giving huge amounts of dowry and being careful about her dignity are the consequences. It has always made girls less worthy than boys. "It was always useful to have a large family, even if it was mostly girls ..." (Desai, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, 1998: 125).

## Discussion and Conclusion

This paper had the aim of studying Aravind Adiga's novels, *The White Tiger* and *Selection Day*, and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* based on

Judith Butlers gender performativity theory along with French Feminists' theories related to patriarchal gender hierarchies. Since India is a developing country which is believed to have been through many improvements regarding women rights throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was expected that the changes claimed to have occurred in the society have been reflected in literature too. Moreover, culture affects society, and examining the extent to which literature, as a part of culture, is free from bias regarding gender and sex is helpful in developing process of the society. Therefore, four novels of two Indian writers were chosen and they were thematically analyzed according to the theories of gender and gender binaries and hierarchies.

Thematic analysis confirms the salient features of patriarchal ideology being reproduced through the textbooks. Although there are instances of transformation in the way women are depicted by the authors and in some main characters, mostly by Desai, the women are depicted as breaking the norms and reversing the binaries. The selected novels portray women as secondary citizens in the society – those who are inferior to men and cannot access the public sphere or do anything, independent of male supervision. It can be argued that patriarchy prevails through the textbooks as women's familial roles are mostly depicted as engaged in household tasks and performing their assigned roles.

Desai's novels, *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, are stories in which characters of both sexes are portrayed and the lives of them, no matter what their sex is, are depicted. On the other hand, Adiga's main characters are male and he does not deal with female characters as much as the male ones. Gender stereotypes, roles and norms were analyzed by dividing them into three groups; those related to appearance, those related to acts and those of thoughts.

Analyzing the novels suggested that there are many gender oriented expectations of men and women in India and some are suggested in Desai and Adiga's novels. Men are expected to be strong and firm. They should not care about the beauty of their face. Delicacy, beauty and ornaments are not accepted for men. On the other hand, women are considered to be of high feminine value if they have long silky hair or white skin color with lots of jewelry and colorful dresses. Whenever a man or a woman's appearance is not in accordance with the norms he/she is predicted to be excluded from society or doomed to loneliness.

It was also found that whenever a man is not doing a physical activity properly, he is defined as a man who is acting like a girl. even women humiliate men if they are not what Indian patriarchal system expects. Taking care of others, paying attention to their food, health and well-being is what generally known as female activities. There is a general view of the activities of Indian women who live in villages. This is all about house chores and futile deeds. About insane fighting and immediately forgetting. The freedom given to men and the limitations regarding the women behavior is obvious in the novels. Pinky is a deviation from gender norms in India. She could be seen as an example of Indian new woman who does not act according to traditional norms. She is not passive. She is active and courageous.

Thinking of women as non-stable and moody is another prevalent attitude in the Indian culture. This idea is rooted in the patriarchal belief that in the binary of logic/emotion women are stand at the emotion side and are not able to be stable. Not being sociable and lacking the courage to visit people is attributed to girls in Mohan Kumar's mind. Living in peace and comfort is not considered a proper way for an adult man there. On the other hand, ladylike comfort shows the stereotypical view of the way women live.

Seeing women as property, objects and options is another patriarchal point of view in India's society. A woman is an object to be compared with other objects too. It does not matter who she is and what she has inside her mind. When women are being depicted in literature the male gaze is present on various occasions. In fact, the way women are being depicted in literary works is as if a man is talking about them, even if the writer is a woman. Men are wild, stereotypically of course, and their driving must suit their nature. This shows the root of some wrong Indian habits is gender stereotyping. People depending on their sex are expected to have certain behaviors and it is so believed that if some do not have those behaviors are stereotypical thoughts regarding people of each sex do exist in the novels both in narration and in stream of consciousness.

Adiga's novels are different from the real world, not including women as much as men. Female characters are just to decorate the story. Women are like some ornaments or decorations that are used for filling the gaps with objects which are appealing to the male gaze. There are female characters in his novels. Balram's grandmother and Pinky Madam are two characters in *The White Tiger* which are of much appearance. In *the Selection Day*, Sofia and Manju's Mother are the key characters. However, their presence does not matter in the stories.

It must be noted that while Adiga's female characters are so rare and are of little importance in the course of the story, there are instances of deconstruction of accepted gender stereotypes. For example, Kusum, Balram's grandmother in *The White Tiger* is the head of a family and all men and women obey her. Misrepresentation of gender and underrepresentation of women is what makes him incomparable in terms of gender binaries with Desai because the women are absent in a large part of his novels. Actually, the representation of men and women in Adiga's books is strongly unequal.

The way men and women are presented by Desai and Adiga and the patriarchal binaries, kept or reversed, were both similar and different. Three points must be mentioned according to the analysis. First, Desai and Adiga both suggested the existing binaries however Desai did it by detailed depiction of characters and relations while Adiga had a more comprehensive way in which women as a group were the 'Other' in his stories and the issues related to them was considered so peripheral that did not worth depiction. Actually, men are given primacy in his novels in a way that the earth rotates for the sake of men and real life is the life of men in which women are some objects.



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### چکیده

مقاله حاضر به بررسی تقابل‌های دوتایی جنسیتی موجود در رمان‌های کیران دسای و آراویند آدیگا می‌پردازد. طبق نظر دو فمینیست فرانسوی، هلن سیکسو و لوس ایریگاری، دوگانه‌های جنسیتی به گونه‌ای طراحی شده‌اند که زنان همیشه در جایگاه پایین‌تری نسبت به مردان قرار می‌گیرند. رمان‌های دسای و آدیگا به این دلیل برای این مقاله انتخاب شده‌اند که از میان نسل جدیدی از نویسندگان هندی هستند و جوایز تعلق گرفته به آنها محبوبیت و اهمیت آن‌ها را در ادبیات انگلیسی نشان می‌دهد. همچنین انتخاب یک نویسنده زن و یک مرد فرصت مناسبی را برای بررسی کار نویسندگانی از هر دو جنسیت فراهم می‌کند. یافتن دوتایی‌های مردسالارانه موجود در رمان‌های انتخاب شده و همچنین برجسته کردن نحوه شکسته شدن این ساختارها توسط هر نویسنده بر اساس آنچه سیکسو توصیف کرده است، اولین گام تحلیل در این مقاله است. سپس مقایسه روشی که نویسندگان برای تحلیل شخصیت‌های زن در رابطه با شخصیت‌های مرد به کار برده‌اند دومین گام تحلیلی این مقاله است. تحلیل رمان‌های دسای و آدیگا نشان می‌دهد که هر دو نویسنده تقابل‌های جنسیتی موجود را نشان می‌دهند، اما هریک شیوه متفاوتی در انجام این کار دارند. در حالی که کیران دسای این کار را با ترسیم دقیق شخصیت‌ها و روابط انجام می‌دهد، آراویند آدیگا روش جامع‌تری را به کار می‌گیرد که در آن زنان به عنوان "دیگری" ترسیم می‌شوند و مسائل مربوط به آن‌ها آنقدر حاشیه‌ای قلمداد می‌شوند که حتی ارزش به تصویر کشیدن را هم ندارند.

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