

The Portraiture of Ecological Consciousness and Ecological Empathy in *The legends Of Pensam* and *Escaping the Land* – A Voice of Mamang Dai

¹Dr. M Muthu Deepa, ²Dr. S Deepalakshmi, ³Dr E Elamathiyan

¹Asst Prof/Dept of Career Guidance Cell, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRMIST, Kattangulathur, Chengalpattu

²Asst Prof/ Dept of Career Guidance, SRMIST, Kattangulathur, Chengalpattu

³Assistant Professor/ Dept of Career Guidance, SRMIST, FSH, Kattangulathur

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1304000098>

Received: 31 March 2026; Accepted: 11 April 2026; Published: 04 May 2026

ABSTRACT

Literature is a world where readers can receive different kinds of experiences and perspectives and it always connects the nature with all living beings. Without the songs of nature, literature cannot exist. A vital tool which cannot be separated from the life of human beings is literature. Mamang Dai, a celebrated poet, novelist and journalist from Arunachala Pradesh portrays her views as “Is the Earth growing old” in her poem *Hello Mountain*. Her birth in Adi Community supplies the ideas for her writings. Her writings are rich in depicting the ecological consciousness and advocating the readers in preserving the nature. She always finds a way to create awareness among the readers through her pen. Mamang Dai could not digest the exploitation of world in the name of civilization and modernization. She has a special vision in viewing the interconnectedness of humans with nature. Her writings has a deep belief that everything has a life. This paper is an attempt to bring out the ecological consciousness which is abundant in the works of Mamang Dai *The Legends of Pensam* and *Escaping the Land*

Key Words: Ecological Empathy, Ecology, Environment, Save nature, Modernization

INTRODUCTION

Ecological Consciousness is necessary and need of the hour in this busy world. In this busy world no one is having a time to look one another and respond. It's an unavoidable one to separate technology from this world. It's a vital thing to take care of the environment. Literature holds the responsibility and it reflects the ecological crisis. In the romantic period like William Wordsworth all the authors praise the simplicity of nature and they can find that the nature is blended with all the emotions in the lives of human beings. In that time nature is a part of life and literature also responds in appreciating the beauty. Gradually the term ecocriticism emerges to save and serve the environment to the future generation. Ecocriticism not only examines depictions of nature in literary texts but also analyses how literature shapes environmental ethics and cultural attitudes toward the Earth. In recent decades, Indian English literature has witnessed a rise in writers who foreground ecological concerns, especially authors from indigenous and tribal communities whose worldviews are inherently rooted in environmental harmony.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mamang Dai's writings usually focuses on Arunachal Pradesh's rich tribal culture, myths, history, and the tension between tradition and modernity, as she belongs to Adi community it is easy for her to breath and praise nature and its identity. Her ecological consciousness is depicted in her writings the *Legends of Pensam* and *Escaping the Land*. Her perspectives and her quality of weaving her experiences with her narrative style reach the bottom of all the readers. Her writings focus on folklore, contribution of tribal to this earth, cultural

and land-based identity and modernization. The researcher has an idea of showing the relationship of humans with nature and in exploring the ecological writings or narrative styles conveying traditional wisdom of our people. The environmental loss and creating awareness is not explored. This research will fill the gap and expose it.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs Ecocritical approach and close reading of the text. The researcher has a close reading and understanding of passages supplying ecocritical ideas and balances in the earth. The description of landscapes, cultural practices are closely examined to analyze the traditional practices which are followed to save the earth's life. This analysis is based on William Rueckert, Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Bull and Nirmal Selvamony. Nirmal Selvamony insists on the divisions of Thinaï and he says: Humans and nature live like kith and kin. These concepts are analyzed in this research. The Close reading helps to analyze it in a better way.

The Legends of Pensam

It is a collection of interconnected stories. This book functions like a novel spinning the tales of tribal people and their beliefs. It also portrays the impact of modernization on a community. This book focuses on the community while reading the stories one cannot stick the protagonists. The stories are weaved through the experiences of the facts and the factuals events and the incidents happened in Mamang Dai's life in Adi community. While sharing the story, the researcher can find out the traditional wisdom and sustainable goals for the environment. The negligence of the tradition and the customs lead to the destruction and displacement of the ecology. "Pensam," meaning "in-between," symbolizes the fluidity between the human world and the spirit world. This concept functions metaphorically to express ecological interconnectedness. It suggests that harmony exists only when humans acknowledge the animate presence of nature. The pensam space becomes a reminder that ecological balance is delicate and must be maintained through respect and reciprocity.

All the characters in these stories are having a close communion with the land and they are taking what is necessary for their life. Dai demonstrates that ecological balance is not merely a scientific concept but a cultural ethic deeply rooted in worldview and daily practice.

Escaping the Land

Escaping the Land purely deals with the modernization of the people. In the name of civilized and modernized, Dai points out that the human beings are not just losing their land but also their culture anchors. Her narrating style reflects the degradation of forests, pollution in the rivers and vanishing traditional practices. The ecological imbalance cannot be controlled and the humans lost their identity and self. The ecological disruptions cause psychological problems also which hindrance the growth of the human beings. It suggests that humanity may eventually have to escape the Earth itself if exploitation continues unchecked.

Ecological Consciousness and Ecological Empathy

Ecological Crisis touches its peak because of the negligence of humans who loss their faith in traditional wisdom and their thinking apart from the nature. Humans begin to forget the concept that all the creatures in this world are interdependent. Deep ecological thinking should create the awareness of the human actions and the existence of nature. Literature in turn should be in position in reflecting the relationship between human and nature. This is introduced as a term Ecocriticism by William Rueckert in his address "present and future of the world". Cheryll Glotfelty defines it as "interconnectedness between nature and Culture". In the field of literary theory "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment".

An explanation of ecocriticism is provided by the Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms: "The study of literary texts with reference to the interaction between human activity and the vast range of 'natural' or non-human phenomena which bears upon human experience – encompassing issues concerning fauna, flora, landscape, environment and weather". Oppermann in one of his articles says: 'Ecocriticism truly launches a

call to literature to link to the challenges of today's environmental crisis', Ecological consciousness and ecological empathy are not new it begins its journey from the romantic period. William Wordsworth as a romantic poet explores nature as a subject. The romantic poets always challenge anthropocentric paradigms. It is the responsibility of each and every human to save and protect nature. This is reflected in Indian Literature also. Mamang Dai, an Indian woman writer, born in tribal community, becomes IAS officer but relieved her from that position, now become the writer and care of the environment. As an author she can live along with the nature. Her talents and her efficiency become the weapon in exploring and exposing what had happened in this world and her vision for future tells the glimpses of nature in future.

Mamang Dai, an eminent writer from Arunachal Pradesh, occupies a significant position in this landscape. As a member of the Adi tribe, she inherits a cultural tradition where nature is revered as animate and spiritual. Dai's literary works present a vision of the world in which nature and human life are inseparably intertwined. Her narratives restore indigenous ecological wisdom that modern society often ignores. Two of her major works—*The Legends of Pensam* (2006) and *Escaping the Land* (2014)—offer profound insights into ecological interconnectedness, cultural memory, and the consequences of rapid modernization. This research examines how Dai uses storytelling, myth, and indigenous knowledge to create ecologically conscious literature that challenges exploitative human behavior and celebrates sustainable ways of living.

Sustainability and Mindful Consciousness

Mamang Dai often wishes to insist on the fact that there should be always a balance between the traditional methods and the intrusion of modern methods which will affect the environment. *The Legends of Pensam* clearly represents the boundary between the traditional methods and the recent humanistic methods. Published in 2006, this web of short stories deals with the myths, rituals and the beliefs of Adi Tribes. Her narratives focus on the reality and myth, truth and spirituality, tradition and modernity. Hoxo often appraised the beliefs and the methods follow by the tribal people. His words: "Some things are beyond recall, and such things happen all the time. It is better to be ready". Rakut claims their unique identity of solely depending on the oral stories of their land, "The most beautiful thing is that we are all bunched up together...far apart from each other in so many ways, but we have words, and the right words open our minds and hearts and help us to recognize each other."

Hoxo fell down from the sky who is taken care of by Lutor. The villagers believe him and accept Hoxo as a boy among the tribes. His growth crosses few generation and it can be seen as a stories and these interconnected stories make them as a novel. The life of Adi tribes is woven around forest ecology and coexistence with the natural world. Their belief and myth is so strong that under the influence of spirits anything may happen. The rites followed by them should be followed traditionally, if not they think that they will receive punishment such as unnatural death, sudden death, natural calamities, strange illness, fire in the forests and so on. They believe that they should perform all the rites properly.

The Adi Community is depicted through a deep connection between the spiritual world and the nature. In this novel the land mark and the natural forces are marked as spirits. For modern environmental crisis, this novel gives a solution of bringing traditional ecological knowledge blended with the modernization. The land is a care giver, it takes care everyone in this world, this could be a political consciousness.

This paper finds that Mamang Dai explains us to follow the traditional culture and it truly provides wisdom in the sustainability goals. Her Nature is blended with emotional, spiritual and ethical dimensions. Dai also indicates the erosion of wealth of the earth which should be saved. She use myths as a tool to explore her ideas of saving the earth. Her narrative style strengthens her views and share her opinions with all the readers.

CONCLUSION

Mamang Dai's writings contribute significantly to ecological literature in India by presenting a worldview where humans, spirits, and nature are inseparably bound. Her works remind readers that ecological consciousness is not a modern invention but an ancient cultural wisdom held by indigenous communities. Through her storytelling, Dai invites modern society to reconsider its relationship with the Earth and adopt

sustainable and culturally respectful ways of living. Both *The Legends of Pensam* and *Escaping the Land* demonstrate that literature can serve as an ethical force, urging humanity to protect the environment before it is too late. Her works stand as literary testimonies to the importance of ecological balance and the consequences of ignoring it.

REFERENCES

Primary Texts

1. Dai, Mamang. *The Legends of Pensam*. Penguin Books India, 2006. Dai, Mamang. *Escaping the Land*. Speaking Tiger Publishing, 2014.

Secondary Sources

2. Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard UP, 1995.
3. Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2004.
4. Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
5. Nongkynrih, Bijoya. "Nature and Belief in Northeast Indian Literature." *Indian Literature Journal*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2018, pp. 42–52.
6. Sarma, Ranjit. "Indigeneity and Ecology in the Writings of Mamang Dai." *Journal of Northeast Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2020, pp. 88–101.
7. Tata, Patricia. "Myth and Memory in Tribal Literature of Arunachal Pradesh." *Studies in Tribal Literature*, 2017, pp. 112–125.