

The Hallucinations of Modern Lifestyle in Mamang Dai's *Stupid Cupid*

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Abstract

Every person has aspirations and goals. Many people are unable to realise their ambitions. Adna, meanwhile, is one of the central female characters in Mamang Dai's *Stupid Cupid*. She wants to live a free and independent life. As a result, she left her hometown for a metropolis like Delhi, where she may pursue her goals. In the metropolis, she imagines her vision has come true. However, she is subjected to a great deal of disappointment and disillusionment. Finally, she realises that the Delhi roadway is not lined with rose petals, but rather with thorns. The city's glitz and gloss are all a trick of the eye.

Key words: disappointment, illusion, false hope, modern lifestyle

Article History

Mamang Dai is a journalist and former civil servant. Her works are mostly based on the unique experience, culture, tradition and culture of her motherland, Arunachal Pradesh. The novel *Stupid Cupid* is one of the best novels, in which she expresses the original inhabitants of tribal community women who want to transform their old tradition and cultural beliefs following in their native and to live a modern lifestyle which is in the city. So they come to the city where they get a lot of freedom and liberation. They are unable to fit in the lifestyle of the city and they can not forget their own culture and tradition. They misunderstand the lifestyle and are unaware of the collapse in their own life. In the life of the city, the women face a lot of hardships and struggle like disillusion, discrimination, caste, race, religion and culture.

The protagonist of the novel *Stupid Cupid* is Adna. She is a member of the indigenous community. She departs Arunachal Pradesh for Delhi, determined to live her life her own. She doesn't like to obey society's unwritten norms, thus she seeks independence and freedom. Fortunately, her aunt has provided her with a cottage. It is set in Delhi, and the storey vividly depicts the city's landscape. She first struggles to cope with the summer heat in Delhi because she was born in Itanagar, which is lush with greenery, cool, and abundant of rain.

I was coming from Itanagar, a

small town in the

Himalayan foothills in the very
north-east of the country. It was
a place of great greenery with
mountains all around
and plenty of rain (SC 6).

But Delhi is totally different from her native land. Adna is struggling to adopt the four seasons in Delhi. She is not able to tolerate the summer heat.

The first summer in Delhi
had almost killed me (SC 6).

She has complained to Amine and is ready to go back to her hometown. But Amine comforts her and they go to the resort which is situated outside the city. The place is quiet and like a rural place. In Delhi, Adna has a friend, Amine. She is the only companion and well-wishers to Adna.

Adna has a dream which is to set up a love agency. The agency is to provide a decent meeting place where men and women, lovers and friends meet without any hesitation. The customary activity of the society is that the meeting of women and men is considered a criminal act so many people are not ready to meet their beloved persons and share their emotions and feelings. They needed a private place which gives comfort to meet their friends or lovers. That's why she set up a love agency.

I had established myself as an agent. Let's call it a love agency for want of a better term, to give a nice meeting place where men and women, lovers and friends, could connect without breaking a sweat... People simply want to spend time alone with one another.

They need time to meet and talk. They want to find themselves through a moment of love(SC 1-2).

First, Adna confesses her idea to Amine and she is shocked and tells her that everyone commits adultery. Adna tells her that it is not adultery and it is the place to meet and talk mutually. Men and women are in a moment of love without sex. Adna believes that love is not

key to sex, it is a better feeling for someone. She gives importance to the real sense of love. That is the reason, she plans to set up a love agency. She looks for a better place to set up this agency. Finally, Adna uses her aunt's house and she sets up a love agency with the help of Amine.

It was built in such a way, in such a discreet, graceful style, that all the rooms were independent and beautifully laid out, Why, yes- if you're thinking what I' am thinking, each room was indeed like a perfect love nest (SC 2).

She has started her little business 'love agency'. She circulates the pamphlet all over Delhi. The advertisements are "rooms to let, Bed and bath available, short notice. Short or long stay. Minimal, discreet staff. Contact: M/s Four Seasons, New Delhi. Proprietor: Adna Amine...". (SC 2). Amine gives support to this love agency for appointed staff in charge and maintenance. Adna has a huge number of customers and gets some financial support from it. She has a policy that those who have appointments in this agency should not provide any identity proof and Adna never wants to know the men or women coming to this agency and she does not want to know the personal details about them.

Adna has been disillusioned in love. When she first visits Delhi, she looks at the place as her dreamland and she expects her vision to come true. Adna wants to live a life full of love and joy and a liberate, carefree, independent woman. Mamang Dai also describes the woman character who wants freedom and lives a modern lifestyle. Adna gives importance to love which is a valuable thing in the world. It cannot be controlled by caste, race, religion and culture. The feeling of love is apart from these things. So she breaks all traditional norms which are followed by her homeland. He is doing the real estate business.

I fell in love with him because at the time I first met him he was wild and rebellious. In the bright city full of blazing lights and millions of people he circled me intently and sparkled through my days and nights (SC 4).

Adna does not encourage their traditional practice of marrying a person who belongs to some specific ethnic group in their community. If they do not follow it, they will be condemned by the elders of their community. Adna likes her aunt very much because she is the first lady who breaks all traditional and cultural norms and lives her life as her own choices. She is married to a man who does not belong to a tribal community. After she gets married to a non-tribal man,

her family members avoid talking with her because they think that she brings a bad name to her family. When Adna was young, she came to her hometown, the family members instructed Adna not to talk and disturb her. Adna inspires her way of dressing, language and freedom.

Her hair was swept back in a high ponytail, and she wore what in those days was the height of fashion - black stretch pants like leotards, the kind that had elastic straps to loop under the feet (SC 15).

After watching her aunt, Adna wants to live a modern lifestyle as their aunt does. So, she leaves her motherland and settles in Delhi. He never wants to take the relationship with Adna to the next level. It clearly shows that he is simply flirting with Adna and he is going to abandon her without giving any valuable reasons. It is not only the status of Adna but also most of the Northeastern women who flee from their homeland to settle in the city. Adna's lover and many men want love from the Northeastern women but they are not ready to accept them as their wife.

Adna's experience with her boyfriend in Delhi. It can be related to the deeply inculcated images of Northeast women. Most tribal women from the Northeast bring a sense of freedom and independence from their native place to the city. When they reached the city, they misunderstood the freedom gained and misled their life. They do not incarcerate themselves into the so-called "respectable public sites". These women mostly occupy the sexualized places of the city like hotels, bars and streets.

North-east women are discriminated against from the mainstream of Indian women. The mainstream Indian male thinks that they are considered as sexual objects. Adna's boyfriend is the best example of these stereotypes of male. Once, Adna asked her boyfriend if his wife has some other relationship, he firmly believes that his wife is not like that. It shows the difference between Adna and his wife in the views of Adna's boyfriend. He gives false dreams and hopes to her and leads her to nowhere. He leaves her and flees to Canada and he does not give valuable reasons. He enjoyed the love of Adna and exploited her but he never wanted to marry her.

Thus, Mamang Dai gives voice to the peculiar experiences of Northeast women who are discriminated against and exploited. They are treated as strangers in their own country. In this novel, the character of Adna understands the gradual increase of the racial and sexual politics

experience in both village and city. When Adna's friend Amine is murdered by burglars, it brings the experience of violence and death further closer to her. She thinks that city life offers freedom, liberation and love. But her dream is full of scatter and realizes the other side of city life, “I imagined Cupid strewing rose petals on the streets of Delhi and hiding behind a bow covered with peacock feathers” (SC 155). At the end of the novel, she realised that the glitz and fashion of the city is only an illusion. Finally, she understands the hallucinations of the modern lifestyle in the city.

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