

THE PORTRAYAL OF CULTURE, SOCIETY AND THE REGION AS DISPLAYED IN THE WORKS OF MAMANG DAI

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Abstract

This paper deals with the elements like Culture, Society, and the region that have their roles to play in the works of Mamang Dai. She has written alluring novels, non-fictional works and many poems by which she has complimented the place and people and shows her gratitude towards them. There cannot be a novel without society and Dai has proved that as well by her portrayal of characters, especially that of the female characters. In this paper we are discussing her famous works like 'Stupid Cupid', 'The Black Hill', 'The Legends of Pensam' and her collection of poems in order to get the idea of the main themes that she has used in them along with the portrayal of nature and landscape which are the part and parcel of her works. Although her works are based on the northern-east region they are having the universal appeal and that is the reason why they are quite famous among the local as well as the international readers. Let us try to get the complete idea of them in the following discussion.

Keywords: Culture, Society, Landscape, Women, Nature, Region-Arunachal Pradesh, Tradition.

Mamang Dai is one of the greatest writers of India who belongs to Arunachal Pradesh, an aesthetic region of which she has talked so much about in her works especially its culture, people, atmosphere, landscape, the society, the custom and tradition in most of her works. She has written a variety of works like 'Stupid Cupid', 'The Black Hill', 'The Legends of Pensam' and so many other collection s of poetry. She has often been remembered for what she has written on the native land and how she has presented the people and the culture of that particular area as to show the reality of that region with a blend of beauty and misery that we find in other writers works as well but the treatment of Mamang Dai to her characters are much more different than that of the other writers and perhaps that is the major reason why she has become so popular and respected in the northern east region.

'The Black Hill' is one of the finest novels written by Dai as it deals with the north-east region of the 19th century where the East India company is trying to get its hold in this particular region but the local people of the two major tribes the Abor and Mishmee are not happy with their arrival as they feel that they would and force the slavery upon them just like other countries and therefore they are trying their best to keep this East India Company out from that particular area. Moreover, this novel is also famous for its women character especially of Gimur who runs away with cousins are from the Mishmee tribe in order to get settled near the Tibetan border. The society and the culture are exposed in its greatest form which is the USP of Mamang Dai and this aspect is very much evident in this particular novel as well. The character of Gimur is one of the most important characters that we can come across in the novel as the novelist presents it by saying, Gimur did everything that young girls in the village were expected to do, in fact she was better than most at household chores; but as her mother always said she was uncontrollable and daring, more like a boy, whistling and climbing trees and getting into scrapes. (The Black Hill, P.2)

The novel narrates the history from the different perspective as she has discussed the elements of colonialism and the love-affair simultaneously along with the social pressures and the free-spirited girl etc in one narrative which is certainly an outstanding achievement as a novelist.

Another novel of Dai entitled 'The Legends of Pensam' where Mamang Dai has talked about the beauty of Arunachal Pradesh and the tradition, customs and the way of living of people of different tribes that she has experienced personally. This particular novel is famous for how she has displayed the re-establishment of the bond between the nature and the man as these tribal people consider it the major part of their lives because it bring them their real identity. In the modern world which is full of globalization and reconstruction. The novel works as a kind of eco-criticism and the portrayal of the Adis life where the society and nature are not spoiled. There is a strong criticism by Dai as far as the modern way of life is concerned because it spoils the nature and its beauty. The region is known for its beauty but it is degrading gradually on which Dai has focused in this novel. However, it is a wonderful novel that talks about such environmental issues along with the age-old issues like society and people but at the same time it raises the concern of the people to save nature. The 'Time Out Mumbai' has praised the novel in its comment,

An affecting work that intertwines myth, history and memoir to record the life stories of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh...Dai's sensitive, layered narration records the myriad details of life in this rain-drenched terrain...'The Legends of Pensam' is not only the story of a people but of their natural world, the world that share ('Time Out Mumbai', 2009)

Thus, this novel is also one of the greatest novels written by Dai as it has almost everything. The readers can certainly enjoy it if they have the sense of beauty and history.

Mamang Dai's novel 'Stupid Cupid' is the famous novel concerning the women characters that she has certainly portrayed through her experiences and the society around her. Most of the women characters that she has portrayed are from the tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and Dai has presented them with contrasting images. The other type of women characters is the migrants who are totally different from these tribal women. This particular novel provides us an excellent example of the north-east women and their experiences, their aspirations and their troubles. The women from the village want to go to the city but when they reach out the reality is shocking and they certainly regret their decisions. Adna, when she comes across such problem, says, Those were happy days. Everything was new and young, and every moment felt like a new beginning. In the mid-eighties if anyone had asked us who we were and what we were doing in Delhi, my friends would have shouted back: We are here because we want to be here. We like it here and that's it.(13)

The struggle of the tribal people in the place where they never belong is constantly seen by us as they find themselves in the situation which is intolerable for them. Most of these characters are facing the different kinds of oppression all through the novel where they go through a lot in order to get what they aspire but to achieve that they have to face hardships and destitution. The society is never kind to them and thus they have to face it as well.

Mamang Dai's poems are really amazing as they are surrounded around the beautiful mountains and show the mystique beauty and the Grandeur of the region. The nature has its appearance every now and then in these poems. She has returned amazing collections of poetries like 'Midsummer: Survival Lyrics', 'The Balm of Time', 'The River Poems' and so many others. These poems hi the poignant account of the lives of the people and then nature that at beauty with their lives. The inseparable connection of the man and the nature has been the wonderful aspect that we can notice in these poems. However, the mountain is one of the important objects on which Mamang Dai has worked in these poems as it is the symbol of the interaction that we can find between the society and the nature. Her 'River Poems' are praised a lot by many scholars and the agencies. E.V Ramakrishnan and Anju Makhija in 'We Speak in Changing Voice: Indian Women Poets' (1990-2007) praises the poems by saying,

In Mamang Dai's poetry one is always aware of several narratives of community, those of myths, memory, ritual and shared beliefs, informing the imaginative space of poetry (E.V Ramakrishnan and Anju Makhija, 12)

Thus, in conclusion we may say that the works of Mamang Dai are special in terms of the treatment that she has given to each and every element whether it is culture, society of region. The characters are also breathtaking as they display the local flavour, the struggle, the dilemma and the spirit, which is the speciality of people of Arunachal Pradesh. The nature and people's bond with it is evident as well. So we have almost everything in these works and therefore the novelist and the works are really exceptional.

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