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Chapter-III

Portrayal of Tribals, Land, Culture, and Displacement: Echoes of the Past

By

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Abstract

The depiction of tribals, land, culture, and displacement remains a central and urgent concern in modern Indian literature. Rather than functioning as a marginal theme, it foregrounds the existential realities of indigenous communities whose identities are intricately bound to their ancestral landscapes. For tribal societies, land transcends material ownership; it embodies collective memory, sacred belief systems, ecological knowledge, and historical continuity. Displacement, therefore, signifies not merely physical relocation but a profound rupture of cultural identity and spiritual rootedness.

Mamang Dai's novel *The Black Hill* (2014) and Kamala Markandaya's novel *The Coffer Dams* (1969) compellingly explore this intimate relationship between tribe and terrain. In *The Black Hill*, Dai (2014) portrays the Adi community's deep integration with nature, demonstrating how myths, rituals, oral traditions, and environmental

consciousness are inseparable from the physical landscape. Similarly, in *The Coffer Dams*, Markandaya (1969) highlights the tensions that arise when development projects intrude upon indigenous spaces, revealing the cultural and ethical dilemmas embedded within modernization. As state-sponsored development and industrial expansion encroach upon tribal regions, they disrupt not only economic systems but also social harmony and cultural coherence. The resulting consequences include social fragmentation, erosion of language and tradition, and psychological trauma, particularly among younger generations exposed to assimilationist pressures.

Significantly, Dai's narrative does not reduce tribal communities to passive victims. Instead, it foregrounds resilience, agency, and cultural assertion (Dai, 2014). Through acts of remembrance and resistance, indigenous communities emerge as active custodians of land and heritage. Such literary representations emphasize the necessity of safeguarding indigenous rights and preserving cultural diversity, positioning literature as a powerful site of ethical engagement and socio-political critique.

Key words

(*Land-Displacement, Loss of Cultural Identity, Preserving Cultural Heritage, Cultural Displacement, Tribal Identity and Socio-cultural Trauma*)

Introduction

The portrayal of tribals', land, culture, and displacement is a recurring theme in Indian literature, echoing the struggles of indigenous communities across generations. Novels like Mamang Dai's *The Black*

Hill (2014) and Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969), like the Polavaram project, bring to the forefront the intricate relationships between tribals, their land, and their cultural practices. As Arundhati Roy notes, these narratives are not just about displacement; they're about the erasure of an entire way of life. The tribals' connection with their land is deep-rooted, often tied to their spirituality, traditions, and identity. Mahasweta Devi's works, like *Douloti the Bountiful*, highlight this bond, showcasing how land is not just a physical space but an integral part of tribal existence. The construction of Coffer Dams and other development projects often disrupts this bond, leading to cultural disintegration and psychological trauma. Writers like K. S. Singh and Ramachandra Guha have extensively documented the struggles of tribal communities, emphasizing the need to recognize and respect their rights and cultural heritage. *The Black Hill* (2014) is a poignant example of this, where Dai weaves a narrative that underscores the Adi tribe's deep connection with their land and their determination to preserve their culture. These narratives challenge to rethink development paradigms that prioritize economic growth over cultural sustainability and social justice. As Guha notes, there's a need for alternative narratives that value indigenous knowledge and promote environmental sustainability. The echoes of the past are loud and clear: displacement is not just a physical relocation; it's a cultural and emotional uprooting. By listening to these stories, we can work towards a more equitable future where development doesn't come at the cost of human suffering and cultural erasure.

The Coffer Dams (1969) by Kamala Markandaya Vs *The Black Hill* (2014) by Mamang Dai

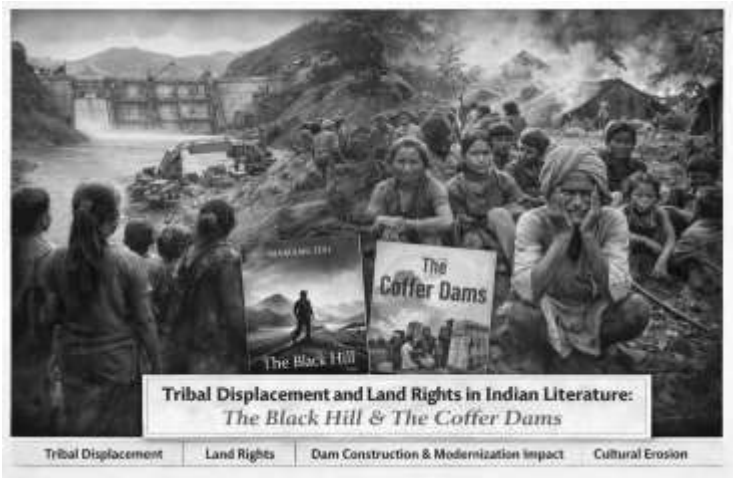
are the two novels that explore the complexities of human relationships, cultural identity, and the impact of modernization on traditional ways of life. Both novels delve into the complexities of cultural identity, particularly in the context of colonialism and post-colonialism. *The Coffer Dams* (1969) explores the tensions between British colonialism and Indian culture, while *The Black Hill* (2014) examines the intersection of indigenous traditions and modernity in Northeast India. The novels share a deep concern with the natural world and its relationship to human existence. *The Coffer Dams* (1969) features the construction of a dam in the Indian wilderness, highlighting the clash between human ambition and the natural environment. *The Black Hill* (2014), set in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, explores the spiritual and cultural significance of the land to its indigenous inhabitants. Both novels grapple with the consequences of social change and displacement. *The Coffer Dams* (1969) portrays the displacement of local communities due to the construction of the dam, while *The Black Hill* (2014) explores the impact of modernization on traditional ways of life in the hills. These two novels also offer nuanced psychological portrayals of their characters, exploring themes of identity, belonging, and the human condition.

The main objective of this chapter is to analyze and portray how tribals were portrayed in both the novels *The Black Hill* (2014) by Mamang Dai and *The Coffer Dams* (1969) by Kamala Markandaya. The common and central points in both the novels are Britishers' establishing their mission in the tribal habitants as result, how tribals faced problems in their hands, tribals' reactions to it, how tribals were being treated by the colonizer and the consequences of the same. In

the novel *The Black Hill* (2014), the protagonist's aim is to establish Christian missionaries in the tribal territory. Gimur from Abor tribe and Khajinsha from Mishmee tribes are the two main tribal characters among the many, whereas in the *The Coffer Dams* (1969), Clinton is a protagonist whose aim is to complete the construction of *The Coffer Dams* (1969) in time. In the process of completing the Dam he is least bothered about the tribals working as coolies and their plights. In addition to it Clinton treats the tribal boy 'Bashiam' as Jungly wallah and never recognizes their role in construction of the dam and least bothered about their concern and sufferings. In *The Black Hill* (2014) Mamang Dai portrays how Father Nicolas Krick, a Jesuit priest tries to establish his mission on the Mishmee hills. In this process, he hatches many plans and makes friends with Kajinsha to execute his plan of establishing his aim on the hill.

Going into the details of both the novels there are some important concepts such as determination, challenge, obsession, love, conspiracy and relationship between major characters of the two novels are common factors and that are challenged in the two novels. In the novel *The Black Hill* Gimur and Kanjinsha come from two different tribal backgrounds and two different villages. Their family relationships, cultural background, aims, are affected by the entry of outsiders' into their lands. On the other hand, Clinton and Helen in the novel *The Coffer Dams* (1969) got united with love but how Clinton's harsh attitude towards tribal workers and Helen's soft corner towards tribals play a pivotal role in the construction of *The Coffer Dams* (1969) is to be portrayed in this chapter. The purpose of the novel *The Coffer Dams* (1969) is to complete the construction of the dam and *The Black Hill*

(2014) is to stop the white man's entry into their land forms the crust of the novel.



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Analysis of the Chapter

Displacement of Tribals in *The Coffer Dams*

The Indian-born English author Kamla Markandaya is a literary powerhouse. The combination of her active participation in India's social life, her astute observation, critical acumen, and her feminine sensibility propelled her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) to worldwide acclaim. Her other works include Some *Inner Fury* (1955) *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), A *Handful of Rice* (1967), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973) and *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977). So far, she has published nine novels. Markandaya's knowledge of Indian culture and customs is just as genuine as her knowledge of the English men's

personalities. She is widely recognized as one of the most important Indian English novelists of all time. Critics of both Indian and international renown have read and praised her works with great enthusiasm. *Nectar in a Sieve* **(**1954**),** the first novel by Markandaya, is a sad story told from the perspective of the novel's narrator, Rukmani. Accurately depicts the hardships endured by Indian peasants under British rule. The author takes us to the heart of a little South Indian town where nothing has changed in a thousand years. Over time, a tannery brings industry and cutting-edge technology to the community.

As the youngest of her father's four daughters, Rukmani often takes on the role of village matriarch. She weds her tenant farmer husband Nathan when she is only twelve years old. He may be financially strapped, but he certainly does not lack in regard for or devotion to his wife. Her spouse constructed the home where the couple now resides. Due to their financial situation, the family is at risk of going hungry. Also, they have to deal with the brutal whims of Mother Nature. The flood is followed by a prolonged drought, leading to disastrous destruction. Because of this, Rukmani and Nathan have had all their aspirations shattered. Things just keep getting worse for them. If he does this, he's being disloyal to her. Because they are starving, Ira, her daughter, turns to prostitution. Kuti, her youngest kid, starves to death from lack of food. Both of her sons, Arjun and Thumbi, have gone to Ceylon in quest of work. This results in the family being forcibly removed from their homestead. The couple finally gives up and decides to leave the town. Uma Parameswaran an Indo-Canadian writer says:

The narrative of the nameless farmer who stands silhouetted in the endless dusk of Indian agricultural bankruptcy, the horizon shining through the quiet trees now with scarlet gashes, now with soul-exalting splendor, constantly holding out the hope that the lowering sun would rise again after the night ever-approaching but never-engulfing, is portrayed in *Nectar in a Sieve*. *Some Inner Fury* (1955), her second novel, is distinct from her first. East-West conflict is introduced here for the first time by Markandaya and reappears in her subsequent novels. It's safe to say that Mirabai and her brother Kitsamy come from a privileged and sophisticated background. One of their brothers, named Govind, is adopted. Kit and Richard Marlow, a mutual acquaintance from Oxford, have travelled here from the British capital. Kit marries the conventional Premala while in India. Govind falls in love with her, despite his guarded nature. Kit supports the British Raj while Govind works to topple it by terrorist means. Both brothers have different political views. When Mira meets Roshan Merchant, a journalist, they hit it off. Mira runs across Richard while doing journalism work, and they end up back together. She goes to a remote area to aid an English missionary named Hieky in his efforts to establish a school for the local boys. In the past, Mira and Richard have gone sightseeing. Upon their return, they discover that the Quit India Movement has spread across the nation. Govind and his associates deliberately burned down the institution. A knife is used to kill Kit. Police have taken in Govind on murder charges. Govind gets acquitted and released during his trial. Both Mira and Richard had no choice but to separate from one other. Mira moves back in with her family to reminisce about the good old days.

A Silence of Desire (1960), is the third novel by Markandaya, and it focuses on the struggle of a married couple named Sarojini and Dandekar to reconcile their religion with modernity. A God-fearing woman annoys her devout husband. Dandekar is plagued by worry and fury as he accompanies his wife to a Swamy to have a tumor removed from her womb. The couple has been married for fifteen years. He doesn't give his loved ones the time of day. After explaining the situation to his employer Chari, Mr. Ghose was tasked with conducting an investigation into Swamy's background. The impasse is broken when Swamy suggests surgery to Sarojini. Now that Swamy has left, Dandekar is a transformed man who can finally find inner peace, but he is still plagued with remorse. When compared to the first three novels in the series, *Possession* (1963) falls short. This work uses symbolism to explore the clash between Eastern and Western worldviews. It's told by Indian author Anasuya, who travels to England to get her books published.

A young British lady who just divorced as Caroline Bell explores India; she meets Valmiki, a fourteen-year-old boy from a nearby hamlet. She eventually moves him to England, where he becomes a famous artist. Furthermore, she plans to take advantage of Valmiki's youth for her own sexual gratification. Valmiki starts to feel like a foreigner after a while. In response, she hands him a letter from his Indian Swamy buddy. He takes up painting again after reading the letter. Caroline is taken aback to learn that Valmiki is related to her housekeeper Ellie in some way. She deftly manages to break them apart. The letters purportedly from Swamy that were handed to Valmiki turn out to be forgeries, he learns later. Eventually, he breaks

up with Caroline and moves in with Annabel. Valmiki's return to India is facilitated by Anasuya's sale of one of his paintings. Indeed, Caroline will be joining us in India as well. Valmiki, however, claims that possessive women are not to be possessed, and so she rejects her. But in the end, Caroline gives Swamy hope by promising that Valmiki would come back to her.

To some extent, *A Handful of Rice* (1967), Markanday's work, may be compared to Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954). Ravi moves to Madras in search of better job prospects, but instead he finds himself unable to find steady work and filled with resentment. After being rejected by society, he turns to physical labor and quickly befriends the smuggler Damodar. During a night time chase with a police officer, he finds shelter in the home of a tailor named Apu. When Apu comes home, his wife binds his wrists and feet and beats him. She feels sorry for him when he admits to trespassing, so she lets him leave. There, Ravi finds himself falling for her daughter, Nalini. A change of heart and usefulness in the household follow. With Nalini at his side, he marries and sets down roots. His company thrives thanks to his efforts. He feels his salary is inadequate when compared to that of his peers. He runs across Damodar again, and this time he offers him dishonest labour. At this moment, he can't decide who is better, his wife Nalini or his buddy Damodar. He feels the tension between being truthful and being dishonest with Damodar more acutely with each encounter. His situation is becoming completely intolerable. Meningitis takes the life of his kid. The death of Nalin's kid and his subsequent silence has enraged the young guy. Once upon a time, there was a disturbance and the crowd used the opportunity to pillage a

granary. It's a stone-throwing incident. Ravi too participates and takes up a stone, but his inner knowledge is so powerful that it ultimately overcomes him. He decides to alter his behavior. Thus, Ravi's personal setbacks and struggles are the focus of this work.

The Nowhere Man (1972), Kamala Markandaya's next novel, is her most powerful and most mature work to date. It's basically a touching eulogy on the ongoing racism in England today. The author is in a unique position to fictionally mold an actual event. Srinivas and his wife Vasantha spend their early years in a tiny Indian town, but they are eventually compelled to flee the country because of British domination. As a result, they end up relocating to England. There, they had two sons: Laxman and Seshu. The two men, Laxman the manufacturing owner and Seshu the RAF pilot, go to Britain. Time passes, and eventually he loses his life in the German conflict. A case of TB claims the life of his wife, Vasantha. After his older son weds an English girl and moves in with her, Srinivas was left to his own devices. He takes a serious emotional hit from the loss of his wife. His company takes a hit, and he has no way to repair his reputation. When he meets Mrs. Pickering, an old widow, he decides to take her in as a housemate. She stands up for him as racial tensions begin to rise. A horrible race riot breaks out in 1965. A leader in the anti-colored movement is his neighbor Fred Fletcher. In spite of Srinivas's fifty years of residency in England, he forces Srinivas to see himself as a 'nowhere man' and an outsider. When he has a suicidal thought, Mrs. Pickering talks him out of it. Leprosy strikes him in his past. He is not anti-white, but a leper and that only makes things worse when he asks

his renters to leave. As a result of Fred's arson, Srinivas is rescued from the blaze but later dies from shock.

Two Virgins (1973), by Markandaya, is often regarded as the author's poorest work. There are six sections here. It's not bad in terms of theme. While Uma Parmeshwaran's 'lf Two Virgins' succeeds for some readers it is because it taps the treasure house of basic human experiences, especially the ever popular one of adolescence,' in a series of well-worded, well-organized vignetts, 'lf two Virgins fails' because it does not delve deeply enough into the human experiences it discusses.

The publication of her latest novel, *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), was a significant turning point in her writing career. As a historical fiction, it spans the years from the turn of the century through 1947, when freedom was finally won. Devapur, a royal realm, is where the story takes place. There is a preface and an afterword, making the whole thing three acts. The author has therefore addressed issues of poverty and hunger, the fight for independence, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the East-West encounter. In addition to these topics, Markandaya has regularly dealt with Indian ethos in her works, demonstrating remarkable diversity within her narrow scope.

The Coffer Dams (1969), is a mature work by Markandaya that attempts to combine the Indian and British perspectives into a convincing story. There are a number of story points that are designed to shake the tribals' foundational beliefs and introduce them to new ways of thinking and behaving. The novelist's expertise is on display in the way she weaves the characters' interactions and the ideals they hold into the story's structure. The novel's premise reveals the infinite

complexity of an apparently simple story—the building of an Indo-British Daman project and the romance between an English lady and a disillusioned tribal crane operator. Instead of being a story about sexual promiscuity or racial discrimination, the book is a throbbing chronicle of human pain and cultural awareness set against the background of formidable elements of nature thanks to the novelist's deft handling of a clash of sensitivities and attitudes.

In each of Markandaya's works, the reader may expect to find a personal tale, a larger struggle, and a societal context. In this work, too, she employs this method of storytelling. Helen, split between two very divergent worldviews, is the protagonist here. The author addresses real-world complications that have direct bearing on the novel's central idea. Most of the time, she imagines just two or three of the characters in the story. Her perspective allows her to inquire more into people's true motivations. This plot's driving force is the desire to demonstrate the cultural tensions at play in a certain setting's ideological arena.

Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969) is about a tribe fighting for life against both human and inhuman forces, such as British technicians and fierce nature. In this process how tribals were depicted by Kamala Markandaya is the central point of discussion. About the novel, S. John Peter Joseph, Associate Professor at Saint Xavier College writes that Kamala Markandya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969) depicts the clash between a post-Colonial Indian hill tribe and a machine-based Western civilization. She takes a different approach to this topic, addressing the globe that even a tribal culture that has been impervious to change from the beginning of time would

eventually succumb to industrialization and modernity, much like cancer.

Poor indigenous people, the homeless, and the ordinary people have seen their lives ravaged by the unrelenting march of urbanization and industrialization. The story follows a British engineering business as it builds Coffer dams in the hills of Southern India in order to control the flow of a raging river. Howard Clinton, a British Chief Engineer, and Mackendrick, his business partner, begin work on a dam across the raging river. There are also a number of Indians working as engineers, technicians, and manual workers.

Kamala Markandaya writes:

> Clinton, the project manager, exhibits several traits common to colonists. He has a cold, heartless, and callous disregard for the tribals and laborers. For him, the indigenous are irrelevant. Clinton says, 'the guys called them,' is what Kamala Markandaya says there are barriers between Clinton and his employees. Clinton was so disconnected from the folks who worked for him that it took some time for him to recognize that they did (CD 9). Clinton is portrayed by Margaret P. Joseph, who says of him, 'He thinks of them as archaic, but a necessary irritation if work is to be done.' In his mind, they are not real people with feelings and thoughts similar to his own. He doesn't give a hoot about them as people and has zero interest in their thoughts, feelings, or issues (Markandaya, p.p, 130-131).

After the 1950s, Kamala Markandaya appeared on the literary scene as one of India's most renowned English-language authors, having had

10 novels published. She has extensively addressed social, political, cultural, and economic issues facing modern India in her works. Her sixth novel, *The Coffer Dam*s (1969), depicts a tribal village near which British engineers Howard Clinton and Mackendrick intend to construct a large dam to control and channelize a turbulent river 'that rose in the Lakes and valleys of the south Indian highlands and thundered through inaccessible gorges and jungles down to the plains with prodigious waste.

Going into details of the plot Helen, an Englishwoman newly married to a self-styled British engineer named Howard Clinton, relocates to India so that her husband may fulfil his contractual obligation to finish building a dam on a river in southern India. The destitute tribals are forced to relocate to a less desirable location when British engineers Clinton and Mackendrick, together with their families and helpers, arrive in India and occupy the tribal community. That's why the tribesmen had it so rough during the pre-dam building periods. Construction of the dam is being done by the underprivileged tribal residents in the surrounding region. The primary crane operator is Bashiam, a member of the tribal culture and a trained mechanic. Howard Clinton, a British engineer, gave Bashiam the nickname 'Jungly wallah' because of his knowledge of the jungle. Though Bashiam is educated the narrator says about him:

> Of them all, only Bashiam clung to the reservations. He was not like the others, a product of technical training colleges that were being urged into being up and down the country. He had been born in these hills and had followed the traditional craft of woodcutting until they began building the hydraulics

> station, further up the river, uprooting his family, indeed his whole village, to do so. Bashiam had gone back out of curiosity and stayed, and was spellbound by the workings of strange powerful turbines. A discerning foreman had given him employment, and in the course of it he had learnt about electricity and machines, about building, repairing and dismantling, welding his new learning on to older, part inherited knowledge of forest, river and hill country seasons. It was his previous knowledge that inhibited him, preventing him from falling in line with the others. They made their plans, seduced by statistics: but he had seen what a cyclone could do, had cowered before the storms that swept down the hills to burst in the valley, knew that a rogue monsoon could make it at night in the most careful design. It was not easy for him to shed his misgivings, although his later training made him acknowledge that despite them planning was essential. (Markandaya, p, 18)

Though Bashiam is an educated and capable mechanic, he is nevertheless considered to be a Jungly wallah by Clinton and the Indians because of his increasing fondness with the British staff and Clinton's wife in particular. In relation to Clinton's feelings for Bashiam, the narrator makes the following observation:

> Bahiam seemed to him to be riddled with fears, in thrall to spirits of forests and rain like the hill tribal man he still was at heart. Even the other Indians kept him apart, a stranger in their midst, calling him Jungly wallah as he had taken to doing. Jungly wallah: a man of the Jungle. A primitive just came

> down off the trees. Englishmen and Hindu alike looked down their fine Aryans noses and covertly spurned the aborigines. (Markandaya, p, 19)

Helen, Clinton's wife, becomes close to the local tribal people during their brief stay in a region of India that is controlled by them. The tribal people's huts are more appealing to her than the elegant bungalows in which she spent her life but did not really appreciate it. She feels an inner need to connect with the indigenous people; therefore, she routinely visits their huts. Day by day, her fondness for tribals increases.

This is how the narrator describes it:

> Helen got on well with the tribesmen. He had seen groups of them gathered around her in their compound, or accompanying her if she returned after sunset from her wanderings. (Markandaya, p, 21)

Helen's developing closeness with the tribals' creates tension in her marriage. She slips out into the jungle without informing her husband, following an impulse to spend time alone with the tribals. She gives no thought to what he may think of her choosing the tribals over her. Clinton despises tribal people, but his wife Helen and his coworker, an engineer named Mackendrick, feel compassion for them. His focus on the dam prevents him from seeing Helen's attraction to the indigenous people. Helen sees the natives as ideal people whereas; Clinton thinks they're backwards and barbaric. Helen passionately opposes her husband's decision to levy mass penalties on the tribesmen and provides food to prevent hunger deaths. Helen and Clinton's relationship is strained because of her affinity for indigenous people.

He attempts to get her to see that the natives don't merit her respect. Why she has become so attached to tribals is a mystery that has plagued his head. To the effect that, he is not thrilled with his wife's preference for the tribal community, he says:

> What of, he asked himself in exasperation: of a tribe whose outstanding characteristic in his view was the severe retardation of its civilization? Or of the glib communication she had established with a people who presented to him only the blank opacities of their total incomprehension. (Markandaya, p, 31)

Helen's visit to the native settlement will allow her to better understand tribal culture. Without coming to this tribal hamlet, she would never have the great, happy experiences she has here. She realizes, after a little period of mingling with tribals, that she, and only she, really belongs in the tribal world, which offers the prospect of genuine happiness.

In the words of the narrator:

> She played with children, rubbed flea powder, into the dog's jealous coats, watched the crops grow, watched men and women at work, stated herself with watchman, and most of all she marveled that such full rounded out living could go on, on so feeble and flimsy a footing. The fragile huts, that man and boy could put up in a day or a determined wind demolish in les: the primitive patches of surface-root crops of a community with one harvest in mind, rather than the recurrent cycle of growth; the haphazard clearing, overshadowed by encroaching forest: on these impermanent, flyaway

> foundations, whole people build whole lives. (Markandaya, p, 39)

Helen needs the services of an interpreter so that she may communicate with the indigenous people and learn their language. With intent, she approaches Krishnan, but he refuses to assist. Then, she goes to Bashiam in the hopes that he would act as a liaison between her and his community members; unlike Krishnan, Bashiam readily accepts this role. Since Bashiam has lived among the tribes for so long, he has an unparalleled understanding of their culture and can educate Helen about their values. The narrator comments on his function as a liaison between Helen tribals.

> Bashiam, the Hillman whom they called Jungly wallah, or even more disparagingly the civilized Jungly wallah. He became a linkman, providing the information she sought of a country and a people who intrigued her, whetting a curiosity with which she had always been liberally endowed. The curiosity grew with each encounter: no longer satisfied with watching, but wanting to know: entry achieved, now seeking performance. Bashiam helped to quench her desire to know, and she gave him generous credit. He firmly declined it. (Markandaya, p, 41)

Helen and Bashiam discuss a wide array of tribal issues, including Bashiam himself, throughout their talk. She inundates Bashiam with a variety of tribal-related questions. Bashiam does his best to gratify her by divulging as much information as he knows about them. He lacks answers to a few queries. The following exchange between Helen and

Bashiam demonstrates an Englishwoman's empathetic disposition towards Indian tribal members.

> Helen one day said to Bashiam 'Do you know what they call you behind your back?'
>
> 'Jungly wallah' he said at once without hesitation.
>
> Do you know what it means?
>
> 'A man of the jungle', an uncivilized man'
>
> 'What it really means' she said cruelly, 'is someone who doesn't count; someone who gets kicked around and doesn't do anything to stop it'.
>
> He was puzzled by her vehemence, and saw no reason for it. He said,do you mean me?'
>
> Her anger began to scale up, crossed and compounded by a sense of shame. She controlled it and said, quietly, 'There used to be a village where the bungalows are…where our bungalow is a tribal village.'
>
> A small settlement, yes,'
>
> When they are told to go, they go.'
>
> 'Yes'
>
> 'Without protest, just got up and walked away, like animals,'
>
> 'I suppose you could put it like that.'
>
> His calm unnerved her. (Markandaya, p, 45)

Helen gets as close to Bashiam as Clinton because she has no other option to get connected with as she has to stay there until completion of the dam. On the other hand, Clinton also tries to neglect her and she gets bored of her routine life. It is not because she has a genuine love towards tribal people. For a tribal group, an English woman's arrival

in their hamlet is cause for tremendous celebration. The villagers, both young and old, are overjoyed at the prospect that a portrayal of the British, who formerly dominated India, now lives among them, elevating their status in the eyes of those who live in the developed world. Helen's fondness for the natives stems from the same qualities that drive Clinton's hatred of them. Helen is attracted to the tribal people and their wretched lifestyle, but Clinton develops an instant distaste for them. She places tremendous value on indigenous people's ideas, practices, and ceremonies whereas Clinton dismisses them as examples of backwards thinking. Helen is laughed at by Clinton for believing the lies spread by the superstitious tribals when she assures him that snakes are always harmless.

Helen's fondness towards tribals can't be as real and genuine and it can be observed in two aspects: one she is ignored by her husband Clinton whose aim is completing the construction of the dam rather than his wife Helen. In this process he pays little attention to his family life. As she is ignored by Clinton and she gets connected with Bashiam to enjoy her time and at the same time Bashiam as an educated tribal knows how to behave politely and with love and affection he shows immense interest in her as an English woman. It is the basic qualities found among tribals. On the other hand, it is understood that she has never come across tribals and their lifestyle as they live in cosmopolitan cities. Their simple, pure lifestyle and values were attracted by Helen.

Moreover, Helen and Bashiam have a lot of similar interests and values. They have a lot in common in terms of their areas of interest. One of the most distinctive features of their temperament is their

willingness to challenge the norms of their community. Helen abandons the rest of the English, including her husband, and instead hangs out with the natives. Similar to how Bashiam chooses a career reviled by his fellow tribe members, he acts counter to the prevailing tribal mentality. Bird-trapping is another area where they find common ground. As Clinton watches Helen and Bashiam becoming closer, he decides to alter his behavior. When he learns that Bashiam has been bird-trapping in the forest, he begins to suspect that his wife's sudden interest in the hobby is a direct consequence of her relationship with Bashiam. Up until now, he had seen Bashiam as nothing more than a Jungly wallah. Nonetheless, he now sees Bashiam as a formidable adversary. The narrator states why Clinton's feelings with Bashiam have changed so dramatically: "He turned and looked at Bashiam and saw him then for the first time as a mantle man with whom Helen went: someone with whom one had to reckon" (Markandaya, p, 91).

When Bashiam was constructing the hut, he probably did not anticipate being pulled into the mud of desire one night by an English woman. According to an old proverb, 'what is fatted cannot be blotted'. When he returns to his hut one evening after a day of labor, he is surprised to discover Helen hiding in the darkness. She had travelled to this location at this time to sample the robust tastes of a huge tribesman like Bashiam. The narrator romanticizes the thought-provoking encounter between Bashiam a tribal, and Helen, an Englishwoman, by stating:

> What you want with me, he said as he waited outside hesitantly, since it was the memsahib who desired. Who would use him as a blackjack on her white and gorgeous body, pull

> him into her vortex to taste his abrasive tastes, and then, after savoring the unique experience, abandon him to what? What about me? He whipped himself, he asked himself. While her proximity sent warm currents throughout his body' (Markandaya, p, 140)

With the help of the tribal laborers Clinton intends to complete the construction of the dam before the arrival of monsoon. But god wills it otherwise. As the construction work nears the completion, a technical fault in the machine under operation leads to a thunderous blast that causes the death of thirty tribal laborers. As the news of this blast and its consequences spreads all around like fire, the tribals in hundreds gather at the site of the blast and feel a great shock when they see the dead bodies of their poor fellows.

Clinton's inhumane treatment of the natives reaches a pinnacle when he exhibits no emotion over the premature deaths of thirty workers. However, when he says 'the bodies can be integrated into the structure,' he shows his lack of empathy for the tribal group and instead expresses his anti-tribal mentality (p, 163). Clinton's plan to include tribe members' skeletal remains in the construction has been met with universal skepticism. Everyone agrees that the crushing machine should be dismantled and the corpses removed. That's why it's necessary to move the rock in order to bring the corpses to the surface. But who is brave enough to move the heavy rock? As is common knowledge, the equipment used to move the boulder is broken, and doing so might put the life of the operator in jeopardy. Because of this, the British engineers and technicians are hesitant to go through with the boulder removal. Bashiam, being a brave tribal

himself, steps up to the challenge when no one else is willing to do so for the sake of the deceased tribe's people. Despite Clinton's knowledge that the machine has acquired a significant malfunction and that whoever lifts the boulder in this state would surely lose their life, he permits Bashiam to do so.

Clinton, along with Bashiam and the other employees, is determined to have the building done before the onset of monsoon so that he may return to the United States without any delays. The heavy rains that come before the monsoon season ruin his intentions. He can't finish building because of the flooding caused by the rain. Clinton, who seems least concerned about the tribals' fate, ignores the engineers' repeated warnings. The unexpected torrent of rain is so severe and prolonged that the whole region is flooded, and everyone is terrified of the destruction they will face. Everyone is waiting for 'the ridges to rise clear' (p, 22), when the tribal headman has predicted the rain would cease. After expressing his forecast, the tribal headman tragically passes away. And just as he had prophesied, the rain ceases and the ridges clear a few minutes after his death. The completion of the dam building project has brought joy to the whole tribal hamlet and the British staff, since the villagers no longer have to worry about being flooded and the British engineers and technicians can return home to their families and helpers.

The tribal man Bashiam is a pivotal figure in the story. The novel's big and little events, from the first to the last, all involve him in some way. His importance in building the dam cannot be overstated. It's safe to say that the British engineers are completely satisfied with his performance as head crane operator. The elderly chief is another

resident of the tribal hamlet, and he has a small but important part to play at the novel's conclusion, acting as a conduit between the villagers and the British personnel in general, as well as the novel's heroine. He sees it as his duty as a village elder to ensure that the young tribe members maintain strong ties to their culture.

After reading Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969), one could get the impression that the representation of the tribals is very comparable to that of modern-day tribals living in rural tribal locations that stand in stark contrast to metropolitan centers. In Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969) the protagonist Helen retreats to the tribal world after finding the grandeur of modern civilization lacking. To integrate tribal people into modern society, it is important to stress the importance of education and economic development, and to encourage tribal people to make full use of the government program designed specifically for their benefit. This leaves us with just one option: cultivating a cooperative and cordial attitude towards them as a method of drawing them closer to us.

Love for Land and Tribal Culture in *The Black Hill*

Mamang Dai's novel, *The Black Hill* (2014), is a poignant portrayal of the Adi tribe' s life, culture, and struggles in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The novel explores the intricate relationships between the Adi people, their land, and their traditions, set against the backdrop of modernization and external influences. The novel vividly depicts the Adi tribe's deep connection with their land, which is a central theme of the narrative. The hills, forests, and rivers are not just geographical locations but are imbued with spiritual significance, myths, and legends. The Adi people' s relationship with their land is

one of reverence, reciprocity, and dependence. Through the character, the novel highlights the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and practices related to the land. Mamang Dai's novel provides a nuanced portrayal of Adi cultural practices, such as their rituals, festivals, and social norms. The novel explores the significance of oral traditions, myths, and legends in Adi culture, which are passed down through generations. The novel critiques the impact of modernization on Adi culture and traditions. The construction of a road, the introduction of modern education, and the influx of outsiders threaten the Adi tribe's way of life. The character of Miller, a government official, represents the external forces that seek to assimilate the Adi people into mainstream Indian culture. Through the Adi people's struggles, the novel highlights the importance of preserving cultural diversity and recognizing the rights of indigenous communities to their land and self-determination.

The novel *The Black Hill* opens with Gimur in the year 1847, in the Mebo village of the Adi region. Many neighboring tribes have gathered to discuss the British's proposed trading station in the hamlet. Gimur is introduced to Kajinsha, a leader of the Mishmi people. As they are so in love, they decide to run away together. Krick, a Jesuit priest, is getting ready to leave Paris and establish a mission in Tibet. From Assam, he would go to modern-day Arunachal Pradesh. In Kajinsha's area, Gimur makes his home. Kajinsha regularly visits the trading centers of Tibet and Burma. Auli, Kajinsha's first wife (Gimur is aware of this), her younger sister Chhomu, and Kajinsha's son Awesa are among the people she encounters on their journey to Zayul (Tibet) with Kajinsha. Buddhist Marpa is an enigmatic figure. The

Brokpas' and the Mishmi's had an understanding that the Mishmi's will keep outsiders out of Zayul, and that the Brokpas will stay out of Mishmi territory. Kajinsha wants unity among all the tribes and clans in his tribe so that they can work together to keep his region safe. The Khampti Chowsa and Kajinsha's cousin and fellow Mishmi chief Zumsha help him. Another Mishmi chief, Lamet, is broken, nevertheless. He is inspired by Marpa and has previously admitted white males into the region for financial gain.

Meanwhile, Krick finally makes it to Tibet after a long and perilous voyage. Kajinsha is also now in Tibet and is keeping a close watch on him. With Kajinsha's aid, Marpa suggests, Krick has made it to Tibet. He gives Kajinsha medicines and forces him to have sexual relations with Chhomu. Krick's brief time in Tibet is cut short when Chinese authorities expel him. He will be staying in Kajinsha region close to Tibet for the time being. After talking it out, Kajinsha and Krick become fast friends despite their divergent worldviews. As someone who has picked up on Kajinsha's affair with Chhomu, Krick can't help but feel bad for Gimur. Twins are a bad omen, and she has given birth to them.

Krick is forced to depart by Kajinsha since he was supposed to accompany the Tibetan regent when he met with the British in Assam. Gimur, still agitated, and Awesa set off towards Mebo. As a result, she will no longer have her son. Krick, who had previously spent a few days in Assam, eventually arrives in Mebo in search of an alternative route to Tibet through the Adi area. He forms a relationship with the Adi and Lendem a spiritual connection with Gimur. Later on, he is

forced to leave Mebo as well after being held responsible for starting a fire with his negative energy.

Kajinsha apologizes to Gimur and returns to pick her up. Meanwhile, Krick is again on his way to Tibet, this time accompanied by a different monk called Bourry. They went to Sommeu (Tibet) in 1954 and began setting up their shop. Once again, Kajinsha is the target of Marpa's accusations. He and Lamet devise a plan to eliminate the priest. Kajinsha is warned by Zumsha to put a stop to this, Kajinsha travels to Sommeu. Gimur has also independently arrived there. Unfortunately, they can't save Krick. Lamet gets there first, and he ends up killing Krick. To Gimur's arms he goes as he passes away. British authorities accuse Kajinsha of murder and take him into custody. Gimur, with the help of Chowsa and Lendem, tries her best but her efforts are in vain to free Kajinsha from the Assam prison of Dibrugarh. Many assaults against the British were carried out by several tribes after Kajinsha's execution.

Krick, Khajinsha, and Gimur play an important role in the novel. There are also other minor characters like Lamet, Sommeu, Chowsa, Lendem and Marpa. Gimur and Khajinsha are portrayed as saviors to their community and Krick is portrayed as a strong willed person whose ultimate goal is establishing his mission in Tibet by trying to understand the social differences among the tribals and their weakness. This reveals that when there is lack of unity among people it is certain that outsiders encroach in tribals' heartland and establish their mission.

Mamang Dai, born in 1957, writes poetry, novels, and articles under her own name. She used to be a high-ranking government official, but she just left her post to focus on writing full time. She has contributed

to publications including the Sentinel, the Telegraph, and the Hindustan Times. She worked for the World Wildlife Fund in Arunachal Pradesh as the Project Officer for their Biodiversity Hotspots Conservation Programme. She has served in a number of roles for organizations including the North East Writers' Forum, the Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation, the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society, and the Sahitya Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi. Dai received the Padma Shri, India's highest civilian honor, in the fields of literature and education in 2011. Famous for her works on Arunachal Pradesh, she is also a respected creative writer and cultural historian. She has written two books on the culture and cuisine of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, neither of which are well recognized outside of India (2005). Her artistic works span several genres. She has published three novels, *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), *Stupid Cupid* (2009), *and The Black Hill* (2014), which is about the colonial encounter with the Abor and Mishmee tribes over the murder of a Jesuit priest, Father Nicholas Krick, as well as two volumes of poetry, *The River Poems* (2004) and El balsam (Songs of the River) (2014). The mystical grandeur of Arunachal Pradesh is reflected in Mamang Dai's works, which also showcase the region's traditions, myths, beliefs, cultures, and beauty. In addition, they make an effort to fuse the oral tradition with the novel. She writes on how urbanization and modernity are eroding tribal identities and posing a danger to traditional ways of life.

Legends of Pensam (2006) by Mamang Dai, is a wonderful synthesis of the folklore, religious practices, historical background, and cultural practices of the Adis, an ethnic group indigenous to the Siang Valley.

Mamang Dai weaves her fiction and at the same time traces her origin, rejecting the depiction of history by the Raj and presenting discourse from the Subaltern point of view, against the historical backdrop of the assassination of Neol Williamson by the locals in 1911 and the Abor expedition of 1912.

Mamang Dai's *The Legends of Pensam* (2006) is clearly motivated by a search for origins, since the author describes every little quirk of Siang Valley. The narrator takes a helicopter ride back to his hometown, and this is mentioned right at the beginning of the prologue. One possible interpretation of this trip is a literal return to one's own country or other place of origin. The community was so tiny that ''few outsiders crossed our paths,'' as the narrator puts it, thus everyone there knew each other. (Dai. 2006: 4). Finding one's ancestry requires a visit to the past. The place where she was born comes back to her in vivid detail as the 'village heaved with life' that triggered the recollection. (Dai.2006: 4). 'Names and intriguing up like hidden diamonds, sparkling anew in their individual pathways and fates,' the narrator says, describing the image in her head. (Dai.2006:4). Her account of these mythical 'jewels' is compiled in her 2006 book, *The Legends of Pensam*, which is written from the author's first-person perspective. Rather than being narrated by hegemonic members who barely grasped the Adis of the Siang Valley's core. What Mamang Dai set out to do in *Legends of the Pensam* (2006) was to tell the stories of the people who lived there in the past and to provide us with a flavor of the region's culture, geography, faith, and traditions from the perspective of a local and a believer in the region's religion. In the

telling of her story, she travels through the halls of history in search of her beginnings.

The Legends of Pensam (2006), is a fantastic journey that reflects the author's search for her own origin and identity. An investigation of subaltern critique reveals that reconstructing history; the past of one's land, is the most important source for locating one's roots. *The Legends of Pensam* (2006) is a collection of legends pertaining to 'transition.' Mamang Dai informed us that the term Pensam might be defined as 'gardens that develop in the secret recesses of the heart.' (2006). Mamang Dai tells several Pensam stories under four titles. As the Legends progress, the between-hidden country truly takes the form of the Siang Valley, the narrator's home. Mamang Dai says that the Adi tribe exists in the prologue. The residents of the Siang Valley are the focus of the novel (Dai, 2006). Under the titles a *diary of the world, songs of the rhapsodist, daughters of the village, and a matter of time*, Mamang Dai relates many stories explaining the tradition, festival, geography, history, and tribal beliefs of the Adis.

In *Stupid Cupid* (2009) both Adna and Mareb are disillusioned with love. However, when Adna and Mareb initially arrived in Delhi, they were both enchanted with the city. Both of them fall in love with non-tribal Delhi males. Mamang Dai portrays them both as contemporary, liberal women who feel that religion, caste, and cultural distinctions have no bearing on romantic relationships. Both Adna and Mareb violate the cultural norms of their own homelands, which discourage intercultural marriages. In the majority of North eastern communities, it is customary to marry within a given ethnic, class, or social group, while rejecting others as inappropriate for marriage. People who marry

outside of their communities are either shunned or treated with disdain. Adna remembers her own aunt, who married a man outside of her community and was never mentioned in the family again since it was considered she had brought disgrace upon the family. Adna, like her aunt, wants to marry the person she loves, regardless of the individual's community. Mareb, on the other hand, did not want to confine herself to the four walls of her house, as did her mother. Despite her liberal beliefs, she finds herself bound and progressively shaped by conventional ways of thinking, and she accepts to marry a guy chosen by her father. But afterwards, her ex-lover, Rohit, entices and encourages her to fall in love with him again and have an affair with him. However, the guys they adore are only interested in having an affair with them in secret. The married partner of Adna never considers taking the relationship to the next level. It is implied that the male would eventually abandon her, albeit the reasons are unknown. Similar to Adna, many other women from the Northeast are fooled into love since they are not welcomed due to their ethnicity.

One of Mamang Dai's finest novels, *The Black Hill* was published in 2014 and won the Sahitya Akademi Award the succeeding year, in 2017. It was set in the state of Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India during the years 1840 and 1850 and centered on the first recorded interactions between the British and the indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Fiction and nonfiction about the people's history are intertwined in this novel. The novel focused heavily on the Arunachal Pradesh tribes of Abor and Mishmee. When referring to the Adi people, the word Abor refers to their traditional name. The novel's protagonists, Gimur and Kajinsha, embody universal human emotions

through their experiences with love, loss, and ultimately, life. It also included Father Nicholas Krick, a French priest with a dogged determination to enter Tibet and do missionary work there.

The story of *The Black Hill (2014)* is non-chronological. The plot is presented in a linear fashion with a variety of time jumps, flashbacks, dream sequences, etc. it zooms in and out of a tale like a movie camera, following numerous people and plotlines. The tale is portrayed from a third-person perspective, giving readers complete insight into the main character and all of the other players. Both *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen are told from a third-person objective point of view. The events in the novel take place at the start of a period marked by upheaval and transformation. Dai writes in a lyrical and conversational style, therefore it's no surprise that she's a poet. Literally, it's a festival dedicated to the art of storytelling and the preservation of oral traditions.

The novel opens with the narrative of a 17-year-old girl called Gimur who lives in the Mebo hamlet of the Abor tribe. She's portrayed as a strong-willed, independent young woman who defies her family and culture in order to wed her true love. After losing her father when she was just six years old, she now lives with her mother. Her relatives in the narrative are aunt Moi and her cousin Lendem. What happens to Gimur is revealed gradually as the narrative unfolds. While that's happening, the pieces of the tales that have been connected together begin to fit together. The meaning of the word Mebo means both 'desire' and 'nostalgia' for the long ago time when brothers had lived together. (Dai, p, 27)

> ‘Our numbers are many,’ they said. Who can threaten us? The British may conquer the world but they will never take our land. The words of the migluns are like a fleabite. At the heart of this anger was the issue of runaway ‘slaves’ who had taken advantage of the tribes’ engagement as allies of the British during the Anglo-Burmese war. These ‘slaves’ were the offspring of men and women captured by the Abor in Tribal wars who had been absorbed into the tribe to perform domestic and agricultural services. (Dai, p, 25)

To understand the nature and power of tribals the above lines speaks about how tribals are determined to protect their own land from missionaries and British colonies. Tribals have always been exploited by the dominant groups of the people in the society and this is an example of how the British eyed tribal land to grab their land and dismantle their settlement who were living peacefully on the hill area. In this narrative, Gimur, Kajinsha, and Krick are all interconnected, and as a result, they play crucial roles in the plot. Kajinsha is a powerful figure from the Mishmee tribe. After the death of his father, he assumed leadership of his family’s clan. There were a lot of issues that Kajinsha had to deal with in the narrative. He had found the one he would spend the rest of his life with, but they were doomed from the start. Protecting his people from outsiders was only one of many duties he had to do as chief of his tribe. With its action taking place at a period of great social upheaval, the novel is packed with exciting developments. White settlers were busy setting up camp while local people were drawing boundaries around the area. Kajinsha had hoped to find calm, but the loss of his son Siengbow shattered his world.

Marpa from Somneu village was behind a conspiracy that made the surrounding clans feel unsafe, despite the fact that he had no intention of killing the French missionaries. Marpa concocted a plan in which Kajinsha would be held responsible for the murder. Lemet was the one who shot and murdered Priest Krick in 1854. Lemet is a very greedy guy who will do anything for financial gain. Marpa was ultimately successful in his schemes because of Lemet. There was a lot of atmosphere created by the tribal rivalries. As the narrative draws to a close, Kajinsha is kidnapped and sent to Debrooghur Jail, where his destiny is sealed when he accidentally kills a jail guard due to a misunderstanding. After this, Gimur and her cousin brother Lendem went to see Kajinsha in prison, where they were able to finally meet each other. However, the narrative goes on to reveal that Kajinsha and Gimur were responsible for the death of a guard. After Gimur's jailbreak, Kajinsha was presumed dead.

Contrary to popular assumption that tribal women are weak and inferior, Gimur exhibits strong and undeterred personality despite many taboos and superstitions. She says as long as there is breath in my body I will never bow down to any god and beg for mercy she told herself. (180). This is how tribal women display their bravery and strong willed attitude in the face of despair but they were portrayed in a negative manner in the majority of the non-tribal writings.

The French priest is linked to all the disasters that befall the protagonists. Krick was a guy with an unusual level of passion for his missionary work. Like Kajinsha, he had a chance to live, but his death was already predetermined. Kajinsha had attempted to warn him away from their country, but he had no luck. On his second trip to Tibet,

Priest Krick brought Augustine Bourry, a 26-year-old missionary along with him. The narrative begins after Krick's second attempt to reach Tibet in the year 1854. Now the link between the two tales is learnt. The Mishmee tribal man was executed after the deaths of the two French missionaries. Gimur played a crucial part in the novel by demonstrating unconditional devotion for his beloved. Her fate was brief and severe, but she faced it with dignity. Contrary to expectations, Mamang plays Gimur as a resolute individual from the very first scene to the very last.

After the Mishmee tribe leader (Kajinsha) dies, the novel ends, and Gimur is not mentioned again in the narrative. There was also no record of the discovery of the two priests' corpses. Two sides of the narrative of real love are shown: the greed of men and the failure to communicate that led to tragic outcomes. Due to its oral storytelling roots, this tale lacks internal coherence, yet its excellence rises to heights beyond the scope of most people's wildest dreams.

There are a number of pertinent themes that can be drawn from the novel, including the depiction of a love story and the act of genuine love. Gimur and Kajinsha, Krick's eternal devotion to the divine, is shown through their love tale. More good elements make reading enjoyable and rewarding for the readers. Each of the story's protagonists, Gimur and Krick, exemplifies 'Determination' in their own unique way. Despite this, there is open warfare between the families, highlighting the concept of 'Rivalry among tribes,' which is both distressing and all too typical in both ancient and modern societies. Sadness or sorrow is often felt when remembering how colonization led to the loss of one's cultural and political identity.

Gimur, Kajinsha, and Father Krick all hailed from various geographical areas, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions, but fate drew them together. When their paths inevitably crossed, they made a feeble attempt to decipher each other. They were motivated by a desire to do well in many ways, such as defending their homeland against invaders, sharing the gospel, and experiencing life to the fullest. Their goals and aspirations were partially realized before tragedy struck. An excursion by troops into the steep areas interrupted the routines of the local tribal inhabitants. The Mishmee and the Abor were two of the many indigenous groups who resisted the arrival of outsiders because they valued their autonomy. Their opposition to the migluns or whites varies, however, from clan to clan. At the same time as some of the chiefs fought against their own brothers as British sepoys, for example, in the Suddya war, others, like Kajinsha's father, Kajinsha, and Zumsha, were adamantly opposed to the miglun's presence in their territory. Some chiefs and clans have tried to fight the migluns, but they have been mainly ineffective since leaders like Marpa and Lamet have colluded against their own people with the Migluns, which has stoked inter-tribal violence. The tribals believe in spirits and they have no faith in drugs as Arayars in Kerala, Krick gives an example how tribals die:

> 'Krick realized that the people here had no faith in drugs and medical diagnosis. Everything that befell a man came from the spirit world and the only physician was the shaman who could intercede with spirits that caused human beings to fall ill and die. If the power of shaman was based on exorcism and unshakable faith in the unseen, he too had turned into a

> foreigner shaman, the man who created belief that his touch would cure them. It is through faith that we are healed.'(Dai, p.p, 178-179).

To elaborate the above, tribals are underdeveloped due to their blind belief in spirits and exorcism. Many tribals still believe in superstitions and spirits and die. If they could come out of their faith they would definitely eradicate poverty and be on par with the mainstream. They have strong faith in taboos and spirits. They also believe in the existence of God.

Many colonialists saw missionaries and schools in mountainous regions as tools to further enslave the indigenous people there. When Father Nicholas Krick, a French priest, arrived in Mishmee territory, he was met with fierce resistance. The Mishmee had learned from history that whatever progress gained in one area always led to the miglun settling there and taking over the Mishmee's land and other domains. Since the only way for Father Krick to enter Tibet is over the Mishmee highlands, he was unable to achieve his goal of preaching the gospel in Tibet. The tribal people, wary of his objective, repeatedly foiled him and his hopes. But it wasn't all for nothing; he influenced and healed a few Mishmee tribespeople, and they gave him their thanks.

In addition to the colonial theme, other important components include the varied and vibrant local ecosystem, customs, cultures, beliefs, and the place of women within the home and the larger community. *The Black Hill (2014),* like other postcolonial publications, challenges the conventional forms and methods of colonial literature. Postcolonial authors have complete sway over the tales they tell, since they develop

their own techniques and approaches to storytelling and convey their own versions of the past and present. This is done through using local idioms, metaphors, symbols, and speeches, giving their compositions a post-colonial flavor.

Tribes and clans in Northeast India have always had harmonious coexistence with their natural surroundings. A sense of 'rootedness' permeates the literature of Northeast India. The roots of the land that is loved and cherished, the roots of the people and the culture, all serve to illustrate this (Ngangom and Nongkynrih xii). The indigenous inhabitants of Northeast India hold land in the highest esteem. As shown with the Mishmee and Abor people of *The Black Hill* (2014), the land is more than just a surface; it is the people's prideful home. For the natives, land is a major concern. Conflict between indigenous groups existed long before the era of European colonization, exacerbated by competition over resources including territory, fisheries, and game. It was the people's deep attachment to the land they had called home for generations that made them so adamantly resist the migluns' attempts to remove it from them. Indigenous lands were seen as places of logical deficiency for colonial reasons, whether they were really underutilized or vacant.

According to Plumwood, anthropocentrism is inextricably linked to colonial ideology. By imposing their own culture and infrastructure on native communities, colonists subjugate the natural world ('Decolonizing,' 504). As a result of colonialism, many indigenous peoples no longer believe in or practice their traditional ways of being deeply connected to the earth. Colonizers appropriated native lands for agricultural and industrial use and the development of tourist

attractions. However, the indigenous notion of land was gradually superseded by other ideas and terminology such as private property and deserialization (Featherstone 202). This resulted in the loss of land and property rights for the indigenous people. That's why discussions of geography and location feature prominently in postcolonial writing. It was a vexing problem even after colonial control ended, and it hadn't been solved throughout that time. To understand how much tribals of Mebo village value and love their land the following lines speak volumes. 'Our members are many,' 'Who can threaten us? The British may conquer the world but they will never take our land. The words of the migluns are like fleabite' (Dai, p, 25). Their strength and confidence to fight against the British is revealed in the above lines. Land is not only a place to live in and cultivate but it is a book for them to read and understand nature. They go to any extent to protect their land and save their culture.

To know how much, they love the land the following words of Kajinsha reveals the same:

> Kajinsha said, 'The Tibetan lamas have books and you read your books for knowledge of God. We read the land. The land is our book. Everything here on this hill, the grass and the rocks and stones is saying something. And what falls from the sky- rain, thunder and lightning – are also the voices of spirits telling us something. It is how we learnt what is good or bitter, by living here and remembering what happens during the day and the night, every day for hundreds of years'. The time we have is what we call life. It is how I stand, hunt, sleep, and breathe. Who knows when life will end, and how death will

> come- by fire, by water, a falling tree, illness or from the hand of an enemy? But whether one will live a long life, a successful life, these are not considerations. The desire is to live!' (Dai, p, 140)

This is how the majority of tribals feel and have opinions about life. They completely depend on the forest; they adore nature follow social values, respect and selflessness. They never crave for superficial happiness and they live life without harming anyone, cheating and depending on anyone. They always believe in themselves for their life.

> Khajinsha also says. 'My father also told me that everything on earth and sky is connected since we are born of the same mother. It is very simple. We belong to the land. The land is a good mother. I take only what I need. Animals and trees offer themselves. We help each other survive. Tell me priest, what do you think of our land? ' (Dai, p, 141).

Kajinsha is a symbol of selflessness and stands firm for their community. His pure words reveal his true nature towards life and land. Contrary to modern man's attitudes who always want to have more and more and always accumulate property illegally and by unethical practices.

According to Crosby, the triumph of European imperialism may be traced to ecological and biological factors (7). Colonialism's ecological control has a chilling effect on indigenous people's respect for and belief in the natural world. Since, they no longer had access to the trees, woods, mountains, and other natural resources that had been fundamental to their religion and way of life. Westerners have a multifaceted conception of space that incorporates architectural,

physical, psychological, and theoretical dimensions. The indigenous way of thinking and the physical environment have been transformed by these ideas. The conquerors had a low opinion of indigenous territory and saw it as something to be ruled or controlled. For instance, indigenous people saw the land as a living entity, conquerors saw it as something that can be domesticated and improved upon**.** These actions altered the original and natural setting from which natives and tribal peoples drew inspiration for their myths, tales, and religious practices. The native settlements were free to make their own decisions on land use, resource management, and government. However, things changed significantly under British administration and have persisted in independent India. Over time, invaders used a variety of tactics to maintain control over indigenous populations. According to Xaxa ('Tribes and Indian,' 120), the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1873 was enacted with the intention of drawing a boundary between the plains and the hill, the Dafla and the Abor people. This statute lacked a component of direct administration. This created a natural barrier between the hills and the plains, allowing the former to better defend their territory.

Humans are inextricably linked to the locations and landscapes that sustain them and bio regionalists work to restore this connection. In the narrative, it's not only the natives who are hostile to the migluns' incursion into their territory; the forest is, too. Due to a curve in the river system, British forces were unable to approach the settlement of Mebo by water. Even though the migluns were hampered by the rugged landscape, the indigenous people consider it a boon since it keeps outsiders out of their country.

> In the meroms (communal hearths) of Mebo, the locals have been having heated discussions about how they have no intention of selling their property to the migluns. As their ancestors had done before them, they continued the practice of vigilantly guarding their territory. People in the meroms came together out of a shared passion for their homeland, giving new meaning to the adage "a fire brings people together" (Dai, p, 25).

The position of women in tribal communities is varied, since each maintained its own norms regarding the female population. Arunachal Pradesh's many tribes adhered to the patriarchal system. The father is the family's leader, but the mother manages the household's affairs. Like her husband, she supplied for her family's necessities. It is criticized that the mother or wife's mishandling of household affairs has led to hunger or poverty in the home (Nyori 209). Traditional women were less privileged than males in various aspects of social and political life, but their mistreatment by men is not condoned by society. Boehmer suggests that tribal or indigenous women are also referred to as subaltern women. They are 'doubly' or 'triply' marginalized on the basis of their gender, race, socioeconomic class, religion, caste, sexual orientation, and regional position (216). In her discussion titled 'Finding the Word,' Dai offers her perspective on traditional women in tribal cultures.

In his wanderings around the countryside Krick met men and women who were gentle and humble. They bowed their heads and moved aside to let him pass. If he tried to greet them they averted their gaze (Dai,

p, 231). Tribal women were very loyal and hardworking. It is even seen in the present day tribal women.

In rural communities, it is difficult to distinguish between men and women since they rely on one another and labor together throughout the seasons. Tribal women are women of wisdom and have keen insight. They possess lasting strength and are able to pick up the pieces of their life after failure, hardship, and so on. They understand the laws and conventions of their culture and recognize that they cannot have everything; nonetheless, they are pleased with what they have. By doing so, people do not feel restless about the items they were unable to obtain. The traditional women do not identify as contemporary feminists. Traditional women were content with what they had, however contemporary feminism is based on women's equal involvement in politics, religion, and for equal pay for equal labor. They were proficient in agricultural labor, housework, and other tasks typically handled by women. However, this does not imply that women are equal to men.

The Black Hill (2014), tells the story of many powerful female characters who suffered at the hands of patriarchal and colonial authorities. This showed the gloomy reality of the indigenous women whose sufferings and voices had been muted. In addition to being colonized by their own people, women were also colonized by the colonial authority. The other side recounts the tale of their valor, tenacity, and diligence. Both menfolk and the whites in authority were amazed and intimidated by their courageous and independent choices. Since the novel is set in tribal communities, traditional roles and expectations of women are interwoven into the plot.

> 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. At the time this story begins Gimur was seventeen-year-old. (Dai, p, 2)

Gimur is the only lady whose life illustrates a great deal. Her name is derived from the month in which she was born. Gimur was a hard worker who excelled at domestic tasks, but she also acted like a boy by whistling and climbing trees, causing her to sustain injuries. While the males oversaw and protected their lands from the miglun, the women managed the houses and performed fieldwork. After Gimur met Kajinsha, she established a bond with him and was prepared to leave her community to live with Kajinsha. She concealed her affair from her mother, but was unable to do so in front of Lendem, his cousin, who reprimanded her since Kajinsha was from a different village and inter-village romances were forbidden. Gimur broke societal traditions by eloping with Kajinsha when she was pregnant with Kajinsha's kid.

> Gimur knew that what she had to say would not be well received. She remembered how Moi's husband had gone to look for the woman who had run away from the village with a lover so many years ago. Her uncle and relatives were respected elders but they were taciturn men who talked only of abhor pride. She knew what they would say. An Abor girl should behave according to custom. Every girl is an asset to her family and a man taking her away in marriage must

> compensate her parents for depriving them of a daughter. This was the customary bride price called a-regelic. Just for a moment Gimur wondered how many heads of mithun she might have been worth. But she knew Kajinsha's gifts, even if he brought them, would be rejected. Abor villages were secure enclaves where the rules of tradition were never crossed. Inter-tribe relationships were a betrayal to the community and girls married outsiders were spurned, useless like mustard seed scattered to the winds. (Dai, p.p, 45-46).

Contrary to the mainstream opinion that tribal women are weak and inferior. Gimur exhibits outstanding valor and faces challenging tasks to protect her family and land. She also faced humiliations and hardships in the process of achieving her aim. She stands as one of the important and turning points in the novel. She may be misportrayed in other novels written by elite sections of writers. There are many such tribals who can exhibit their valor and strength in times of suppression but they were not portrayed appropriately.

> The clear days of winter passed quickly and Mebo settled into an uneasy calm. Many of the visitors had left saying, 'Call us when the time comes.' They knew, just as well as the British did, that nothing could happen now during the rainy season from March till September. Everything was subservient to nature. Now it was plating time, working time. A gust of wind brought the first drops of rain and Mebo had a deserted look as men and women prepared their artik-fields, before the weather broke. (31). Gimur's mother worked day and night planting, weeding, washing, fetching, digging, her hands were

> black with charcoal, wood, fire, paddy, husk, pigs, and fowl. Gimur pitied her. (Dai, p, 35).

It is a known fact that tribals both men and women, work relentlessly in agricultural fields when the season starts. Before the start of the agricultural work they perform various Pooja's and sacrifice goats in order to appease their village deity for the smooth and seamless performance of the work. The neighboring villagers and their tribesmen also help each other in their work. This is the nature of tribal people and their mutual respect towards their clan people. 'Tell them about us,' Kajinsha had said to her that night in the jail. 'Tell them we are good. Tell them we also had something to say. But we cannot read and write, so we tell the stories. '*Stories…words…I too have word.* (Dai, p, 288)

This is how Kajinsha genuinely reveals the nature and reality of tribals to outsiders who don't understand the tribals. Change is inevitable but change for good is better than unchanged. There is no restitution there. Perhaps some stories always elude the historians. Perhaps some things are better left unexplained. What happens to their endeavor, their very presence in these mountains? In their lifetime, they couldn't convert a single soul. The south Tibet mission was abandoned, forever, it seemed, and until one day in December of 1997 the first Mismi Catholic converts were baptized in a makeshift church in Tezu, the headquarters of Lohit District.

Khajinsha strongly resists the encroachment of outsiders particularly father Krick because he feels that their unity, identity and tranquility of their life-style may get shattered once they land in their settlements. Khajinsha's character reveals so many ethics, moral values and hard

realities of life. Khajisha's approach to life is worth learning. He says nature gives the true meaning of life. Tribals in *The Black Hill* strongly believe in god. Everything is in the hands of God, he thought. Everything is already written. Build me a temple and I will dwell among you…he thought about the innocence of the human heart given by God (140). To understand their love and attachment to land and forefathers Khajinsha says 'songs of magic blood and dreams. It has been there from the time of our forefathers. I only have to recall and it is there here…' he tapped his forehead. My father also told me that everything on earth and sky is connected since we are born to the same mother. It is very simple. We belong to the land. The land is a good mother; I take only what I need. Animals and trees offer themselves. We help each other survive. Tell me, priest, what do you think of our land?' (141).

This is how tribals are deeply connected to the land and nature. There is no selfishness or any sort of self-possession; they only live for their happiness and take what nature gives. Pure love and the true meaning of life are seen among tribal life-style and self-resistance and resistance from outsiders. Gimur the wife of Khajinsha is emotionally strong and portrays how a tribal woman can face and resist all the hurdles in her personal life as well as in her community. Though tribals in *The Black Hill* strongly believe in taboos, superstations, spirits and god they continue to resist and fight strongly for their rights and preserve their land from outside forces.

It is in this context that the following quote from Mahatma Gandhi is very insightful. 'We must approach the poor with the mindset of the poor, and so too, we must approach the tribesmen.' If tribals realise

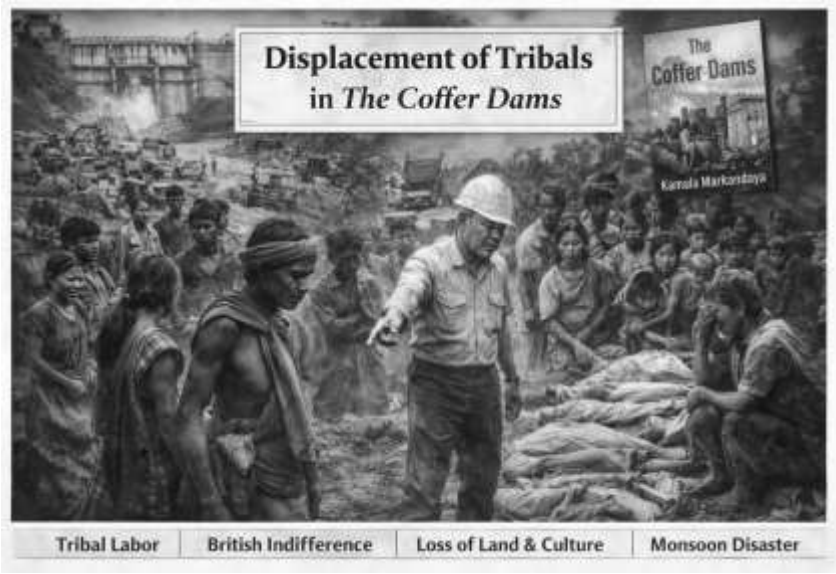
and change their mindset that they are not 'inferior' to or less than anyone in the society they would be on par with mainstream society. *In Coffer Dams* (1969) construction of the Dam symbolizes modernization, advancement but at the same time the inhuman attitude of the Clinton towards tribal people leads to the step motherly attitude and colonial mindset of the people who are in power.

Whereas in *The Black Hill* though tribal people portray as the saviors of their culture and identity they were cheated by their own community people and outsiders. They preserve their culture and ancestral spirit and also they have strong belief in superstitions and spirits which is a barrier for their development. Krick's character portrays modernization who strongly desires to establish Catholic missionary in the tribal region. It also signifies death and destruction. Kajinsha and Gimur stand as strong pillars for the development of the plot. They also stand for bravery and courageous people who always want to preserve their language, values, land and culture and also protect their land.

Both the novels portray the suppression and resistance of tribals. Because of these reasons tribals are still underdeveloped and their conditions have not been improved. The violent and expected fury of nature which suddenly creates havoc in the lives of the people and as a result of it people from *The Coffer Dams* and *The Black Hill* suffer a lot. In addition to it, tribals in both the novels are misportrayed by outsiders. The outsiders, whether it could be Britishers or missionaries, have a common goal of accomplishing their aim. In the process of establishing their mission they are least bothered about tribals and not

shown any concerns or treated them equally. This shows the discriminatory attitude of the mainstream and outsiders.

By the end of the two novels, the aim of outsiders is known as a dominant and exploitative nature towards tribal people that created havoc in their lives. But tribal people are the most affected and losers of their native land, cultural values, traditions. Both the novels place high value on emotions, love and affection, cultural integrity, taboos, rituals, and their dreams are shattered by the outsiders who they never expected to happen.



(OpenAI, 2026)

Implications of the Study

The portrayal of tribals, land, culture, and displacement in works like *The Black Hill* (2014) by Mamang Dai and *The Coffer Dams* (1969),

by Kamala Markandaya has profound implications, as noted by writers like Arundhati Roy and Mahasweta Devi, who have extensively written about the human cost of development projects. The narratives underscore how displacement isn't just physical relocation; it's a cultural and emotional uprooting, as Dai vividly captures in *The Black Hill* (2014) . Tribals are forced to leave behind their ancestral lands, sacred sites, and traditional ways of life, leading to identity crises and social disintegration. The construction of *The Coffer Dams* (1969) , like the Polavaram project, exemplifies this, where thousands of tribals are displaced, their lives irrevocably altered, as highlighted by Roy in her non-fiction works. These stories also bring to the forefront the clash between traditional knowledge systems and modern developme nt paradigms. The tribals' deep connection with nature, their sustainable practices, and rich cultural heritage are often pitted against large-scale projects, raising questions about whose development is being prioritized, as Devi's works like *Douloti the Bountiful* poignantly illustrate.

The portrayal also highlights the resilience and resistance of tribal communities. *The Black Hill* showcases the Adi tribe's determination to preserve their culture and land, mirroring real-life movements where tribals fight for their rights and against displacement, as seen in the works of writers like K. S. Singh, who documented tribal movements and struggles.

The implications of these narratives are multifaceted:

- They challenge policymakers to consider more inclusive and sustainable development models, as advocated by Roy and other writers.

- They underscore the importance of recognizing and respecting tribal rights and cultural heritage, echoing the sentiments of scholars like Ramachandra Guha.
- They bring attention to the need for alternative narratives that prioritize environmental sustainability and social justice.

Eventually, these stories serve as a reminder of the echoes of the past that continue to shape the present. They urge us to listen to the voices of indigenous communities, to value their knowledge and traditions, and to work towards a more equitable future. By doing so, we can ensure that development doesn't come at the cost of cultural erasure and human suffering.

Conclusion

After a thorough study of these two novels, it is understood that both the novels have a common vision in their novels that is in *The Coffer Dams,* completing the construction of the dam signifies modernization and change in the life-style of people. It is both challenging and inviting change in the system. Whereas, in *The Black Hill* setting up a Christian missionary in the tribal hamlet which paves the way to the entry of the British. The tribe put all out efforts to stop their entry. In this process they faced so many hardships and obstacles, pathos and bathos. Though both were written by two different socially and culturally different writers, both these novels have tribals who play a key role in the novel. In *The Black Hill* Mamang Dai portrays the importance of land in tribals' life. How tribals learn everything about life through nature, and their love and affection and attitude towards life is very much appreciable but change of life-style is also equally important in life.

In *The Coffer Dams*, Kamala Markandaya portrayed tribals as savage, sluggish, uncivilized, and Jungly wallah, which is humiliating and misportrayal of the tribals. More focus was laid on the non-tribal characters such as Clinton, Helen, Mackendrick, Krishnan and they were depicted as the main characters in the novel. Except Bashiam, other characters' names were not revealed by the writer. This shows her discriminatory attitude towards tribals. Though Bashiam and other tribal characters worked to construct the dam their names are not even mentioned and nowhere in the novel were they portrayed properly and genuinely. This shows the sullen attitude of the elite and mainstream writers.

On the other hand, Mamang Dai comes from a tribal background of Arunachal Pradesh she has struggled to establish herself as writer and experienced the hegemonic nature of the elite. She depicted tribals fighting spirit and resistance genuinely in her novel *The Black Hill*. Gimur and Kajinsha as the protagonist of the novel played a crucial role in the novel. Though it is a historical novel the events and incidents in the novel are portrayed without distortion of the facts. They symbolize the true valiant nature and fighting spirit of the tribals. Though the majority of the characters are tribals, some non-tribal characters like Krick are also portrayed in a true sense in the context of the novel.

Moreover, in *The Black Hill* Mamang Dai portrayed tribal culture, their land, values, taboos, and belief system genuinely. To understand the culture of any community all these aspects play a vital role in understanding the tribals and their life-style. The true love and nature of tribals to preserve their land and culture is impeccable. The conflict

between tribal culture and the miglun, or British, has a prominent position in Dai's works. In addition to this, Dai provides a thorough description of the 'Adi' and 'Mishmee' people's beliefs, culture, myths, stories, and way of life. The novel's central theme is the transformation of the indigenous population from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial period.

Dai depicts Kajinsha as a victim of eviction. Kajinsha's hardships force him to protect his territory against any alien incursion. Kajinsha is not held guilty for the death of the French priest Krick in the novel. He is persecuted as a result of the presumed rumors propagated among the people in the hills, as well as the wrath of the other tribes. This reversal of the previously held belief reveals the author's aim to take a strong stance against the colonial depiction of the Tribes. The killing of Kajinsha demonstrates the colonizers' motive. They do not seek justice for the death of the Christian priest, but rather to subdue the Tribes' opposition to their progress into tribal territory and bring them under their rule. Dai's emphasis on the loss of the British in her words 'the white people running' suggests a postcolonial tone. Her narrative not only depicts tribal resistance against the British and their defeat, but it also reveals the ignored and forgotten annals of the tribals in Indian linear history.

Mamang Dai laments for the inaccurate interpretation of several authentic tales from the native people in western literature. She believes it is her responsibility to fight textualization and reconstruct the histories of the silent past. 'Every morning, I think all the stories of the world are connected,' she says, explaining why she chose to tell the story. There are still untold, distinct stories, a different voice

informs me at night. There are a lot of forgotten tales in the world, as well as ones that date back a hundred years or less. (Dai ix) She feels that the priest's account is likewise contrived. The evidence states that a Mishmi chief was accused of being responsible for the priest's demise. This story attempts to highlight the tribals' pitiful acts. However, they differ from what is described in the texts. Kajinsha tries to smash the British mirror: 'Tell them about us…' inform them of our positive performance. Tell them we had something to say. But we are unable to read or write. According to Dai (288), 'we tell stories'. Kajinsha's relatives massacred Lamet's family in retaliation for betraying him to the British, but they had no idea what the history books would state.

Dai's work fiercely resists British cultural colonialism. Cultural hegemony tries to improve colonial control by promoting religion and missionary schools. One social group exerts authority over another. According to philosophy and sociology, a varied society can be governed and dominated by one social class. Western countries consider themselves superior to Orients and seek to teach them their way of life. Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill* highlights the anguish and suffering of northeast indigenous communities that have been overlooked or distorted in history and literature, perpetuating colonialism. The novel creates a fresh interpretation of tribal history including a local spirit. The work captures the essence of the Northeast tribes' traditional ethos, which is rapidly disappearing.

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