

DEVELOPMENT OF KHASI AS A LITERARY LANGUAGE

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled " **Development of Khasi as a Literary Language**" which is being submitted by Ms. Darishisha Rynjah for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy is her original work, and it has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree of this or any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiner for the award of the degree Master of Philosophy.

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Dedicated To
My Mother

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INTRODUCTION

Khasi, the language spoken in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya is a branch of the Mon-Khmer language. Khasi and Mon-Khmer culture rests on the same foundation to which is assigned a common linguistic and cultural background¹.

The Khasi language is a young language in the literary field. Its inception and growth as a literary language can be traced only as far back as the advent of Christian missionaries in the Khasi Hills.

Prior to this, the Khasis used the languages and scripts of their neighbors such as Bengali, Persian and Arabic for purposes of trade and commerce and diplomatic communications. But the medium of communication with each other invariably was Khasi.

There are many stories relating to the absence of a script for the Khasi language, chief among which is the story of how it got lost during the great flood.

Given the absence of a script, the Khasis had an oral language and literature which was vast and varied like those of other tribal languages of the world. The absence of a script dampened the pride and honour of the Khasi race and when using the script of their

¹ Bareh. H. - A Short History of Khasi Literature - (Shillong : Hamlet Bareh, 1962).

neighbours, they realised the threat it posed for them, the threat of acculturation and assimilation.

The absence of a script also contributed to a loss of old precepts, maxims, proverbs and ordinances as they are forgotten or erased from memory.

The Khasis welcomed the Roman script brought by the missionaries, as it now enabled them to write their language and they were no longer dependent on other languages and scripts from their neighbours.

The coming of the missionaries to the Khasi Hills not only brought Christianity but also a new way of life influenced by western ideas and thought processes.

Till the last part of the 19th century western culture influenced the Khasis, but, some realised the erosion of their tradition and culture, and, by giving new life to Khasi as a language in their literary efforts they did not allow it to die a slow death which it was facing during the mid-19th century.

Khasi, now has become a major language recognised by the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong as an Honours subject.

Khasi as a literary language still has a long way to go, but it is proceeding on the right track.

CHAPTER - I

THE PRE-MISSION AGE

KHASI ORAL LITERATURE

The presence of a language and a script is important for any community as it is a mirror for the people and culture of that particular community.

According to legend, the Khasis lost their script during the great flood¹ thereby bringing their once flourishing civilization to a decline. The presence of a language and a script is a unifying factor for any community. When the Khasis lost their script it affected their growth and development and even brought about a disintegration of the community, when different dialects come into being. During the early history of the Khasis there was one religion, one ruler one culture, one language and one script.

Language is a foundation stone for any community. Though we have no written account of their early history, yet, the stories and legends of that age make it impossible for us to ignore their influence on our

¹ It is said that when this great deluge occurred, there were only 2 survivors a Khasi and a Hindu known as "Dkhar". The Hindu managed to rescue his script by trying it to his head while swimming across, while the Khasi carried it in his mouth and swallowed it by mistake.

lives till this day. Language also amalgamated the community in their belief in God, the creator (BLEI NONGBUH - NONGTHAW).

The beginnings of Khasi oral literature perhaps can be traced to the laws given by God and passed on by word of mouth through the generations among the early Khasis.

The loss of the script affected the destiny of the Khasi people and this in turn affected the essence of their existence and thus the Khasi community became stunted, it never outgrew its childhood. As said earlier the society disintegrated as new dialects and new beliefs came into existence causing disorder and chaos among the community.

However, as time rolled by, the importance of their language attained a deeper significance. It was now no longer considered to be just a means of communication among them, but a God given gift which had to be used judiciously. For example the fulfillment of a verbal vow became a matter of honour and conversation became sombre and not light-hearted fun. Each and every word became a precious commodity not to be bandied about carelessly, for to do so would incite the wrath of both God and society. Language became the only source of literature and history for the Khasi people.

If it is from the words and the language that the Khasis have woven the fabric of their culture and society from traditional beliefs, to rules of governance, and, even matters of land tenure, the etiquette of a genteel society and a strong code of ethics are still a part and parcel of Khasi life today.

The absence of a script did not however hinder the Khasis in preserving their valuable heritage. It was passed from generation to generation through word of mouth like a silken thread stretching and joining the past, the present and future generations of Khasis together with an indestructible bond of brotherhood and togetherness².

The Khasis have a rich and varied repertoire of oral literature, which sometimes far exceeds the amount of written literature that is available now. Poetry, rhymes, proverbs and maxims, incantations, folk songs, pastoral comedies and sacrificial chantings were prevalent and widely used during the pre-literate age. Another feature of the language is the use of imitative and adverbial phrases.

Let us now look at the different genres of oral literature present among the Khasis.

- I. Legends - These are stories told to all children from their childhood, teaching and guiding them in an interesting,

attention grabbing format making it easier for them to remember and empathize with the characters. These stories have a two-fold function - one, to provide moral lessons and two, the ethics of the community, as is evident in the stories of the giant serpent³, and the peacock and the field of mustard flowers⁴.

These two stories are just two minor examples of the vast storehouse of stories in Khasi literature.

II. Mythological Tales : These stories dealt with the Khasi belief in their divine origin. The stories mark this tribe as the chosen few of God, the Creator. The story of "U Sohpetbneng" (The Umbilical Cord of Heaven) and "Diengiei" (Tree or pathway to the Heavens)⁵. Again, the divine origins of the 'Syiems of

² Roy J.L Rev. Ka Thoh Ka Tor In Khasi (KAS).

³ This is the story of a serpent who devoured travellers; when he was killed, a piece of his flesh was left over, by a woman who realised after some time, that it was alive. It promised wealth and fortune for the woman if she procured a human life. The greed of the woman prompted her to procure a human for this serpent, and in return he gave her wealth and fortune.

⁴ This story about the Peacock married to the Sun; as the peacock looked down to the earth, he saw a beautiful sight of a field of mustard flowers swaying in the breeze. Mistaking it for a woman, he flies down to earth, abandoning the sun, only to realise his folly later.

⁵ The Khasis belief that they are a part of the 16 families (nuts who lived in heaven and when God created earth, he needed caretakers for this new paradise, so he send 7 families (nuts to earth to be the caretakers, they were however not cut off from the heavens, there was hillock called 'Soneed' being on which a huge tree grew called 'Diengiei' and this served as a stairway or pathway to traverse between heaven and earth and as time passed by, the 7 families started getting self-sufficient and started drifting away from God and fell under the influence of the Devil who urged them to cut down as it would obstruct the sun, thereby, causing them a lot of hardship and they believed him as they cut down the Diengiei tree, without realising the gravity of their decision. They lost touch with God and their family and relatives.

Shillong⁶ (the kings of Shillong) are stories portraying and explaining the right to rule through God's choice, akin to the Egyptian Pharaohs who believed in their divine right given by the sun God 'Ra'.

The mythological tales and legends are the backbone of any historical data of the Khasis as they explain and talk about an ancient age of the Khasis who did not have any written historical data.

Another genre is the Folk-tale and narrative:

III. Folk Tales : These stories varied in theme and plot as they dealt not with religion or ethics, but more with human relationships, man and woman relationships, man and God which educated people and gave them a fair idea of the norms of relationships between members of a community. The stories of bravery and valour and self-sacrifice are abundant in this genre.

The stories of 'Noh Kalikai⁷, "U Manik Raitong bad Ka Lieng Makaw⁸".

The folk-tale, legends and mythological stories. Many of these are

⁶ The story of Pah Syntiew a woodland rymph who married a mortal man and their children became the kings of the Shilling syiemship.

⁷ A woman who was a widow gets married a second time to provide a stable home for her child, and finds herself in dire straits as she becomes the sole bread-winner as her second husband whiles away his time and in his hatred for his step child, kills her and cooks her flesh and feeds it to his unsuspecting wife who come home tired in the evening; as she sits down after dinner to have the customary piece of 'K wai' (pan and belet nut) she found her child's fingers and realising the grotesque crime runs away to escape this terrible deed and plunges to her death from a waterfall since then named Noh Kalikai (or the place from where Ker Likai jumped).

realistic with historical references and discuss, human nature and relationships between man with God, and woman and man. They serve as reminders to one and all that in a community there are norms and obligations which all of us have to live by. For any person outside the community, they may appear to be just stories, but, for the Khasis, they teach moral lessons and do not allow us to forget our culture and tradition even in this century of science and technology.

IV. POETRY

The Khasis live close to nature and from a very young age they are taught to respect and love it as a gift given by God (Blei) and their life and way of life is influenced by this belief. In a word, we can say that "nature is the original art of the Khasis"⁹. The Khasis imitated the music and sounds of the birds and the wind blowing through the trees.

⁸ The story of Manik and Lieng Makaw qualifies as one of the legendary folk tale of love and romance against all odds. The Queen Lieng Makaw was caught in a marriage where her husband the King completely ignored and sidelined her after marriage. In her loneliness she finds solace in Manik's music. Manik an orphan is a lonely man and through his music- they become soulmates and as their relationship progresses the Queen become a mother and on the King's return from his tours all round his kingdom, he determines to find the sire of this child and he does discover and asks for the death penalty for Manik from his council. Manik accepts his punishment, but, chooses his own method, of jumping into a fire. However the Queen chooses to die with him thus ending two lives.

⁹ Tham - AD. Ka Literature bad ka Art (Shillong : Mrs. E. Gatphoh) - 1985

Poetry serves as a much used tool in teaching young children as they learn the language. The meaning does not matter much at this stage but, as they grow and mature , it achieves a deeper significance for them.

The beginnings of poetry started with rhythm. And this is the pivot of any poem or song. Poetry among the Khasis however can be classified into three categories.

(i) Phawar (Irony)

Phawars are couplets with 8 feet and four rhymes. They do not follow any particular theme, they are impromptu recitations in any situation, they are more renowned for the beauty of their thought than for any literary reason or aesthetic beauty. The 'phawars' are recited in any place varying from festivals, political processions to social gatherings and community work. They are humorous and provide light-hearted commentary for any proceedings.

The spirit of the Phawars differs according to the demand of a situation or the circumstances in which they are recited.

Given below are a few examples:

These couplets (Phawars) are recited after a victory in war or after a successful headhunt

i Ka skei ia ka kyndad u diengduh kum ia u pathaw,

Ko Blei Trai Kynrad ko Nongbuh ko Nongthaw.

Shi kyndup u dohjei uu shibidi ha ù shi kynda,

Shi tyllup ka pyrthei u khun Khasi u khun Khara.

When looking at the Phawars of the Khasis one is struck by their one significant characteristic trait, where the first line is ambiguous and cryptic and it has no relation with the second line which is meaningful and coherent. This characteristic according to Prof. Tham is an example of how poetic conception moves from chaos to order and how man gropes for light in the dark, eventually finding it¹⁰.

(i) Pharshi (Allegory): This aspect of the Khasi language is still very much in use by one and all in the community. They are used to describe any particularly unsavoury trait in an individual, in an indirect but subtle way so as not to cause any hurt or incur an individual's wrath. For example:

- A match-making woman who is glib would be characterised as "an old hag who likes to plait a garland" (Men -suh-syntiew).

¹⁰ Tham, A.D. Prof (Mrs) - Literature and Art, 1975

- A woman who is always late and never on time is called - "Ka Tiew-Lalyng lalyngi pep-shad" (A woman who spends too much time on her toilette).
- A man or a woman who is a regular party gatecrasher is called "U sew bna lad" or a hungry, stray dog.

These ironic statements occur very often in speech as well as in writing as they are humorous and more apt than being rude and unpleasant

(ii) KTIEN TYMMEN (COUNSEL OF THE EDLERS)

This form of oral literature also comes in verse form and it imparts moral and ethical values to the young generation. Also a code of conduct which is imparted till this day to all young children.

(a) Baroh Shipara wat ju ia bishni,
 baroh shipara wat ju ia thansi,
 Mane biang la u kpa bad la ka kmie; ,
 Nguh arti ia u blei mynba dang khie;
 Mane ruh de ia kiba la tymmen,
 La ha ka jingtrei ne ha ka jing kren,
 Wat ju nangang shitong lane iriang,
 Ta kur ia kha ruh kren, leh daba biang.

All siblings do not envy
all siblings do not push the responsibility towards each other
Respect your father and mother
Bow to God when you wake up
Respect your elders and old people
In the work you do and in the way you speak
Do not gossip or be rude
to your clansmen or your paternal aunts,
do everything with respect.

Wat ju marmlien ka kti ban shim kynthet,
Kumba leh ka matti shrieh isaitmet;
Baroh ia ki kynja jingbuh jingsat,
Dalei lei wat ju mlien niad da ka kjat;
Wat ju mlien ruh de ban shu jam khyllad;
Ia kiei kiêi kum ka akor mrad.
Ia ki briew haba iaïd wat ju ryngkang;
Ba khlem akor, ba sang, ioh ki ioh pangi;
Wat ju ai, wat ju shim ða ka diang,

Ba ka akor ka sm\niew

Ne mangkariang

Never make snatching a habit,

Like the hands of a monkey;

all the things at home should never be wiped with our feet;

Never jump at something suddenly,

For it becomes an animal like habit

Even while walking do not walk or cross over anyone as they might
get sick;

Never give or take with your left hand

as it is a rude habit and does not look good for you

These are just two examples of the counsel of the elders, and they not only impart a code of conduct, but also caution the young people to be less impetuous and high spirited as all young people are, and in being so manners and etiquette can sometimes be forgotten in their zest for life.

(iv) KTIEN KNIA (SACRIFICIAL CHANTINGS)

This genre of oral literature among the Khasis is restricted to only one clan of the community, that is the priest clan, the - "Lyngdoh" by their tradition being the mediator between God and the humans.

These are not commonly used and they are passed from uncle to nephew¹¹ to teach ways of conducting sacrifices and paying obeisance to God.

To this day the priest among the Khasis is always from the 'Lyngdoh' clan and he uses the chants and invocations taught to him by his uncle before him.

This brief explanation of this genre of the oral literature would not be complete without an explanation about the Khasi religion - some have called it animism, demon-worship, on ancestor worship. However it is a theistic belief and they have different titles used to denote God:

"Blei Na Jrong Na Tbian - God the Omnipresent

"Blei u Trai Kynrad - God the Infinite

"Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw - God the creator

¹¹ Khasi Society being matrilineal, the son cannot be taught as he belongs to his mother's clan.

Whatever name is used depends on the occasion on which a prayer or sacrifice is being made. Invariably each and every invocation is introduced by giving thanks to God by any of his various names.

Khasi oral literature does not end here. It governs each and every aspect of their lives - socially, politically and even individually.

(a) Socially - Each and every individual has a collective responsibility towards his community and in doing so he has to follow a code of ethics which has helped in the evolving of new words in the language like - "Hangamei" which literally translates into 'pride and prejudice' in any individual and this is not tolerated in the community.

(b) Politically - Civil institutions evolved from habitation and laws governing the people are evolved - and each and every individual has to follow them. Anyone deviating from these laws is ostracized and excommunicated. For example words like "ka sang ka ma" (taboo) and "ka byrsieh byrsang" - (a sinful evil contagion) which forbids inter-marriage in a clan and between first cousins is strictly adhered to till this day.

In the council of the Kings (Durbar) a code of ethics makes it a decorous and sombre occasion where there is no shouting, slandering

and sloganeering as it is a solemn occasion and as said before, the Khasis use their language not only as a means of communication, but as a gift. Therefore it is too precious to use it as a belittling tool or as an insult.

(c) Individually: A Khasi is taught etiquette and good manner - "Ki Akor" from his childhood and these are expected to be followed throughout his entire life.

The last but not the least important feature of Khasi oral literature is the use of imitatives or 'Ktien kynnoh".

(v) KTIEN KYNNOH (Imitative)

These are used to convey the specificity of an object of speech - for example:

(a) ka kren - ka khana - literally translated - 'kren' is to speak while - 'ka khana' is a story. The phrase therefore means speaking a story or telling a story.

(b) 'Ka ktien' is coupled with "ka thylliej" which translates to 'word' and 'tongue' respectively thus making it words are uttered by using the tongue.

(c) "Ka Shnong' is coupled with "Ka Thaw" which translates to "village" and "building" respectively thus making it the buildings constituting a village.

However in the case of verbs the words like

(a) "tim-tla" literally translates to "rebuking" and 'disparaging' respectively.

(b) "trei - ktah" - literally translates to 'work' and 'touch' which explains the concept of working by touch.

(c) "Nguh - dem" literally translates to 'bowing' and 'prostrate' which explains the concept of obeisance to any higher being.

Khasi oral literature is not only vast but also varied in its various modes and genres which have not been collated and categorised properly inspite of the many attempts made by modern writers - the written literature is still quite insignificant when compared with oral literature for the latter spanned hundreds of years of a people's history.

Khasi oral literature not only serves as a means of entertainment or serve as bedtime stories told around the family hearth (lyngwiar dpei); they serve as sources of social, cultural as well as traditional

values which make the Khasi tribe unique in comparison with other tribes.

However, it is a sad but an inescapable fact that Khasi oral literature is now practiced only during festivals, sacrifices and in remote villages, where science and technology have not made inroads into their society. Oral literature is dying a slow death under the onslaught of education, the print media, the television and science and technology.

The Khasis should work hard to preserve this oral tradition which has stood in good stead for our forefathers who could preserve it for our generation so that the next generation will be aware of the history of the tribe and ensure its continuity and growth.

In trying to preserve this oral tradition we should work closely with modern technology namely, recording the chantings, stories, 'phawars' and 'pharshis' for posterity for they are now the only way of preserving our age-old tradition which may disappear into the annals of history and time.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY-MISSION AGE

The earliest contract of the British with the Khasis was from the Serampore Mission in 1812-13, but, the mission abandoned its work in 1838. In the meantime, the consolidation of the Khasi Hills by the British East India Company was in full progress. Perhaps the unstable political condition was a threat to the security of the missionaries and was indirectly responsible for the abandoning of the missionary work in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1838.

The work of the Serampore mission cannot be ignored, even if it was only for a few years. The foundations laid by it proved enough for the Welsh Calvinistic mission to build an infrastructure which has lasted till the present day.

William Carey's ambition was fulfilled when he printed the New Testament in the Bengali script using the Shella dialect in 1824. Carey's experiment failed miserably when his "Khashee New Testament" failed to evoke a positive mass response from the majority of the population. Carey in his grandiose scheme of christianizing this new tribe did not take into account the various factors which should have been taken into consideration. Chief

among them was his misunderstanding or preconception that the Khasi language was the Snella dialect and he did not deem it necessary to learn any different language from other parts or people of the Khasi hills. The Shella dialect was confined to only one group of people residing in the areas bordering the Hills and the plains of Sylhet. It was a language formed from a combination of Khasi and Bengali used for trade and commerce purposes only, but never as a language of communication among the people of Khasi community in these areas. Also, this language was not known among Khasis from other parts.

But, most importantly perhaps, the Khasi people were not willing to accept and learn a language and use a script which was deemed as 'foreign' by them. It presented a real threat of acculturation and at no cost would they allow an alien language and script to express their "words".

This fear has been a major feature for the Khasi people as they fought an alien culture, not only against their neighbours from the plains, but also the English in their colonial intent for the Khasis.

A copy of Carey's "Khashee New Testament"¹ is on display at the Serampore Theological College and the language used by him became obsolete as soon as the British East India Company came to the Hills.

The next batch of missionaries arrived in 1841, from the Welsh Calvinistic Mission. They arrived in Cherrapunji and were warmly greeted by Captain Lewis, the military Commander stationed in Saitsohpen². This clearly indicated the partnership between politics and religion from this time on in the Khasi hills. It indicated a tacit agreement between the company and the missionaries, though their objective may appear different, the underlying aim was to colonise, be it through religion or politics, it did not matter, as long as their sphere of influence was growing.

Thomas Jones immediately set down to work and opened the three schools that had closed down after 1838, opened by Lish in Mawmulh, Sohra and Mawsmal with a strength of 36 students with 3 Khasi boys among them, the most prolific among them was 'U LAITHAT, who played a significant role in the foundation of the Khasi language. Jones took an enormous risk by his decision to learn the language of his parishioners. He was the first foreigner who made an

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¹ An example of the first attempt to reduce Khasi into a written language by using this dialect - script used included -

² Lyngdoh, R.S. - Ka Histori Ka Thoh Ka Tar - Bynta - I



The following is the Lord's Prayer, as translated by the Serampore Missionaries, taken from the Gospel of Matthew vi. 9—13.

হ উম্মাংগান্দ্র উবাস্যাং হাবেমেং উক্পা কাঙ্ক্ষি কাকর্ষেং বজা উম্মামে লং।
 কাঙ্ক্ষি কাঙ্ক্ষ বালালং। কুম্কাবা হাবেমেং কুম্কাতা হাখতেউ উ কাষ কা-
 ঙ্ক্ষি কাবাসেচীজা কাকাম। মিতা কাঙ্ক্ষা বাও হালাফাতি কাবাবাম চাণাবু
 যাদ। পাতেং কুম্কাবা যাতাবু কাঙ্ক্ষাবু ইয় কিতাচিম্ম ইম্যা বাপ্ কুম্কাতা
 কাঙ্ক্ষাবু কালাম তমাপ। ইয়াতাবু ম্কাবাপূর্স্যাং অল্লাম ইয়াতাবু ম্কাবাবি-
 ম্কাবাপূর্স্যাং নাগালেই হালাফাতি কাঙ্ক্ষ পাতেং কাবর উলেহে কাঙ্ক্ষা আমিম।

SELECTIONS FROM TRANSLATIONS.

The same in the Roman character.

Ho ujungá baudra ubúsyong haboung ukpá, kújungphi kakartteng
 babbé unmúno long. Kajungphi kúshnoug bánlong. Kumkúbá húbeneng
 kumkátá hú khandou u kám kújungphi kábá sugoubhá ká kám. Mínta ká
 jungá baudra hálúkashui, ká bá búm chúngá baudra máy. Páteng kum-
 kábá mángúbandra kújungábandra kúrúm tamáp. Iyúngábandra húkábá-
 pursáng allám iyúngábandra núkábújungjúr tapauláy nábalci hálúkásngi.
 Kúshnoug pateng kábar ulehe kajungá, amin.

effort to learn and speak the Khasi language. This endeared him to the Khasi people of that time and made them more receptive to his ideas and plans for the Khasi language. He was a man who took his work seriously and his job as a missionary demanded his whole hearted effort to spread the Gospel and in order to do that, he had to be able to communicate with the people and the Khasis were unwilling and suspicious of any new language and script as seen from Carey's wasted efforts.

Thomas Jones started learning the Khasi language and using the Roman script to write it down though he ran into a number of obstacles as he tried to do so, chief among them being the critics who believed that the Roman script would be supplanted by the Bengali script. Later on Thomas Jones was supported in his decision by Alexander Duff, another missionary scholar.

Jones was not only motivated by his missionary zeal, but, also by a more convenient method of using a known script than an unknown script for this new and unique language. He was aided in his quest to write down the language in the Roman script by U Laithat.

Jones tried to experiment with the Welsh system of spelling by adopting 'c' to represent the Khasi 'k' and 'kh' and the early words

were according to this spelling system, but later realised it was not adequate to express the correct pronunciation of the Khasi words.

This spelling system which can be seen in the first book published in 1842 prepared in the Khasi language by Jones is as follows:

Jones started with teaching the alphabets and in 1841, published a book "Ka Kot Pule Nyngkong" (The First Reader) where the first Khasi alphabets were written as follows:

A	B	K	D	E	G	NG	H	I	J	L	M
N	O	P	R	S	T	U	W	Y			

There were 21 alphabets in all, but in later years two more alphabets were added by Hormu Rai Diengdoh thus taking the total number of alphabets to 23:

A	B	K	D	E	NG	H	I	<i>I</i>	J	L	M
N	<i>N</i>	O	P	<i>R</i>	S	T	U	W	Y		

The italicized alphabets were the newly added ones - making the Khasi alphabet complete.

However, before he started using these alphabets, Jones used another form of spelling an example of which is included:

"Oo cupha jong ngi oo ba ha buneng, long bacooid ca curteng jong me. Wan ca bor jong me. Long ca ba mon jong me ha pyrtei coom ba ha buneng. Ai jing bam coom ba ngi cwah ha la ca sngi. Map noh ca pobp jong ngi coom ba ngi map ia ci ba leh sniw ia ngi. Wat ialam ia ngi ha ca ba iapah, ialam noh na basniw : na ba ca bor bad ca boorom jong me hala carta. Amen.

This is the Lord's prayer from the New Testament when first translated by Rev. Jones. We can see that instead of using the alphabet 'K' he uses 'C' and the alphabet 'C' also was used for the sound 'Kh" which therefore distorted the language and could not provide an accurate written account.

However, this inadequacy was realised later that year (1842) when he published the First Reader with new alphabets.

And in 1846, his translation of the Lord's Prayer is as follows:

"Ko kypa jong ngi u ba ha byneng; long bakuid ka kyrteng jong me; Wan ka hima jong me; long ka mon jong me ha ka kyndeū, kum ba ha byneng; ai ia ngi mynta ka jing bam jong ngi ka ba biang. Map ruh ia ngi ka ryngkang jong ngi kum ba ngi map ia ki ba leh sniu ia ngi.

Wat ialam ruh ia ngi sha ka ba pynshoi, hinrei sumar ia ngi na ka basniu. Naba ka hima, ka bor ruh ka burom ruh ki jong me, hala karta. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer in English

"Our father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever, Amen".

Yet, it was important first attempt which sounded foreign to even the Khasis.

The Bible has proved to be a major contributor towards the growth and development of the Khasi language. The missionaries wanted to spread the gospel and the Bible needed to be translated to enable the Khasi people to understand it. However, alongside the Bible translation, which was going to take longer Thomas Jones translated a Welsh book, "Rhodd Man" (Mother's gift) which was further updated and edited by Dr. John Robert, another missionary who contributed a major number of works in the Khasi language.

Jones has been called The Father of Khasi Literature to this day. He is given the honour he deserves not only for giving the Khasis a written literature, but also as a man, who, against all odds marched, ahead to give this unknown tribe a place in world literature without compromising on its unique sound system and grammar.

The "Yr Hyffordwyr" was translated in 1843, and became another Christian translation published together with the New Testament's "Gospel of St. Mathew" in 1846.

Thomas Jones left the mission when two missionaries Rev. Daniel Jones and Rev. William Lewis succumbed to malaria. This tragedy proved too painful for him, he became a merchant in Calcutta. Thomas Jones occupies pride of place among the Khasis not only for his literary contributions but, also for his love and benevolence towards the Khasis. He taught them not only to read and write, but also taught them carpentry, and how to use a kiln to purify lime stone in a coal fire. All these contributions by Jones made him a legendary figure among the Khasis and his character has been summed up by G. Angell Jones in his book "Ka Histori Jong Ka Balang" . A Babu Dohory Ropmay says of him " . . . it is sad that the turning away of Thomas Jones from the Mission in 1847. And his death in Calcutta in 1849, when he was only 39 years old. He had his faults, but, who

among us are perfect? To evaluate a human being, one has to focus on his good qualities and in doing so Thomas Jones deserves the honour and fond memories from the Khasi and Jaintia people forever. He worked for nearly 8 years for our land and our people, he made the Khasi Alphabet and laid the foundations of Khasi literature³.

When Thomas Jones started writing in Khasi, the mission was based in Cherrapunjee (Sohra) as well as the military headquarters and its dialect was used by the mission and by the government. The Sohra dialect became the linguafranca and a medium of instruction as well as the official language during this time.

The Sohra dialect was the accepted standard Khasi language, as the missionaries used it in their schools and in their literary efforts from the very beginning.

When looking closely at the translated Bible and other works, it is seen that the Sohra dialect; was used. However, the spellings were not accurate; they differ so much from the modern Khasi language spelling that we have now. For example, words like the following were spelt differently :

³ Ropmay, Rai Bahadur. D - Centenary History Jong Ka Balang Presbyterian - pp - 21-22.

Translated Spellings	Modern Spellings
Kiw	Kiew (to climb)
Shintur	Shyntur (mouth)
Mynsiim	Mynsiem (spirit)
Byneng	Bneng (heaven)
Sngeu	Sngew (feel)
Kypa	Kpa (Father)

This form of spelling the words continued till the early part of this century when other writers, both missionaries and native writers used it, and this often created a lot of misunderstandings as the pronunciation and the spelling of the word did not correspond. However, inspite of all these problems, the missionaries also brought new words into the vocabulary of the Khasis, like the word "BIBLE", which never existed in the vocabulary earlier is now used and spelt as "BAIBL". A few examples are given below :

English	Khasi
Plate	Pliang
Kettle	Ketli
Bottle	Bitor, Bilor

Essentially, the words used by the missionaries had not been in existence for the Khasis but with their contribution a number of literary terms also come into existence such as the following :

ENGLISH	KHASI
CULTURE	KOLSHOR
LITERATURE	LITERASHOR
COMEDY	KOMEDI
POETRY	POITRI

Now, they are being used by everyone, so much so that most are not aware that they are 'loan-words' from English and this has enriched the Khasi vocabulary and language. Khasi is a developing language and it has never been static from its inception as a written language till today, as it continues to fold new foreign words into its dictionary.

Another important writer of the age was Rev. William Pryse, who wrote and published a book in 1855, called "An Introduction To The Khasia Language", it is the earliest attempt to understand and learn Khasi grammar and syntax by anyone. It dealt mainly with orthography of the language, and it gives a vivid insight into the wealth, resources and flexible features of Khasi as a language.⁴ However, this same

⁴ BAREH. H - A SHORT HISTORY OF KHASI LITERATURE 1962.

author still held the same opinion he held when Thomas Jones used the Roman script. He was of the opinion that " . . . such a small and an uninfluential tribe will not be able to retain characters different from those of the larger nations of the plains which surround their hills, . . . for the sake of the Khasis it would be desirable. Nor would it be less desirable, for the Bengali language to supplant all hill dialects on the North-east frontier.⁵

He was proved wrong as we see it now, the Roman script is still in use even after 150 years of its introduction, so much so that it is hard to even imagine the Khasi language written in any other script.

In 1891, the entire Bible translated into Khasi was completed and published in 1899 in the codified edition. The Bible is the epitome and architect of the Khasi language and laid a strong foundation for Khasi literature. The translation in its entirety stretched over a period of 50 years and it became an enormous help in evaluating the standard of Khasi literature with its vocabulary, the use of idiomatic phrases with the meanings as close or exact translations to Biblical thought and it has not diminished the theological dogmas, proverbs, doctrines, parables of the original copy⁶.

⁵ Pryse, W.Rev. An Introduction To The Khasia Language - 1855.

⁶ BAREH. H - A Short History of Khasi Literature - 1962.

After Thomas Jones, the more prolific missionaries in regards to Khasi literature, who not only wrote down Khasi literature and did not limit themselves to Christian literature were Dr. John Roberts and Rev. Hugh Roberts.

In 1876, when Rev. Hugh Roberts and his wife were in Wales for a holiday, Dr. John Robert took over the position of principal of the Normal⁷ and Theological Institutions of the mission.

His creative and literary muse gained impetus as he wrote a series of "Khasi Readers" which were used in schools.

The "Third Reader", he compiled had 15 animal fables and also had prose-translations from the English newspaper "The Spectator". The stories included from the Bible and indigenous sources were lucid and were taught in the schools.

The "Fourth Reader" was a collection of Khasi Phawars⁸ though not arranged under any particular heading or category, but a collection of couplets used by the Khasis for the Bone-Burial Ceremony (Thep-Mawbah) for a Bear Hunt (Shad - Dngiem) and even a lament on the death of the paternal grandmother (Iam-Meikha) and other miscellaneous essays.

⁷ In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the primary and middle level schools were termed as "Normal" schools.

⁸ Phawars - Couplets recited in any gathering

Rev. Hugh Roberts' major contribution was his "Anglo-Khasi Dictionary" published in 1878 and sometime before that he published a book which he titled "Ka Kot Grammar" (The Grammar Book) which attempts to study the Khasi language under three composite headings :

(a) ORTHOGRAPHY - (KI DAK THOH)

(B) ETYMOLOGY - (RUKOM KREN BAD PYNSAWA KTIEN)

(C) SYNTAX - (JINGPYNRYNTIH KTIEN)

This grammar book by Rev. Hugh Roberts is perhaps more detailed than that of Rev. William Pryse as it is more exhaustive than Rev. Pryse's earlier work, more so because Rev. Roberts did not have the same bias that Pryse had against the Roman script, as he remarked in his introduction " . . . the Mongoloids physique is established beyond doubt (referring to the other Hill Tribes) while the racial affinity is evident, it is important however to state here that the percentage of words common to the Khasi and the rest of the mountain dialects is extremely small : Equally great also is the dissimilarity in many other points of grammatical detail". He also

said, "It is irrelevant to class Khasi with the monosyllabic Chinese or even more with Turanian"⁹

The Khasi people appreciated and felt gratitude towards Rev. Hugh Roberts for giving their language a global recognition. This grammar was published in London again in 1891. It made the other translation and literary efforts pale into insignificance as it allowed foreigners to see and read about the untold wealth and flexibility and the strong oral base of the Khasi language. This book was dedicated to his old Khasi students who would be the future of this small but well-known tribe.

In 1889, another milestone was reached in Khasi literature as a monthly journal was published by W. William from his mission in Shella called "U Nongkit Khubor" (Messenger). It also carried write-ups about the traditional rites of a funeral and the divination process by Rabon Singh.

Another Christian journal "U Nongialam Kristan" (The Christian Leader) edited by J.C. Evans played a significant role among the new literate reading public who no longer were an illiterate, backward community cut-off from the country and the world. They were now aware of a much bigger, wider world outside their own little world

⁹ Bareh. H. - 'A Short History Of Khasi Literature' Pg. 31.

which made them as eager as young children to learn and know more about the people of the world, their culture and their tradition.

CULTURAL AWAKENING

The missionaries played a major role in the development of Khasi literature, yet, as we have seen, the literary works which were produced and published were all Christian literature except for a few like the readers of Dr. John Roberts and the Dictionary and Grammar of Rev. Hugh Roberts and this proved a setback in more ways than one for the Khasis. As they grappled with a new religion and the new alien culture they were being irresistibly drawn to it as it provided a better life and more doors of opportunity were opened for them.

The missionary zeal in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills bore fruit more quickly as compared with other parts of India. Many reasons have been advanced for this, some opinions vary greatly citing the spiritual to financial benefits. While on the spiritual side the converted Khasis lived a contented and happy life, they also benefited financially as their education and literacy allowed them a wider choice and bigger avenues to explore, be it professionally or individually as the education they received at the schools paid rich dividends. The increasing number of schools only gave them an education which was enough to enable them to become evangelists or school masters.

As people moved away from the rural areas to the headquarters, then Shillong, instead of Cherrapunjee, to take up government jobs and establish businesses and they gradually started letting go of their ethnic traditions.

A few Khasi men, who had been educated and inculcated into this new educational system of the missionaries had an insight into the dangers faced by the Khasi tribe in losing their culture and tradition.

Babu Jeebon Roy, made sustained efforts to awaken in the Khasi people their pride and love for their culture and tradition, and towards this end established a printing press in Shillong called the "Ri Khasi Press" in 1896. This gave him the freedom to write and print books not based on Christian teachings, but books which were more attuned to the Khasi culture and traditions which he felt were more needed, as the Khasis were losing touch with their culture under the influence of western culture and religion.

The attitude of the missionaries did not help at all, as they were guilty of sharing the same preconceptions that their English compatriots had; The Khasis were look down upon as barbarous heathens and pagan people who performed human sacrifices and above all worshipped the many faces of the devil himself.

This attitude is reflected in one booklet published by the Foreign mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales¹⁰ where the author clearly states that the Khasis were demon or spirit worshippers and ridiculed the divination ceremonies of yore. He considered the Khasi way of life as barbaric and uncivilized.

The missionaries did not allow Christian converts to attend or watch any traditional festival or ceremony for fear of reconversion. This coercion was resented by many Khasis for it represented a severe restriction on their freedom of choice, yet, no one raised any questions or protests against it.

The danger of Khasi culture and tradition being erased at that time, was halted by the emergence of one poet by the name of S.M. Amjad Ali who published a collection of poems called "Ka Myntoi" (The Benefit).¹¹ This collection virtually gave a new breath of life for the Khasi people as it recalled their bravery and honour.

In two particular poems "Ieng Riew Khasi" (Stand Up Khasi People" and "Synshar Riew Khasi" (Rule Of The Khasi People) he called upon the Khasi people not to forget their bygone glory of their warrior tribe and the honour bestowed on this tribe by everyone.

¹⁰ Morris, J. Hughes, "Christ's Ambassadors in Khasia" -(Liverpool)- 1839.

¹¹ Also called "Ka Kot Bo It" (1888)

One poem however found an echoing pulsating beat in the hearts of the Khasis who realized the folly of not clinging to their culture and tradition. This poem was called "Ka Shad Khasi" (The Dance Of The Khasis).

There were two prolific writers of this age, Rev. Morkha Joseph and Radhon Singh Berry both Christian converts, yet they did not forget their Khasi identity as they risked censure from the church and mission as they wrote extolling the virtues of Khasi culture and religion.

Babu Jeebon Roy, another significant contributor towards Khasi literature wrote a booklet and published it in 1897, called "Ka Niam Jong Ki Khasi" (The Religion Of The Khasis). In its preface, he asked the enlightened and educated Khasis to strive hard to protect their culture from extinction in the face of so many outside influences.

In this book he gives an account of the religious beliefs, rites and ceremonies of the Khasi people, on tenets of clan allegiance, monolithic erections, rites of birth, death, naming ceremonies, divorce and marriage. Being also a staunch advocate of monotheism he encouraged people to believe in this traditional religion.

In this chapter we have dealt with the incipient beginnings of Khasi written literature, from finding a script to finding an alphabet, to a new breed of an educated first generation Khasi, who are fascinated and in awe of this new development for the first fifty years of the church in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The first fifty years saw the emerging trend of christianisation of a small tribe nearly submerged under the deluge of a new religion and culture. The christian writings of these early years blacked out not only Indian culture, but, also Khasi traditional beliefs and culture while extolling the virtues and great deeds of western civilization.

If it had not been a rude awakening by some educated and enlightened people, this fledgling tribe would have been lost in the maze of acculturation and assimilation, as they would have blindly reveled in this more liberal and attractive culture.

When Babu Jeebon Roy, realized the limited education being given to the Khasis which did not allow them to be more than a school teachers or clerks, he approached the mission to introduce High Schools or Entrance Schools as they were then called, to give the Khasi youth an equal advantage with their contemporaries; the reply given to him was "we have come for religion and not for education".

The missionaries taught the Khasi people to read and write, and gave them a written literature not for the advancement of learning or education or for any other reason, like the urge to enlighten and 'civilize' them. But to enable them only to imbibe, absorb and understand Christianity and the Bible. It is clear that all these efforts were not to give the Khasis an opportunity to see and experience the world. Maybe, they were single-minded in their zeal for spreading the gospel or maybe it has political motivations where a native population is given a free rein to a certain limit but not beyond for it might rise up in rebellion.

However, the Khasis inspite of all these major influences on them have managed to carve a niche for themselves, between the western and traditional keeping a fine balance between the two and this ability to balance both has been the hallmark of Khasi society till date.

CHAPTER III

THE POST - MISSION AGE

As we saw in the last chapter, the mission not only played a significant role in the growth and development of Khasi literature, but as in all good things there is always a down side to this, and it was a grave erosion of the traditional and age-old wisdom of the Khasis as they now were coerced into accepting this new religion and new way of life for them which they happily accepted as it opened new avenues of opportunity and a better standard of living than their compatriots who refused to accept this new way of life. For at least fifty years this status - quo was in force but as literacy and education spread, it gave the more a sighted learned ones cause to question where all this education and way of life was taking the community, as the Khasi people were losing touch with their 'roots'.

It was a poet called S.M. Amjad Ali, who gave the impetus to this cultural awakening of the Khasis and what is ironic about this is that Amjad Ali was not a Khasi but a Bengali Muslim who wrote Khasi poetry urging the Khasi people to wake up from this slumberous state and recalled the indomitable warrior spirit of the erstwhile Khasis before them.

There were many Khasi writers during this time but the five most widely-read and most vociferous were Babu Jeebon Roy, Radhon Singh Berry, Rabon Singh, Rev. Morkha Joseph and Nissor Singh.

The prolific writer of this transitional phase was perhaps Babu Jeebon Roy who in 1896 established the “Ri Khasi Press” the first press in the Khasi - Jaintia Hills, it was perhaps this which allowed a lot of secular literature to be published and read by the public because prior to this the only printed and published works were by the missionaries and their converts . The only secular literature printed was perhaps by Dr. John Roberts with his 'Readers and Hugh Roberts' Dictionary of Khasi words. Yet, these were hardly sufficient to adequately capture the ethos of the Khasi community.

BABU JEEBON ROY

The need of the hour was to revitalize and give a new lease of life to a community drowning in a deluge of western culture and religion so much so that even the educated members of this community found it hard to recall their ancient birthright and tradition. Into this scene came Babu Jeebon Roy’s book in 1897 called “Ka Niam Jong Ki Khasi (The Religion of the Khasis).

This book is a concise and lucid explanation of aspects of the Khasi religion. It is the first coherent work on one aspect of the Khasis, it gives an explanation about clanship alliance, monolithic erections, sacrifices, ceremonies relating to marriage, divorce birth, naming ceremonies and funeral rites. However in the last chapter he pens down about 40 wise sayings or codes of conduct for a Khasi from table manners to paying obeisance to God the Creator in the morning as soon as your get up.

Jeebon Roy in this book's preface urges the Khasi people to maintain the structure and form of the Khasi religion as it meets new challenges of religion and culture from outside its purview and knowledge. This book perhaps not only preserved the traditions and religious beliefs of this Hill tribe but served as beacon of hope for the beleaguered Khasi community who was adrift in a sea of new ideas in collision with their own identity and beliefs which were beginning to get shaky and losing a foothold among the members of the educated few.

The educated Khasis were torn in two directions and their dilemma was evident in the case of Rev. Morkha Joseph, who became a Christian and was a Pastor, but, before him was the question of identity first as a Khasi or a Christian, Rev. Morkha Joseph realised

early enough that his identity as a Khasi did not necessarily overlap that of being a Christian. However, this was not how the mission saw it, and he was branded as a traitor to his religion as he wrote a poem "U Sier Lapalang" published in the Christian magazine "Nongkit Khubor" (the messenger)¹ which is an elegy by a mother, demonstrating her affection as her wandering son perished at the hands of Khasi hunters.

This poem was the first written by a Khasi who was brought up and taught as a Khasi. This poem had 51 stanzas with a 4 line verses. This poem stood as a guiding light to the golden age of literature in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the coming of foreigners to the hills.

The poet, Rev. Morkha Joseph urged the Khasi and Jaintia people to chase away the foreigners who were exploiting the culture and tradition of the people which has been the cornerstone of Khasi society. Perhaps the poet, could envisage a future generation who had lost their cultural roots and age-old traditions, by a constant deluge of western ideas and influence.

Babu Jeebon Roy also published a book "Ka Kita Shaphang Vwei U Blei" (A Book On Monotheism) in 1900. The main aim of this man was not only to preserve Khasi religion or perpetuate it, it was for a dual

¹ The First Khasi Poem which initiated a revival of Khasi literature.

purpose, one to preserve it for future generations or they would be lost and as he says "if one don't write it, the people will forget this time, and the Khasi religion without a written literature will disappear from our society and after many years the people will forget it forever"². Two, he emphasises the unnecessary religion of the foreigners and he sums it up in these words "when you think about it my brothers and sisters of the hills and plains (referring to people from the border areas) every village, every house, every kingdom and every man know of a God, of their own. God is not a stranger so why should we accept him and expect him to guide us"³.

Yet inspite of the sometimes harsh words Baby Jeebon Roy appears to be a liberal man as he does not denigrate any religion or any god. But for the missionaries he proved to be an irritating thorn in their sides, as he tirelessly campaigned for better education and a higher education for the Khasi community.

Another writer who wrote in Khasi religion during that time was Sib Charan Roy whose publication "Ka Niam Tip Blei Tip Briew" (The religion of knowing God and knowing man) and has a more detailed explanation of his father's book "Ka Kitab Shaphang Uwei UBlei" (The

² Lyngdohr.S. - Histori Ka Thoh Ka Tar - Bynta - II Pg. 95.

³ Ibid,

Book about One God) and talks about the Khasi concept of one God and the community's monotheistic principles.

He has explained about family organisation, migration of the soul, religious doctrines governing family and social relations., this work has further given the Khasi community an added boost for their self-image as a community governed by an ethical concept of moral and spiritual values.

There are various anecdotes of his brushes with the mission. He had vision of a "glorious Khasi race" and in order to achieve this they needed a higher education which was not available then in the Hills, and anybody who wanted, had to travel to Calcutta to enroll for High School and almost nobody did as the expense and the uncertainty would be too heavy a burden to bear. So he approached the mission where T. Jerman Jones was the missionary incharge then and received a typical British reply - "We have come for religion and not for education", so he persuaded the government to establish the Entrance school in Shilong before its merger with the mission Normal School which shifted from Sohra, Babu Jeebon Roy donated funds for its initial phase till the Welsh Mission School joined hands with the 'government' in running the school - and among its first graduates

was his son Sib Charan Roy who followed in his father's footsteps and became a prolific writer in his own right.

Babu Jeebon Roy also translated the 'Buddhadev Charita", The Ramayan" The Hitopadesha" - Parts I to IV and even wrote books on Indian history all these literary efforts concentrated over a two year period from 1898-1900.

He sought to convey the need of the hour to the Khasis to identify and learn about their motherland, India, from a very young age. He urged the people to go forth into the world and other parts of the country to learn and experience the different and varied cultures of the neighbours, as this would not only educate them, but give the Khasis a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the world and its people and in order to achieve this he had accompanied a number of Khasis to Calcutta for a World exhibition in 1883-84.

Not only has his contribution been literary, but his social contribution has been immense, as in 1899, founded together with like minded Khasis , the "Seng Khasi" . This was established with the object of perpetuating Khasi art, dance and music, and also published many articles which catered to a growing awareness of the identity of the Khasis. Its main aim was to rear a generation of people who were

aware and lived under Khasi concepts which were propagated by them.

Another prolific writer during this time was Rabon Singh Kharsuka. He converted to Christianity in his adulthood and he was fired with the same missionary zeal as his fellow Christians. Rabon Singh gave up his lucrative and promising career in the government services and became a missionary, he was posted to Mawmluh as a school teacher together with his wife. He set about his tasks with such zeal, so much so that even the Welsh missionaries were all praise for him. It was during this time in Mawmluh that three Englishmen who were on a world tour came to the Khasi Hills and were received by Rabon Singh and his wife at Mawmluh.

In the course of their stay they came into close contact with the Khasi populace living in Mawmluh, some of whom had not converted but had retained their age-old forms of beliefs and rituals of worship for the creator-God. These Englishmen witnessed the sacrifice of a pig to give thanks to god and immediately saw it as a form of Devil - worshipping by the Khasis⁴.

⁴ Roberts, Sir J. Herbets - Soviet Union - A World Tour, p.37.

Rabon Singh was deeply pained by this concept of how the Khasi religion was viewed as Devil worship where the Khasi religion is in fact a religion or belief in the creator (Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw) and monotheism.

The book written by him "Ka Kitab Khein U Khasi" was published somewhere between the years of 1897 - 1900. And, this book according to him was published "from information gathered from the diviners who were quite well-known, U Bor Hynniewta, U Sain Syiemlieh and another called Bit who converted to Christianity⁵". In this RabonSingh explains about rites and rituals, customs and traditions and even prayers and invocations. He tries to explain the belief of the Ancestress and Ancestor (Ka Iaw Bei and U Thawlang) and even about the prayers of request and about the spirits and nymphs abounding in nature.

And he further as he explains about monoliths, the laws of the ancient Khasis and the laws of governance and the rules of succession. This book stands as a path finder in Khasi literature as it was a book clearly dealing in subject, theme and content of Khasi religion only and not Christianity. It was a huge deviation and path-breaker for Khasi literature to move forwards with a sense of

belonging, with a history, which contributed very much to the identity of the Khasis, who had faced a massive erosion of their cultural and political identity under the East India company and the Mission and it preserved for eternity the footprints of the forefathers in the sands of time.

In 1905, another book by him was called “Ka Kitab Jingphawar”. It is this book which is an eye-opener for its readers as it gives an accurate idea of how Rabon Singh yearned to develop Khasi poetry based on the framework of the couplet used by the Khasis from time immemorial in every aspect, from festivals, athletic meets, archery meets to dance festivals and even in funerals, births and naming ceremonies. So in this book, Rabon Singh categorises them under various heads - “Ka Jingphawar haba ioh khlieh, ne ksan thma:”. He also made rules for poetry by using allegory and metaphors and called them “Ka Syllok Phawar” (a discussion on couplets) and he uses the English style of periphrasis. These were all followed by 22 folk tales told in the fable style of Aesop the Greek and invariably, these stories had moral endings which further enhanced the value of this book as it proved to be an inimitable source for later writers of Khasi literature in later ages.

⁵ Lyngdohrs - Ibid, p. 39.

Another publication by the same author, titled “Ka Jingiathuhknana Puriskam” which had a collection of 20 stories, ranging from mythology, legends and folk-tales has become a source for many poems and plays by prolific literary scholars of later years like Soso Tham, S.J. Ducan and even Dewi Singh Khongdup Rabon Singh died in the year 1910 and his death was a great loss not only for his family but also for the world of Khasi literature. And on his death the poet laureate of the Khasis, Soso tham said to his grandchildren, "it is to you his children and grandchildren that I confess that my inspiration was your grand father⁶.

In 1902-3, Radhon Singh Berry published his book in two volumes called “Ki Jingsneng Tymmen” and these books were written in the form of couplets (phawars) and it is seldom used by writers. The first volume consists of 41 couplets while the second volume consists of 68 couplets and they all are presented in proverb form and teach the right code of conduct and exhort the readers to obey the mandate of doctrines handed from generation to generation. These two books are considered today as the best collection of proverbs and original Khasi maxims.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 40.

They talk about a code of conduct, respect and way of life of the Khasis from birth till death. These volumes form the backbone of Khasi Literature, and it is like a mirror image of the way of life of the Khasis, as a community and as a society.

In one couplet he says,

“Da kumno (Sumar bad ri kyndong ialade nadong shadong)

Kane kam long thamula ne kai

Hynrei ka long ka tynrai u Trai”

which roughly translates, as taking care of ourselves in all respects for this is not a joke, but a law of God, which means to say to respect ourselves first is the fount of gaining respect from everyone and this leads to living a full spiritual life

Another couplet says,

“Wat ju khublei thala iano iano,

La'mde iaiddur, long jingtim pynban, ho”

“Do not congratulate anyone until and unless they deserve it,

for to do so will bring down God's wrath”

Phrases and maxims like these abound in this text and reflect the thinking process of the Khasis. It tells us of a community governed by a strict code of ethical conduct as well as a strict moral code which appears to have been lost in the time we live now, where codes of conduct, moral and ethical have disappeared in this age of material prosperity. It is indeed tragic that even after recording these maxims and precepts, the Khasi community is hard-pressed to retain and follow these teachings of the forefathers.

Another writer who contributed to the growth of the Khasi language was Babu Nissor Singh, who published a dictionary⁷ with about 6,800 words. This was an Anglo-Khasi dictionary hardly ever contemplated by anyone before. He received an award for this work from the Government.

Amidst all these developments in the Khasi literature, we should not forget the contribution of the Roman Catholic mission to Khasi literature. It may not have been as huge as the Presbyterian Mission as it followed a little later. It was only after 1888 that the Catholic mission seeing the rise of indigenous Khasi thinking decided to take the plunge to contribute their share to the development of Khasi literature and language. The more prolific ones were Father Giulio

⁷ Ibid,

Costa who came from Italy in 1925 and was in the Khasi hills till 1933, and in his tenure in the Khasi Hills which was roughly for 25 years as he was transferred time and time again, he wrote and published two books in the Khasi language. "Ka Riti Jong Ka Ri Ki Laiphew Syiem", Vol. I and II, and various articles under the topic of the coming of the Khasis and two other articles under the heading of "Ka Jingroi Ka Ri Khasi" (the development of Ri Khasi) dealt with the life, the way of thinking, the dreams and the traditions of the Khasis as well as their culture.

This love for his adopted people is reflected in the Preface of his book when he says.

"To you, the children and the youth who are the hope and the dignity of Ri Khasi so that you love and respect your culture and tradition of your land - I give you this book".

He was followed by Fr. Elias Hopewell Sohliya who carried the torch of literary development from among the Catholics.

In 1937, he published two books, "Ki Khanatang u Barim" and "Pansngiat Ksiar Ki Saw Aiom" and both these books reflect his intense love and respect for the tradition and culture of the Khasis and even his parents for having taught him to love his people and his

land. His love prompted him to pen down the history and literature which had so far been understood by only the few far sighted from the Christians to the Seng Khasi members.

This chapter was dedicated to these handful of men who made a difference in the life of the Khasis. They may have not shared the same views, but, they were drawn together by their love and respect for their people and their cultural identity, which did not affect in any way, which religion they followed.

These writers have been a major source for all the youth today to learn and understand the ancient laws and customs.

Throughout, their writings they have used the Sohra dialect, which was unanimously accepted and is used as the standard form of Khasi even today and they not only used Khasi words alone, but also took some words from other languages if they could not find an equivalent in Khasi.

For the Khasis today, as with many other tribes, their identity is a priority and their religion is often relegated to the background as they find a common platform of ethnic identity anywhere in the world.

During the cultural awakening or revivalist movement of the Khasis, the literature published and printed dealt with the Khasi religion and traditions only.

The writings and the language was the pure language of the Khasis who still used their oral language for ceremonial and festive occasions.

The books written by Babu Jeebon Roy dealt with Khasi religion, and these oral religious tenets were finally put down in black and white. This 'Seng Khasi' (The Khasi organisation) is not only an organisation for perpetuating the art, culture, dance and music of the Khasis, it also took upon itself to revamp and remake Khasi society into a more modern yet without losing sight of their Khasi roots.

The language used by Babu Jeebon Roy and Sib Charan Roy for describing and explaining the concept of Khasi religion is still very much in use today by all of the Khasis.

Words like "Ka pyrthei shong basa" means "this world is just a temporary abode" and the concept of "ka hok - ka sot" meaning 'righteousness' and sot' is just an imitative .

This concept of 'hok' in Khasi parlance has been a debatable point for it is spoken in various contexts. Here it means 'righteousness',

elsewhere it may be used to mean 'truth' for e.g.: "Iathuh hok" (Tell me the Truth). Therefore the Khasi language has many abstract concepts which are spoken or written in different situations to mean different things.

Sib Charan Roy in his book "Ka Niam Tip-Riew Tip Blei", writes about Hell and describes it as "Khyndai - Pateng Niamra", the "Ninth-Level Underground", and this phrase to describe Hell is still very much used in literary works rather than the colloquial word "dujok". Another word describing the superficial pursuits of this word is found in this book, "Mangkarong" (superficial display/illusions of grandeur)

These words found in the books of Babu Jeebon Roy and his son Sib Charan Roy make us realise that the Khasi language before its written literature not only have a vocabulary which was vast, but also very sophisticated as we can see. The language had words for abstract concepts which the missionaries might have been hard pressed to find them had they never existed.

Another feature of this time was that the writers were more biased towards Indian classical texts as seen from the translations of Babu Jeebon Roy who was well-versed in Sanskrit and this influence from Hindi can be found in the number of 'loan-words' which are evident in the Khasi language

Khasi	English	Hindi
Mahajon	(trader)	(Mahajan)
Mor	(maund)	(mound)
Kudam	(Godown)	(Godam)

Though, the Khasi language has some phonetic gaps in regards to Indo-Aryan languages or English. For e.g.:

Hindi	English	Khasi
Sukh	(HAPPINESS)	Suk
Maph	(PARDON)	Map
Chakka	(Wheel)	Shaka

The 'Khasi' language adapts itself by substituting sounds and consonants.

The Khasi language has grown by leaps and bounds, primarily by its ability to be open to outside influences and the various languages that have come into contact with it, thus making it a constantly developing and growing language.

CHAPTER IV

THE MODERN AGE

Khasi literature started growing by leaps and bounds as the years passed - writers, poets, essayist and critics were all now part of the Khasi literary milieu.

Khasi literature saw an improvement with the blossoming of poetry which till now has been woefully inadequate. The only type of poetry were the 'Phawars or the couplets.

When S.M. Amjad Ali published his collection "Ka Myntoi" in 1888, i.e., was not a Khasi, but a Muslim from Murshidabad originally, but, growing up and being a part of the Khasi community made him a fluent speaker and writer of the Khasi language.

When looking at his poetry, we are struck by his knowledge of Khasi, yet, his language in these poems is influenced by his own mother tongue and his pronunciations of words is reflected in his spellings: for example -

'briew' becomes briw (man)

'syntiew' becomes syntiw (flower)

'rieh' becomes rih (hide)

S.M. Amjad Ali, was very much aware of his shortcomings as a poet of Khasi language, yet, he did not hesitate to come forward and publish his collection as there were no Khasis who stepped forward to contribute to this genre of literature.

According to one Khasi writer D.Nihon Singh Wahlang "A nation tastes the beauty of culture and civilisation through the creations of literatures, say one".

This quote by him adequately expresses the importance of literature for any community, and the growth and development of Khasi literature and language is indeed phenomenal.

Looking at the changes in the spellings of words and pronunciations in Khasi, it has come a long way from Thomas Jones time. For eg:

1868 Edition	Later editions
Iakob	Jakob
Angelor	Angel (pro. Ajel)
Irodis	Herod
Pynbaptisma	Pynbaptis (Baptize)
Jiutang	Testament

Judging from these changes, the Khasi language has adapted itself very well to a changing world and society.

One prolific writer of this age was Primrose Garfield Gatphoh, the youngest son of Babu Soso Tham, the unofficial poet Laureate of Khasi literature.

Primrose Gatphoh inherited his father's flair for writing and he wrote poems, short stories and plays. One of his collections is called "Sawdong Ka Lyngwiar Dpei" (Around the Hearth). The title itself suggests the source of these stories, as the family hearth was the pivotal centre of any Khasi household, family members gathered around it at night after dinner and stories were unravelled and where the young children learned about the legends, folk-tales and fables as well as the values of honesty, morality and kindness towards other people.

It was during this time that the large storehouse of oral literature of the Khasis was beginning to be put down in black and white enabling the generations after them to read about these stories.

When reading these stories we come across terms and phrases which have been used here whereas they are not found anywhere else, like

the word "ka ah"¹ which is money torn into two halves, each kept by the parties who have made an agreement, this is done only among the king and his ministers so that the agreement can never be broken or a wager reneged upon.

The tradition of finding a husband for the king's sister is also described here, the Khasis called it "leit ring Kongngor" the word 'Kongngor' has an Assamese origin and Assam being a neighbouring area this word has also been added into the Khasi language.

By the year 1937, he had also published another collection called "Ki Khanatang Bad U Sier Lapalang" (Folk-Tales And U Sier Lapalang). This collection had a lot of historical, and mythological tales but the most important is the chapter at the end where he gives explanations and meanings of Khasi words and phrases which were recent additions in written literature. This effort has been praised Dr. H. Lyngdon when he said "this collection has folk-tales, and myths which school children should read, so that their education and wisdom of our tomorrow is based on the tradition and thought processes of the Khasi culture...." Another writer Denelton Passah writes - "In this

¹ Gatphoh, P Sawdong Ka Lyngwiar Dpei, p.109

book, he gives us not only information and entertainment, but mental food and discipline"².

Some words explained by Primrose Gatphoh for example is given below:

(a) Ai Kyrwoh; sending or giving rings

To send messages or send word. In the olden days there were three fingers used to denote the time lapsed or urgency of the message, the ring fitting the thumb meant there was plenty of time, on the third finger it meant it was urgent while a ring fitting the little finger meant that it was very urgent and there was no time to waste.

(b) Bam Kwai Hai ing u Blei - eating betel nut in God's house.

The Khasi custom of offering betel nut and leaf to any guest into their homes is considered to be the mark of hospitality, hence, when talking about a deceased person, this phrase is always added to denote that he has gone to heaven and enjoying God's hospitality.

(c) Khi - lai - nuid: to shave the head in three parts

This was done to any man who is suspected to be practicing the black arts and he is captured and his head is shaven not all cover but in

² Nongrom, K.W. 'Ki Nongthoh Kot Khasi', Bynta II, p.125

only three directions together with being excommunicated and if the dares to step inside the boundaries of his village again, he has forfeited his life.

These are a few examples of words and phrases in the Khasi language, which have been used by many writers in modern literature. These are new words coined after knowing the many practices which were evident during the olden days of Khasi history.

Another contribution to Khasi language and literature is not a Khasi himself, but a Spanish priest Monsignor Emmanuel Bars who joined the Catholic mission in 1922, and he followed Thomas Jones when he started learning Khasi till he was very fluent.

The dictionary compiled by Nissor Singh was of great help to him, so he resolved to compile another updated dictionary and in 1973, he published the Khasi-English Dictionary. His work was welcomed and lauded by one and all, even Dr. R.S. Lyngdon one of the luminaries of Khasi literature and language said - "We are proud to know the Khasi dictionary of Babu Nissor Singh which was published in 1905, had only 6,800 words, whereas this dictionary by Mon. E. Bars has about 40,000 words and phrases... we do not look upon him as a Spaniard,

but his work has made us believe that he has become a true-blooded Khasi".³

When in the beginning of this Dictionary, he wrote down three points:

- (a) Why and how he compiled this Dictionary, he pointed the need to use Adverbs in the Khasi language as they beauty the language.
- (b) He points to the need for sentence formation and this needs patience and wisdom.
- (c) He showed how grammar and a dictionary help and strengthened each other. The language of any nation or community is welded together with the dictionary and grammar

Some of the following new words found in this dictionary:

- (i) Akher - ka sngi- ka (n) - Doomsday, Judgement day.
- (ii) Nguh let (v) to apologize - (iii) ilub (v) attractive
- (iv) Paham ka (n) - Valley - (v) Iit tyndong - (n) -
binoculars/telescope

³ Nongrun, K.W. - "Ki Nongthon Kot Khasi" Bynta II, p.38.

This contribution by Mons E. Bars has shown how Khasi has grown in its grammar and vocabulary when compared to its beginnings, during the time of Thomas Jones.

The Khasi language benefited not only from its native writers, but from the foreign missionaries who had come to the Khasi Hills to propagate Christianity.

Another writer of this time was Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh who contributed his writings to Khasi literature.

One of his books, published in 1937, called "Ka Niam Khasi" (the Religion of the Khasis) is another attempt made by him, after the number of books on Khasi religion before this by Babu Jeebon Roy, Sib Charan Roy and many others.

This book has a comprehensive account of the tenets of Khasi religion including the sacrificial chantings and the process of how the sacrifices are performed.

This book, is a marked improvement over the former books. Its language is modern and the spellings have improved and the sentence formations are more "passive" than the former sentences by Jeebon Roy - For eg: in Jeebon Roy's book "Ka Niam Khasi" the sentence occurring in his chapter on 'birth rites' is as follows:

"Ia kata ka sati sa leit aida u shy mang ha ka kynthei".

That ring is then handed over by the man to the woman

The above sentence can be modified by the removal of the agentive - instrumental particle 'da' to read 'Ia kata ka sati sa leit ai U shy rang ha ka kynthei' - That ring is then given by the man to the woman, this sentence does not diminish the meaning or the sense. Sentence formation the Khasi language has seen a marked improvement over the years and even the grammar has improved to evolve its own rules.

Dr. Homiwell Lyngdon in the preface of this book says - "The signs of the time warns us, if we do not collect and write it down fast, the fast changes of this world will suffocate them to death".

Another book by this author called "Ki Syiem Khasi Bad Synteng" (The Kings Of The Khasi And Synteng People). This book explains the laws of governance, how a king is chosen and the responsibilities and obligations of the chosen king.

The Khasis have always followed the democratic norm of - "a law of the people, for the people" and a king has to be chosen and no man can decide to be king until he is chosen and then too the priests have to offer prayers and invocations to God to guide them in their choice.

This book is an invaluable source of history for the Khasis as it has given them a concrete foundation in learning about their past, their tradition and culture.

Another writer of equal calibre was Mondon Bareh, the father of Dr. Hamlet Bareh, a scholar who has written a number of books in Khasi and English and invariably his literary efforts have always been about the Khasis and their culture.

Mondon Bareh is the first Khasi to write and compose poetry in English based on Khasi folk-lore.

However, his works are found in the book "Mawpun Jingtup" (The Stone Bridge To Knowledge) published in 1956-57 and this work included translations and poems.

His translation of stories like "Sinbad the Sailor (U Sindabad - U riwiaid duriaw) and Alladdin's Lamp (Ka Sharak Jadu U Alladin) all brought literature from other parts of the worlds closer to the Khasi people.

In the field of drama, Khasi literature was indeed very poor, and it was only in 1956, that Victor G. Bareh published a play in Khasi "Ka Drama U Tirot Singh" (The Play about U Tirot Singh) it was a

historical play, finding its source and inspiration from the legendary Khasi freedom fighter of Nongkhlaw.

Another priest who contribute to Khasi language and literature was H. Elias whose work. Ha Pansngiat Ksiar Ki Saw Aiom (The Golden Crown of the Four Seasons). This book has three chapters and the first deals with prosody and prosodic terms which have come a long way in enriching the Khasi language.

A few examples of these new terms are given below⁴.

Khasi	English
Ka khriang	Rhythm
Ka khup	Accent
Ka khup	Measure
Tara	Rhyme
Jing thew	Metre
Lapalang	Group-chanting
Kyud	Chorus
Mieng	Sonnet
Kyoh-mynthi	Satire
Sawangka	Drama-form

⁴ Bareh, H. A short history of Khasi Literature

These new words coined by H. Elias has given the Khasi language, new words and made them exclusive Khasi language terms which has enriched the vocabulary/dictionary of this language.

Modern Khasi literature and language has grown considerably over the years, considering that it is hardly two centuries old. But, the language of the Khasis has not been rigid and it has allowed influences from English, Hindi, Assamese and Bengali into its dictionary in forming new words. Modern Khasi writers having been educated in English. Medium schools, where English is the medium of instruction cannot help but be influenced by its grammar and sentence formation, yet they have not completely forgotten their own language and its grammar.

CONCLUSION

Khasi writers have exerted a lot of influence in maintaining the dignity of Khasi religion and the honour of its culture. Imitation of style and borrowing of ideas is noticed in modern writers, but, they have succeeded in giving a clearer understanding of the Khasi culture.

Khasi literature is at a nascent stage straining to achieve maturity, with its language still growing and developing.

However, since it is still a young literature, Khasi still has the scope to grow and develop as more young scholars are emerging.

Khasi, as we know it now is the Sohra dialect which has become the standard Khasi language.

Khasi as a language is assured a place among other living languages of the North East Region of India with its rapidly growing literature. Non-Khasi words are incorporated into the language with necessary, sometimes drastic modifications, while the syntax remains essentially Khasi.

The influence of English, through translations is more significant as passive sentence construction is evident in later literary works. It is useful because it helps in avoiding difficult construction in translations from languages with different syntactical structures¹.

¹ Simon, I.M. - Contributions to Asian Studies Vol. XI. - "The Khasi language - Its Development and Present Status.

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APPENDIX I

PHONETICS OF THE KHASI ALPHABET

Aa	ai (give) [aɑɪ]
Bb	ngab (cheek) [ŋɑ:b]
Kk	kait (banana) [kaɪt]
Dd	don (have) [doən]
Ee	em (no) [eim]
Gg	Eksamin (Examine) [eəksa:mi:n]
Ng ng	nga (me) [ŋɑ:]
Hh	hap (fall) [ha :p]
Ii	ing (burn) [i:ŋ]
Ii	iong (black) [j: ɔŋ]
Jj	ja (rice) [dza:]
Ll	leit (go) [leit]
Mm	mei (mother) [mei]
Nn	nan (lake) [næn]
Nn	nia (aunt) [ɪəɑ:]
Oo	Ong (say)[ɔ:ŋ]
Pp	peit (look) [peit]
Rr	ring (pull) [riŋ]
Ss	Shim (take) [ʃ i:m]
Tt	tied (knock) [teid]
Uu	ur (fall) [u:r]
Ww	Wan (come) [wa:n]
Yy	yannai (no) [ənn aɪ]

APPENDIX II

PHONEMIC INVENTORY OF KHASI

CONSONANTS :

PLOSIVE	NASALS	LATERALS	AFFRICATIVES	FRICATIVES
b, k, d, g, p, t	Ng, m, n, n	l	j	s, z, f, v
b - bom (beat [b--m])	ng - nga (me) [ŋa:]	l - leit (go) [leit]	j - jew (sour) [jeəw]	s - shong (sit) [[ɔ:g]
k - kam (step) [ka:m]	m - me (you, masculine) [me]			z
d - dawai (medicine) [dæwəl]	n - ne (or) [nei]			f
g - eksamin (examine) [eəksa:min]	n - ni (uncle) [ni]			v
p - peit (see) [peət]				
t - tong (scoop) [toəŋ]				

SEMI - VOWELS / SEMI - CONSONANTS

i, w,

i - ing (burn) [i:n]

w - wan (come) [wa:n]

whereas 'w' can become a long vowel as in

ksew - (dog) [ksew]

briew - (man) [briew]

VOWELS

a, e, i, i, o, u, y

a - a: e - ei i - j

o - əʊ u - u: y - ie

u - ʌ