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## The Representation of the Ethnic Life-World of the Adis in Mamang Dai's *The Legends of Pensam*: An Ecocritical Reading

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Literature in English from Northeast India has been as much stereotyped as the region has been. Of course, a lot of fictional writing which has emerged from Northeast India has been about “bloodshed and killings”, as Mamang Dai, one of the foremost writers from the region, has pointed out in her article “On Creation Myths and Oral Narratives”. This could be regarded as a natural spin-off of what the region has witnessed and experienced on a regular basis for a long time: militancy, ethnic strife, issues related to migration, and so on. However, to consider militancy, ethnic strife and violence as the only defining thematic issues of literature in English from the Northeast would surely be going a bit overboard. Even a cursory glance at the writings in English from the Northeast reveals that the authors from the region have been deeply concerned with the extremely important issues of climate change, deforestation, poaching, environmental degradation, etc. Authors like Temsula Aao, Mamang Dai, Aruni Kashyap, Easterine Kire, *et al.*, have brought to the fore, through their fictional work, issues regarding ecology and environment. For instance, Dai's *The Legends of Pensam*, a collection of nineteen stories, which narrativises the life-world of the Adis, a conglomeration of various ethnic subgroups of the Tani people inhabiting the central belt of Arunachal Pradesh in the districts of East Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang, Lower Dibang Valley and Lohit Namsai, is one such literary work from the Northeast which blows out the old dust of stereotype as it does not deal with the seemingly ‘real’ or ‘bigger’ issues of militancy and ethnic strife but simply narrates the tales of the Adis living in oblivion amidst the lofty and lush valleys of the state, which is famous as a biodiversity hotspot, housing a diverse range of flora and fauna and is one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world. Of late, however, Arunachal Pradesh has, like the rest of India, become a site of constant social, political and economic changes, and it is these changes perforating a society which has always lived in close communion with the natural world that *The Legends of Pensam* documents, showing especially the difficulty that the Adis are facing in remodelling their lives “according to the demands of the changing times” (Misra xviii).

In her endeavour of narrating the legends and fables which are an integral part of the lives of the Adis, Mamang Dai uses her intimate personal experience of their primordial customs and beliefs and becomes thereby a kind of a ‘cultural historian’ whose work provides us the resource from which we can glean the history of the Adis (Baral 8). In an interview given to Subash N. Jeyan for the ‘Literary Review’ section of *The Hindu*, Dai declares:

Ours is an oral tradition you know, I was trying to meet people and collect and record these oral narratives. You know, the small histories which were getting lost and when you talk to people even small things can trigger these memories off.

She admits that the prime objective behind her writings in general is to protect and preserve the heritage and legacy of these tales. This she does by weaving a complex and intriguing narrative structure in which history, myth, tradition, memory and

fiction merge. The nineteen tales in *The Legends of Pensam* are an interconnected group of stories spelling out the ethos of the Adi tribal life and their belief system. Divided into four different sub-titled sections, namely “a diary of the world”, “songs of the rhapsodist”, “daughters of the village” and “a matter of time”, the stories chart out the metamorphosis of a group of Adi people from a primordial society into one evolving towards a modern set up, living, dreaming and experiencing life at a certain point in time. As Gunjana Dey, in her article “Writing for an Endangered Nature and Culture: An Ecocritical Reading of Mamang Dai’s *The Legends of Pensam*”, points out,

...[t]hese stories are spread across a few generations of a family as a result of which the same characters reappear in most of the tales, giving the book a more or less novel-like structure. Traditional tribal beliefs form the nucleus of the lives of the characters in this book; spirits, shamans and unnatural events influence their lives in more ways than one. This intricate web of stories gradually unfolds into the history of a tribe. This book is an intermingling of myth and history of the tribe of Adis of the Siang valley.... (76)

The story line in *The Legends of Pensam* engages a lot of what goes into curating the belief system of the Adis – myths, legends, taboos, etc. Being a society based on animism or practising the animist faith, their belief system largely rests on the seemingly supernatural. However, it is interesting to note that these apparent supernatural beliefs go into creating a unique niche where the human and the nonhuman interact and live in peace. Thus, it can be said that in *The Legends of Pensam* the Adi society has been represented based on their world view, with the narration moving forward to portray how external events altered the course of the Adi society.

This paper attempts to understand the representation of the customs and beliefs of the Adis through the lens of ecocriticism, a critical mode of study which looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying attention to the attitudes towards the physical environment and the strategies employed when speaking about it. A life-world, as conceptualized in the work of Schutz (cited in Biswas and Suklabaidya 18), is the bedrock of any society, presenting and preserving a set of values and norms that are self-evidently real. This concept of the life-world can also be viewed from the ecocritical perspective by associating it with the notion of bioregionalism, which Lindholdt, in an anthology edited by Branch and Slovic (cited in Mukhejee 44), defines as “the process of rediscovering human connections to the land” (244). The essence of the Adi society, being largely based on its connection with the land and its elements, opens up a new perspective of understanding the life-world through the lens of ecocriticism, a working definition of which, as given by Glotfelty in her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). But it must be noted that the concern of ecocriticism is not only to find direct representations of environment in literary texts. Rather, it also endeavours to understand the role of culture and its implications that have environmental corollaries (Dey 72). Lawrence Buell, one of the foremost ecocritics, in his major work *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, has laid down the following four important criteria for any work of literature to have possible ecocritical implications:

1. The non-human dimension must be an actual presence in the work and not merely a facade.
2. Human interest should not be the only legitimate interest.
3. Human accountability to the environment is a part of the text's ethical orientation.
4. Environment should not be portrayed as static but as a constant process.

In this context, it can be said that *The Legends of Pensam* has the potential for becoming an ideal text for an ecocritical analysis from the point of both thematic and technical considerations. The analysis in the subsequent sections would try to ascertain the ways in which sweeping social, political and economical changes have impacted upon the ethnic life-world of the Adis, and how they have responded to such changes. There is, of course, no gainsaying that the major contention of this paper is to understand these changes from an ecocritical viewpoint.

The introductory section of the *The Legends of Pensam*, titled "a diary of the world", takes the reader to the abode of the Adis, the 'Pensam' (of the title of the book), which in the Adi language literally means 'in-between'. Hence, it is possibly an 'in-between' place in the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh which is the setting of the stories. Figuratively, the word 'pensam' could also refer to the stories hidden in between the main stories told in the book. In the abode of the Adis, the inhabitants live in perfect sync with the elements, weaving out indigenous myths and stories which go into creating a shield to protect their immediate environment. Dai introduces the readers to the geographical features of the land as well to the inhabitants' belief systems, myths and folklores, which, being collective, shared and communitarian in nature, are essential for an artist to represent the consciousness of a particular group of people.

In *The Legends of Pensam*, the detailed descriptions of the geographical features of the region run through the entire narration. The text is, in fact, replete with visual imagery and is permeated with the reference of the colour green which is described as "the colour of escape and solitude" (8), thereby suggesting the kind of relationship the people have with their immediate surroundings. This immediately points to the ecocritical significance of their perception of the environment if it is looked at from the perspective of the definition provided by Glotfelty mentioned earlier. However, as the narration progresses, the tone of serenity, sustainability and peaceful coexistence is thoroughly ruptured by a perpetual sense of impending doom. This motif becomes an important trope for the ecocritical analysis of Dai's text in the subsequent sections of the paper.

An important note about the imagery in *The Legends of Pensam* is the fact that there is a constant juxtaposition of two opposite visual schemata. On the one hand, the visuals are suggestive of the bounty of nature, of the dense foliage in the midst of which the Adis live a secured life oblivious to the ways of the world outside their territory, and on the other, there are stark visuals which highlight the grim situation of things going wrong in their cultural milieu owing to the exchanges with the world that is remote and different, a world which does not understand the simplicity of living in close proximity of a natural cover, and is rather thoroughly imposing and alluring. So the omnipresent narrator, in order to underscore the primal and untarnished facet of nature, actually goes on to give elaborate descriptions of the setting like the following one:

The river cuts through our land as before in its long journey to the sea. In spring the red flowers still blaze against our sky. But the old people now, the few of them alive, turn slowly in their sleep as the fires burn down to a heap of ash. In the middle of the night a bird swoops low and calls out in a wild, staccato note. The thatch rustles. The bamboo creaks. The darkness is full of breath and sighs. The rain comes gently, bathing the night. (4)

Another description of a natural phenomenon, that of rain, goes like this:

Every day I saw clouds dropping lower and lower like ominous waves. The hills were blue, their outline rimmed in black, and the trees were still. Soon, the first fat beads of water would tear the giant leaves of wild yam. Then fierce, hissing rain would cover the land like the sea...It rains during the day, it rains all night. It can rain non-stop for sixty-two das at a time. Not a peep of sunshine. Not a breath of wind. Every summer the tangled undergrowth clinging to the hills is swept away by the downpour, causing landslides that cut off all communication and links. (36-37)

Rain here is personified having a mind of its own, with the ability to think and act. Such a poignant description of rain and the events that follow it not only exemplifies an apt aesthetic portrayal of rain itself but it also reflects the vibrancy of life-forms huddled up in the region, which in turn suggests the dynamics of relationship between the human and the non-human world. The nature of this relationship is a curious interplay of several factors: love, reverence, fear and everything else required for a fruitful and sustainable association. The following is an instance of the Adis' reverence for the non-human nature wherein nature becomes the divine spirit who needs to be satisfied with offerings and prayers:

Every winter, men from the surrounding villages perched on the highest ridges set out on a journey to the snow-mountains to harvest a precious root. This is the deadly aconitum that is collected for the preparation of poison arrows. No one remembers for how long this annual trek has been a ritual. But there are many stories associated with the excursion, most of them narrated with disbelief by the travellers themselves who say they were lucky to return alive, back from the realm of silent waste and hallucinations. (58)

The narrator points out that this annual trek is nothing less than a pilgrimage for its takers and they leave no stone unturned to appease the mighty spirits:

We will travel again to your beautiful land. Let us leave in peace now. Do not call us back. We will travel this way again bearing more gifts next time. (59)

The Adi view of life holds everything coming from nature – wind, sunlight, rivers, rocks – as sacred, to be having life, and it is this perception which makes them associate the elements with reverence. They are driven by this urge to return to nature as much as they take from it. But, most importantly, they make it a point to take only what is required. This makes the Adis practitioners of 'sustainable development', an idea popularised only in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment Development. In its report (cited in Palkhivala's article "The Ailing Planet: The Green Movement's Role"), it defined the idea of 'sustainable development' as "development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their needs", i.e., without stripping the natural world of resources that the generations of the future would need.

In this context, it is perhaps pertinent to mention Arne Naess, a Norwegian Deep Ecologist, who vouches for an environmental ethic termed 'biospheric egalitarianism', which started doing the rounds ever since the publication of his essay "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement. A Summary" in 1973. This notion proposes to place humans on a more or less equal footing with other species. This is a more comprehensive and balanced approach towards nature. As Ramachandra Guha opines, 'biospheric egalitarianism' can be stated as the distinction between 'anthropocentrism', the belief that humans stand apart and above the rest of creation, and 'biocentrism', which rejects a human-centered perspective by looking at history from the perspective of other species and nature as a whole (Guha 116). Adis, it could be said, have been practising such an ethic since time immemorial. The idea of living in a harmonious accord with nature has been embedded in their psyche and belief system. Here, mentioned must be made of the set of eight principles for understanding 'Deep Ecology' which were first outlined in an essay titled "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology" by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1984. These principles have been revised a number of times since then. The following are a few of them:

1. The flourishing of human and nonhuman living beings has intrinsic worth. The worth of nonhuman beings is independent of their usefulness for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms on earth, including forms of human cultures, have intrinsic worth.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity, except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is worsening.
6. The foregoing points indicate that changes are necessary in the dominant way humans until now have behaved in their relation to their earth as a whole. The changes will, in a fundamental manner, affect political, social, technological, economic, and ideological structures (Rothenberg 127-8).

These principles seem to be a constant presence throughout *The Legends of Pensam*. Not only do the Adis have a semblance of oneness with nature but what also comes to the foreground is the fact that their understanding of the animal world is recast with esteem and veneration. Dai does not present animals as menacing and aggressive, and this seems to be quite contrary to the usual perception of animals as the arch adversaries of humans. Rather, the tales depict them to be intelligent and intuitive. The following excerpt from "The Silence of Adela and Kepi" stands as a testimony to this fact:

The logs were still lying in a pile and an elephant had been hired for the day to move the logs to the platform above the trench where they could be marked and sawed. The workmen were talking loudly and moving towards the woodpile when the elephant stopped dead in its tracks. No amount of cajoling, prodding or threats would move the beast to take another step forward. It dawned on the frustrated

men that maybe a sne snake had made its home among the logs. What else would frighten a tusker standing nine feet tall and with the strength to kill them all if it wanted to? (22)

The narrative next moves to a description of the power of the king cobra but this happens purely from an objective point of view without any hint of malice or exaggeration:

The ferocity of the cobra is legendary and it is known to attack without provocation. There had been many instances of this snake rearing itself up and running after some unfortunate man. Once its fangs had hit, it would keep pumping its jaws, injecting much venom as possible into the victim. (22)

It is quite clear that the Adis have a rigorous knowledge and deep understanding of the powers of the animals and in no way they demean their nonhuman counterparts. This knowledge, again, is objective and is a result of being brought up in a culture that does not alienate animals as the terrifying other. Animals, to them, are creatures of beauty, mirth and power which they appreciate as much as they would praise a human being. The description of the snake, which, they later realize is a python and not a cobra, is compelling in its aesthetic intensity:

...Suddenly his eyes were dazzled by an iridescence that took his breath away. It was gold, it was green, it was dark amethystine and changing and shining with an indescribable beauty. (23)

Again, when out of a certain mental provocation, Togum shoots the python, the entire village interprets the incident as a bad omen. They even relate it to be the reason behind the prolonged illness of Togum and Kepi's son and arrange for an elaborate and difficult ritual to be performed:

'That was why', Hoxo told us, 'the serpent ritual had to be performed. But sometimes it is a matter of time too.' He said that all night they had chanted and negotiated with the spirits, calling them to restore the sick child, but the spirits had moved away to a place beyond recall. 'They are the most dangerous ones, the ones who go away and never return,' he said. (24)

This incident is a clear indication that even the slightest disruption in the order of their society called for penance. It is totally unacceptable on the part of any clan member to dislodge the balance maintained between the human and nonhuman world. This is quite in sync with the principles of Naess mentioned earlier. But everything does not remain as balanced and perfect as the Adi world-view orders things to be. The onslaught of globalisation has had its effect in the pristine land of the Adis. Upheaval in the political situations in places far away from their land unfortunately has had an immense impact in the Adi social fabric and a lot of everything changed. The political and historical causes are events related to the coming of the 'Bereetes' (the British) or 'Migluns', as the Adis called them, and subsequently the Second World War happened in which a lot of important battles were fought in the region.

It must be noted that though Dai particularly takes into account the Second World War as the locus of change, as it is evident from the deliberations of the characters in the text, who constantly talk about a road which passes through the centre of the earth, an obvious reference to the famous 'Stilwell Road', there is also

the mention of the first brush of the Adis with the 'Bereetes' sometime during the early 1800s:

But it wasn't as if change hadn't touched our land, or had come only recently. The first white priests, surveyors and soldiers had begun arriving in the region almost hundred years ago, in the early 1800s. Since then, people from other worlds had come and gone, though the only records of their journeys are the stories that the older men and women remember. (37-8)

However, the comprehensive knock of change occurred when the Adis came into direct contact with the 'Migluns' during the construction of the Stilwell Road. It was during this time that the unsullied Adis went out of their encasement as construction-site workers and brought with them such things as guns, English alphabets and a certain disillusionment. While the introductory section is replete with vivid descriptions of the greenery of the land, the concluding section, titled 'a matter of time', documents the changes encountered by the Adis.

The narration which is structured in a flashback mode begins with the induction of Hoxo into the clan of the Adis. Hoxo, it should be mentioned, was found by his foster father at a time when the winds of change had already started whistling in the Adi territory: "it was already a confused and haunted time of change when Hoxo was found" (38). It also introduces Rakut, who, in due course of time, becomes Hoxo's friend and both of them go on to give us insights on the change which they have experienced in the most profound ways: "Here Hoxo and Rakut live and remember on a piece of green earth wedged between high mountains and big rivers" (190). It is a very engaging technique employed by Dai to posit two people who have seen the best of their world as well as experienced from close quarters what had gone into changing their social fabric. So, while the clan elders are seen mourning and grieving the change, Hoxo and Rakut observe it from an objective distance.

While the opening section introduces the readers to the worldview of the Adis, the closing section is an elaborate documentation of the changes that swept through the land of the Adis immediately after the end of the war. The nature of this change is varied and based on the altars of such notions as 'progress' and 'development', ideas which are very important in a space which has been recently freed from foreign occupation. Having said this, it is important to take into consideration the fact that the end of the Second World War also marked the end of British occupation in India. With a sense of new found responsibility, the newly formed government of independent India set out on an all-out attempt to ensure developmental activities across the country, and Arunachal Pradesh too became a part of this trend.

Having already experienced a foreign touch during the war and being an important part of the centre of construction activities during that period, the Adis had already experienced a lot of changes. The builders of the Stilwell Road needed decent hutments and structures where they could live and oversee the progress of the road. This marked the beginning of the establishment of foreign structures in the territory of the Adis for the British arranged for the construction materials like iron rods and bricks to be brought in there through motor vehicles. One need led to the other and more roads were built for a steady supply of construction materials. The new found interest of the independent government further accelerated the process. Business grew in and around their land and certain places turned into towns. The Adis took a fancy



for the brick and rod houses and gradually the green of the landscape became dotted with dust and debris. More offices and schools were set up. In the course of time, there developed two new towns of Pigo and Gurdum. Dai gives a telltale account of Gurdum:

The town was permanently awash in debris. Plastic floated across the hills, clung to riverbanks, perched on tress. Broken glass and discarded packaging scarred the bald slopes closest to the town. Workmen sucked on wet bidis and chipped away at the mountainside. Their women stood by and looked askance with dark, savage eyes. A row of labour sheds hung on to the hillside and here they lived, loved, bathed naked on the roadside, fought bitterly, and sometimes murdered each other. (164)

Such a description stands in sharp contrast to the images of lush greenery which have been quoted before. This description of Gurdum makes it clear that it is essentially a town polluted by the forces of globalisation, and populated with a diaspora who have nothing in common with the Adis – the description of the people with “dark savage eyes” who “fought bitterly” (164) is a clear indication of the difference. This description is, therefore, also a comparison of the Adi way of life with the lifestyle of the people who presumably have migrated from the Northern part of India.

In this regard, the ecocritical trope of ‘pollution’ becomes significant. Greg Garrard in the book *Ecocriticism* has expatiated this idea from an ethical viewpoint. In his opinion, apart from the traditional meaning that the word ‘pollution’ has, i.e., the presence of harmful substances in excessive amounts at a particular place, it also carries an additional meaning “that too much of something is present in the environment, usually in the wrong place” (6). With regard to change, Jared Diamond in his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* refers to change taking place in unnoticed increments as ‘creeping normalcy’. However, the change experienced by the Adis has been at a ferocious pace:

The texture and speed of change was visible in strange ways all across the land. A visitor coming to the town for the first time would still see the green hills, the green bamboo and the green river flowing in all directions, but now there were young men on motorcycles roaring across the stones while young picknickers wearing fake fur and woollen caps waved at passers-by. In the run up to the volleyball tourney this year, I heard that the Motum village team had been disqualified because one of their players tried to play holding a bottle of beer in one hand. (*The Legends* 188)

This observation not only hints at the physical and the geographical change but also at an alteration of moral values. The entire section documents many such changes, of things which were unfathomable and unheard before happening on a regular basis. But an eerie outcome of all such new occurrences also bespeaks of massive changes in the immediate geographical and environmental construct of the region.

An in-depth analysis of these changes reveals a disquieting truth. The fact that with indiscriminate changes the moral fabric of the society of the indigenous people also changed has an alarming ecocritical consequence. The following excerpt is tantalising in its revelation of a bitter truth:

His wide, fresh face broke into a smile and I understood that because Kasup had travelled to the city recently his head had been completely turned by the sights, sounds and smells of the other life. The

representatives sent to the National Development Council for Backward Areas had been thoroughly overwhelmed by the sea of people, the lights and the roar of traffic and they had returned triumphant, as if they had learnt the secret of modern life. (170)

Indeed, the lure of modern life is a sweet tooth thing, its fixation being difficult to forego. But when such a fixation stirs the spirit of a people who have traditionally been analogues to nature, it is bad news. This observation could be better interpreted through an understanding of the 'Cornucopian' versus 'Environmentalist' debate, as highlighted by Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism*. The 'Cornucopians' are those people who believe that environmental threats posed by modern civilization and the dangers that follow from it are nevertheless exaggerated and illusory and that free-market capitalist economy, population, technological growth, increases in the prices of commodities etc do not by any chance destabilise or harm the environment. The 'Environmentalists', on the other hand, are those who are not only concerned about environmental changes but also wish to maintain or improve their standard of living as has been conventionally defined, and who would not welcome radical social changes. In other words, with shifts and modulations in the old world order, the Adis ran the risk of becoming 'Cornucopians', which perhaps is more dangerous than visible ecological changes because in the face of such an unfortunate event, the very structure which directed the Adis to maintain the balance of similitude would run the risk of falling apart. Since the very essence of the Adi worldview revolves around living in peaceful co-existence with nature, the slightest rupture in their thought process, ignited by the snare of modernity could lead to a crackdown in the immediate ecological niche. Since ecological disruptions are not space specific and have a generic and overhauling impact, the loss of the 'Environmentalist' trait amongst them would also mean that the destruction would have a global impact, the effects of which would be longstanding and dismally unassuming for the masses to comprehend.

This is one aspect of the ecocritical paradigm that runs deep within the text. Another trait which is also significant and deserves consideration is the notion of 'Ecofeminism', which uses the basic feminist tenets of equality between genders, a re-evaluation of non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and supports a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the merits of collaboration. Such a line of thought is in absolute coherence with the kind of societal structure of the Adis as represented in the text. From the analysis made so far, there is no gainsaying that the Adis are indeed a society which naturally upholds the precepts of ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism also contends that patriarchal domination of nature ensues from the belief that nature is divine and feminine – it is this belief that actually directs more violence towards the environment. This violence comes in the form of capitalism, deforestation, etc., and could be put to an end if nature is perceived from an objective precept, a view integrally congruent with the Adi world-view. As a close reading of the *The Legends of Pensam* reveals, the Adis, though they revered nature, nowhere in the entire course of the text any claim on the divinity or benignity of nature has been made. Rather, the reverence arises from a belief that dislodging the balance in nature would result in destruction. Hence, it can be comprehended that the system of congruence has always been there amongst the Adis because being an animist tribe living on the edge of a blooming but fragile ecosystem, they instinctively developed myths and folklores for safeguarding their existence, which in turn has kept their

immediate surrounding safe from any human-induced harm. Thus, basically, what the theoretical paradigm of ecofeminism strives to achieve or at least implore the Adis, because of their sheer presence in a particular habitat, has intuitively accomplished and carried on successively for ages. In that, it could be said that the Adi society, like many other animist and forest societies, is an ideal model for ecofeminism.

In conclusion, it can be said that though on a simple plane the stories or tales seem to be telltale accounts of the usual day-to-day life of the Adis – how they view the world, eat, pray, sleep, dream, fear and perish – a thorough reading reveals deeper insights rooted in an ecological consciousness. Nature is foregrounded in almost all the tales as a living entity. Dai also does not make the ways of nature seem surreptitious or clandestine. Rather, hers is an objective representation of nature as it is – blooming and burgeoning at times, ruthless in the face of transgression. Her view, which is also the Adi view in particular, does not construct nature as divine and godlike. Nature for them is a “tooth and claw” affair, as Dey points out (80). An analysis of *The Legends of Pensam* thus reveals a society which could essentially serve as an ideal ecocritical model. With beliefs deeply imbibed in what the noted ecocritics and ecofeminists, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, in their book *Ecofeminism*, call the ‘Subsistence Perspective’, which focuses on finding freedom not by subjugating or transcending the realm of necessity but rather on developing a vision of freedom, happiness, and the good life within the limits of nature, Adis, as represented by Dai, seem to believe that to transcend nature can no longer be justified; instead, nature’s subsistence potential in all its dimensions and manifestations must be nurtured and conserved and, as has been mentioned earlier as well, the Adis instinctively coerced a system which upholds this perspective. The pristine society of the Adis seems to be an ideal space, an ‘ecotopia’, which is a vision of a society in which the human and the non-human would sustain and interact with ease and flamboyance – a fragment of what ecocritics across space and time have been aspiring to achieve.

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