

# Love and Marriage in Mamang Dai's Novel, Escaping the Land

Rime Taipodia Tadar

Assistant Professor, Department of English Government College Doimukh, District -Papumpare,  
Midpu, Arunachal Pradesh

---

## To Cite this Article

Rime Taipodia Tadar (2024). Love and Marriage in Mamang Dai's Novel, Escaping the Land. *Indian Journal of Applied Social Science*, 1: 1-2, pp. 105-113.

---

**Abstract:** Mamang Dai is a well known figure in literature hailing from Arunachal Pradesh in India's northeast. She is a poet, a journalist, a social activist and a novelist. She has earned a distinct space for herself amongst the women writers of India. Like the other women novelists of Northeast who usually focus on the themes of love and marriage on their leading women characters. Mamang Dai too tries to explore the themes of love and marriage in her novels. And themes have been so recurrent since the ages, as such issues exist in our day to day life everywhere and are universal. She in her novels tries to blend in characters who fall in love, stay in a relationship and she also creates few who fall out of love too and likewise create characters in the stories who marry in haste, lust, status and for love. The present research paper is an attempt to seek a better clarity and understanding into the depth in detail in order to get a deeper and psychological experience and knowledge of how Mamang Dai has portrayed the universal themes of love and marriage in her novels echoing similar depth and feeling of a couple anywhere in the world. She creates a world of her own in her stories in her novel with such universal themes and blends it with the ethnicity of Northeast India.

**Keywords:** Love, Marriage, Ethnic, Relationship, woman

Love and marriage, a very familiar recurrent theme in any piece of literature. Since time immemorial many writers have written on themes of love and marriage because of its universality. And it is because of its existence and practice by human beings in this world. People fall in and out of love for different reasons and at different times in their lives. And marriage has always been dominant structure of

organization in any society. In any marriage there is a significant role to be played by both the partners whether it be their personal responsibility towards their partners, household responsibilities or social responsibilities. Many fall in love and take the relationship to a next level and end up in a marriage. Marriage does not complete itself to make a relationship grow and flourish, not comes with a baggage of responsibilities, emotional stability and above all the effort to keep the flame of love burning.

Mamang Dai in her novel 'Escaping the Land', creates characters like Lutor and Umsi who had soft corner for each since their childhood days but when they grow up they choose to marry different life partners in their future. There are characters like Lutor who marry without being in love, he happens to be in a peculiar situation in his life where his relationship with a woman named Ossu began on the basis of lust and end up marrying her though he did not love her. There is Umsi and Karan who fall in love at first sight itself and go for a marriage but with the passage of time they realize that love isn't there any more and the couple ends their marriage on mutual ground.

### **Methodology**

The topic is a literary attempt so the research work is done with the collection of the primary sources which is in the form of original text/Novel of Mamang Dai. Secondary sources in the form of reference books, critical works and journals were collected and then cross examination was done and the research carried forward by using descriptive and analytical method.

**Aim:** The research paper attempts to focus and understand how the themes of love and marriage have been put up in the novel and also try to observe how it helps in better understanding of its society.

### ***Lutor and Ossu***

Lutor was a veteran politician from Pasighat with his long and successful career in politics since the formation of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. He had an aura wherever he went, children shouted his name and women used to smile whenever he entered any village. And Ossu, a young girl from Pasighat who came to Itanagar to look for work. Ossu used to visit Lutor's residence very often to check on what he was upto. Lutor he did not like Ossu coming to his place every now and then but

Ossu was a shameless woman. She was outspoken and dared to wear bright clothes and she could stand very close to Lutor wearing a heavy, sweet perfume which almost nauseated him. Ossu used to mock him playfully which made him feel that that Ossu had feelings for him. But, Lutor on the other hand had someone else in his heart. He disliked Ossu's presence or love her but she gave her persistent in Lutor's house and his personal life and tried to take care of Lutor's things without his will and permission.

"You would never be happy with her." P-74, L-8

In the lines, Ossu talks to Lutor about his childhood friend and love, Umsi. She knew the kind of bond Lutor and Umsi have been sharing since their childhood days. Ossu was well versed with Lutor and his feelings for Umsi and now as an adult he might want to get married to her. So, keeping this in mind she told Lutor that if he married Umsi he would never be happy with her in their married life.

"Here, I'll do that," he said, not wanting her presence." P-75, L-1-3

It's very clear from the lines that Lutor did not want Ossu around and also not to do stuff which he did not want her to do. But, Ossu tried to encroach Lutor's personal domain by being around. Even after Lutor made it very clear about his dislike of her presence and she trying to do things for him Ossu seemed quite adamant and sticks to her decision to stay close to him. It might also be a kind of one-sided love on her side for Lutor that she faced all those insults.

"He put his arm around her and had taken her there, in the small room." P-75, L-9-11

Lutor made it known to Ossu how he does not want her to be around his house or in his life, she does not leave rather comes very close to Lutor and the entire scenario changed. Lutor ended up putting his arm around her. A kind of situation developed where the two young people unintentionally indulged into intimacy.

"He did not love her, no, but Ossu exercised a dark, sensual spell over him." P-75, L-14

Lutor took Ossu in the room filled with sudden kind of lust where as he actually did not crave for her nor love her. He disliked her coarse and blunt nature but her constant presence in his room and in his life had a huge impact on his youthful desire and as a result he got lost and engulfed in the magical spell created by Ossu.

"Ossu bore him a son and they were married for twelve years." P-75, L-19-20

Although Lutor did not love Ossu, they got into physical indulgence and as a result they eventually got married and were together as husband and wife for twelve long years. Both of them were blessed with a son. But, Lutor could not recall how these years passed by.

One day, their son was swimming and enjoying the day with his friends in the nearby river and then suddenly he sank in a whirlpool which sucked him. But, no one had ever seen that spinning water ever before and to add on the tragedy, the body of the boy was never found. It was a tough time for both Lutor and Ossu. Their son was the only reason and connection they had to be together and now when their son himself was not alive they lost all the reasons to be together any further. The basis of their relationship was not love and respect for each other. It all started on a situation of lust which resulted in their marriage. But a son was born in the wedlock so they were having a fulfilling life for sometime

“One day she left and he knew she was looking for a new home. He could not blame her.” P-76, L-20-21

Ossu one day without even consulting her husband, takes a huge decision to walk away from Lutor's life, giving up his home and finally walking out of their marriage. And Lutor had no reason to blame Ossu for anything as she gave him a son whom he lost. And with the death of his son, a vacuum developed in their relationship. Ossu was never his choice or his love. Ossu walking out their marriage made him feel and understand that she too had no more hopes from their marriage and that she was seeking for a new home, a new beginning.

### *Umsi and Karan*

Umsi, a daughter of the Daring family married Karan, from Kangra. She met him when he was the manager of a tea garden in Assam. There was a love at first sight and eventually marrying each other.

“Umsi had met Karan at one of these get-togethers when her brother, Kellan had been invited by an old school friend and Umsi's father allowed her to go with him.” P-106, L-13-15

Umsi met her future husband Karan in a planters club meeting. As her brother Kellan was invited by an old school friend, her father allowed her also to go along with him. It seemed they were destined to meet and marry in the future. It was love at first sight for both of them,

“Karan was a handsome, tribal looking man who seemed to want to keep to himself and who was insanely jealous of anyone who came near Umsi.” P-106, L-16-18.

Karan was quite handsome, attractive and he had the tinge of a tribal look . And he got overwhelmed and attracted towards Umsi after seeing her in the club meeting. And he ended up getting intensely jealous of every individual who came close to Umsi. He developed a desire to keep Umsi all to himself. Their sudden unplanned meeting in the club meeting became a melting pot for the young lovers.

Karan and Umsi got married after sometime and they had a daughter together. Due to some tensions going on in the region, they relocated themselves elsewhere and their relocation created a huge distance for Umsi and her relatives back in Arunachal Pradesh. Karan too returned to his family business in real estate and construction which made him travel places and as a result he had shown Umsi the world in mosaic of glittering cities and islands. In the beginning everything was so exciting but, one day suddenly she realized that she had come so far from home.

“When they passed an old stone cottage yellow with lichen something had turned in her soul. I want a home, she thought, a permanent place like this stone structure, full of pieces of history. Where is my life?.” P-107, L-8-11

Since they were travelling a lot, one day in one such trip they happened to pass by an old stone cottage covered with yellow lichen. Something happened to her soul as soon as she passed by she wanted to have a home, a permanent one something unshakable like the cottage which had stories about the inmates of the past . A sudden thought, a question of her identity, her life pops up.

“Umsi had moved into a separate apartment in Delhi more than a year ago.” P-173, L-19-20

Umsi got separated from her husband, Karan and moved herself to a different apartment in Delhi. Their marriage came to an end on mutual ground. Both of them ended their relationship as a husband and wife amicably. They had no grudges or issues with each others views and decisions, decision . They were parenting their daughter together though they lived apart in their lives and not living together anymore. Their beginning contradicted their later decisions in life, from being so much in love to separate later from each other and becoming only good friends.

Both Umsi and Karan represents a modern couple who fell in love, got married and then later separated from each other on mutual ground and parted their ways.

But, they were still good friends . They seem to be calm, mature and very realistic towards life and their decisions. They respected each other's ways and lifestyle and try to blend in as normal friends and normal human being who can vtjink and make their own decision according to their wish and desire.

### *Tanik and his two (unnamed) wives*

Tanik was a politician, his career took a huge turn when NEFA became a union territory. He became a member of the first provisional Legislative Assembly in 1975. He had grown along with the growth of the state, from being a humble legislator to becoming the Chief Minister of the state.

“He brought women and introduced to him to his second wife, whom he had taken even though he was already a father of two at the time. When the second wife appeared his first wife had fought like a wild cat.” P-283, L-9-12

Tanik's close associate and his small time timber agent friend, Kijji knew Tanik's lust for women. So, every now and then he used to bring women to him . On one occasion he brought a woman as usual to Tanik who later became his second wife. When he took her he was already married and had two kids. With the entry of the second woman in Tanik's household, the first wife retaliated by showing her anger and discomfort by fighting like a wild cat. Herbworl was torn apart. The happiness, the contentment she gave Tanik being his wife was all shattered. She wanted to question him why?.

“The new woman had slipped into her place quietly. She bore Tanik a baby girl and lived with her sister, waiting for his visits and trying to win him with her coy looks.” P-283, L-15-19

The new woman had slowly slipped into the place of the first wife of Tanik with time. She gave birth tova baby girl being with Tanik which made her roots firmer in Tanik's life and his family. She chose to stay atba different place with her sister and not with his first wife. She created her own world waited for Tanik's visits trying to win him everytime with her shy looks.

“She whispered sweetly that she would respect his wishes and that if her presence made trouble for him with his elder wife perhaps it would be better if she left.” P-283,L-20-22

The second woman in Tanik's life seemed to have been blessed with all the whims and charmsti woo and keep a man at her toes.She often used to make such

views placed before Tanik which she knew would never happen in reality. She tried her best to make him feel genuine and understanding she was in their triangular love and marriage. She portrayed herself as a woman who was ready to sacrifice her life and happiness for her husband and that her nature and thoughts were superior than Tanik's wife.

"Life was so big. Relationships were ruled by mistakes. Harsh words were spoken. And if unspoken, they were stored away to poison each moment that their eyes met and when their hearts remembered." P- 284, L-1-4

The anger, dissatisfaction and complaints of his elder wife and the whispers and coyness of shown by his younger wife made him and his life a restless one. He realized how big life was and that his relationships were ruled by his mistakes. This mistakes caused him immense happiness and discomfort to where there was exchange of harsh words. Those spoken were heard and faced but those unspoken ones got stored like poisoning their hearts and whenever their eyes met it unleashed hatred and ferociousness.

"He longed to love a woman again, quietly and simply, without war and such turbulence. Neither of the women meant much to him anymore. They had given him sons and daughters. His opponents did not take up his personal life, and sometimes he felt he had become invisible, non-existent." P-284, L- 9-11

The choice he made to have two women in his life tore him apart to this extent that he was now seeking to love a woman again but this time without any war of words and emotional drainage. He was longing for a quiet and a simple life. Both his wives was now no more in their calm and womanly qualities anymore. He chose this life, this disturbance unknowingly. The effect of such an experience in marriages made him indifferent to both his wives in such a manner that both meant nothing to him anymore. Both his wives gave him sons and daughters fulfilling his marital happiness. His indifference made him feel non-existent almost invisible.

"He was hoping one of them would leave him in disgust but they both hung on, determined to drive him mad. They watched him and he began to dread the feeling of guilt that they poisoned his life with." P-284, L-13-16

Tanik who became a pendulum in between his two wives could not take the tag of war any further. So, he was just wishing one of them to leave him and walk away from him and his marriage. But, nothing as such happened, both the ladies hung on and stood by their decision not to leave him by any means. Both these women were

the same women whom he loved and craved for to be apart of his life. But alas, fate and destiny had different plans for Tanik. He wanted anyone of them to leave him to ease a bit of his pain but both the ladies stood back as if determined to see him suffer more and go mad. And as a result he started getting a feeling of guilt and that they have poisoned his life. The ironical part is that, he married these women to gain happiness and contentment but now it seemed to get the feeling of guilt, discomfort and poison in his day to day life.

“He wished he could have his old days back again, before he was entangled in this endless relationship of men, women and politics.” P-285,L-14-16

Tanik was secure, settled, and at the height of power but he missed his old life days with his mother and his peaceful married life. But now, he was a man with two wives, a father of many kids and of all an accomplished political leader. He did not get all of this without any sacrifice of his personal and social life. He was able to achieve many things in life giving his time and energy. But, at home he could not experience peace and happiness though everything was his own choice which he could not undo now. Both his wives were still grounded in their marriage with him and with this kind of marriage it seemed impossible for him to achieve that kind of peace and tranquility in his life anymore even if he craved for it now undeniably.

So, it can be seen that Mamang Dai in her novel, ‘Escaping the Land’ portrays a vibrant picture of love and marriage by blowing life into her character’s by making them live in the story. In Ossu and Lutor’s marriage it can be seen how without the base of pure and true love their twelve years old relationship as a husband and wife collapses away without a word after the sudden death of their only son.

Umsi and Karan showed haste in their love and marriage and as a result after being married for years they amicably decided to separate from each other but remain as good friends parenting their only daughter together. Their love at first sight and their hasty marriage ends contrasting their choice in the beginning and their decision at the end.

Tanik took two wives unknowingly seeking happiness and contentment in his married life but it all ends at a mental state where he was happy at the beginning taking two wives in his life and at the later part he wants any of these two wives to leave him so that he could live in peace. But, both stood firm not to leave him. There was a time when he wanted them but now both does not mean anything to

him anymore. He repents making such a mistake but his peace of mind, happiness and his life was ruined already .

### *References*

#### **Primary Source**

Dai Mamang (2021), Escaping the Land, Speaking Tiger.Pvt Ltd

#### **Secondary Source**

Kumari, Thanga, Jasmine (2010), Nuptial relationship in select novels of Anita Desai and Shobha De

Jadhav. B.S and Nitonde.R,S (2011), Matrimonial Discourse in Manju Kapur's fiction.

Shukla,Manisha (2012), Love and Marriage in fiction of Indian English women novelists a study in changing values.

Vahabzadeh, Malakeh (2012), Images of marriage and women in select novels of Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande.

Gogoi, Jyoti Bhaskar (2016) "We" the others: Women's Voices from North-East India in selected literary texts.

Arjun, Omprabha, Lokhare (2020), Family and Marriage in the select plays of Mahesh Dattani

K.P, Raja Kantha (2021), Issues of Marriage and Gender in the works of Vikram Seth.

Ete, Doyir (2021),The Criterion, Vol.12, Issue -II. *Women Literary Space in North -East Literature English: An Overview.*