



The twilight of devas: New India as a gendered myth in Indian writing in English after 2000

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The aim of this talk is to discuss how masculinities represented in Aravind Adiga's *Last man in tower* (2011) can be read as embodiments of national myths of India. In my analysis, I foreground the notions of embodiment and myth, arguing for their redefinition specifically in the context of post-millennial Indian Writing in English and its critique of socio-political changes in contemporary India. When seen in their broadest meaning, that is, as religious and cultural narratives and political ideologies, myths in Adiga's novel are more than personified. They are embodied. Through the gendered corporeality of male characters, the myths of India acquire a physical form, in which they can be both constructed and deconstructed, venerated and extirpated, as well as confronted with each other. As such, Adiga translates the transition of India from its postcolonial age to its contemporary state – New India. In the 1990s, India underwent economic liberalization, which has resulted in significant changes in the sense, or rather the projection, of Indian identity and has led to socio-political shifts, which can be roughly categorized as: transformation from a socialist to a neoliberal capitalist economy, transition from a secular to a Hindu nationalist state and finally, internationalization of India's economy and culture. This process has also had its effect on which models of masculinity are seen as the hegemonic ones in India today. Leaving behind the Gandhian-Nehruvian masculinity ideals of non-violence and ascetism, India's gender discourse has recently been gravitating towards more virile standards of masculinity as a consequence of stronger Hindu nationalist influences and the growing popularity of gangster films. All of these contextual changes in India and the evolution of masculinity models from postcolonial to New Indian ones will be first outlined and then applied to a critical reading of the novel.