

# THE KHASIS AND THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



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Dr. Barnes L. Mawrie SDB

## The Khasis and their Natural Environment

*The Khasis and their Natural Environment* is a deep study on the relationship between man and nature, in particular of the Khasis. Emphasis of the study is laid on the elemental relationship that used to exist between the Khasis of old and their natural environment. The different chapters enumerate this basic relationship through an analysis of the cultural elements like folklore, music, dances, cult, religion, etc.. In all these socio-religious and cultural aspects of the Khasis, one sees very clearly their deep contact with nature and the attitude they had towards creation in general. At the close of the book we come to the conclusion that the Khasis are highly eco-conscious and that they possess a profound eco-spirituality. Their religion is, in fact, founded on the concrete reality of the tangible world. The place that nature occupies in every aspect of their life reveals to us the quality and propensity of this relationship.

The final chapter of the book is an appeal to the modern generation of the Khasis to recapture that pristine kinship with nature. This is seen as the ultimate solution to the current problem of mass destruction of the environment.



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**THE KHASIS  
AND THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

# THE KHASIS AND THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

*A STUDY OF  
THE ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS  
AND ECO-SPIRITUALITY OF  
THE KHASIS*



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*This book is dedicated to our  
Grand Mother Mrs. Monica Hek (died on 10.10.1980)  
and to our beloved mothers,  
Mrs. Therisia Kharpran (died on 18.02.1984)  
and Mrs. Serina Kharpran (died on 23.11.1985),  
who took great care of us in times of need  
with love and tenderness  
and through whom, we have experienced God's blessings.  
May our daily prayers be for their eternal repose in heaven.  
With eternal gratitude from:  
Shri. Alexander L. Hek, Mrs. Flora Hek (mother) and all the  
Family members.*

**(Golf Links, Shillong 1, Meghalaya)**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If anyone has watched the award winning documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore, he/she would certainly shudder with fear to think that our beautiful planet is nearing its doomsday. The economic well being that the world is striving for has led to a wanton destruction of the Earth. Economic giants like USA, Australia, China and India are on a production spree and their numerous factories are pumping huge volume of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Global warming has become a global warning and if man does not change his destructive and exploitative behaviour, the life span of our Earth is running short.

It is said that Henry David Thoreau one day was watching with great sorrow a wood cutter felling trees. Looking up at the sky he said aloud "Thank God they cannot cut down the clouds". Looking at the way the forests are being stripped off and the land being exploited by the greedy fortune hunters of today, we can almost express the same sentiments of Thoreau. Ecology has become a primary concern today. It has turned out to be a struggle for the survival of the planet. Even the people like the Khasis who not long ago, were great lovers of nature, have been caught up in the destruction spree. Little have we realized that we are cutting down the ground beneath our feet. If things go on in this manner, soon we shall turn this beautiful land into a desert.

It is precisely this awareness of the deplorable situation, that has prompted me to write on this subject. It is the intention of this book to awaken the people, the Khasis in particular, once again to their pristine intimacy with nature.

There are some people whose names deserve to be

placed on records. Their contributions in diverse forms have made this work see the light of day. First and foremost I owe a great debt of gratitude to Mrs. Pristilla Lyngdoh, Principal of Shillong College, who had painstakingly gone through the manuscript and offered valuable suggestions. The critical evaluation that she has made in the Foreword to the book, enhances the value and readership of the book. I am eternally grateful to Shri. A. L. Hek, M.L.A., for his timely help to materialize the publication of this book. I cannot let go without saying a word of appreciation to my family members, the teaching staff of SHTC, Mawlai, friends and well wishers for their constant encouragement and support which I experienced throughout this undertaking.

*Barnes L. Mawrie, SDB*

# FOREWORD

From time immemorial, man's relationship with nature has been on a give and take basis where man procures from the earth what he needs, and in time replenishes his sources. But as man experiences more technological development, he becomes less sensitive to this man-nature relationship. This has resulted in an uncontrolled exploitation of nature. One of the biggest crimes against nature is deforestation, where forests are exposed to unprofessional and unscientific management which has brought repeated calamities like flood, drought, soil erosion and changes in weather conditions. As we enter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the new millennium, we know for certain that we have got the technical know how, the skill, the man power to sustain us in various sectors of our daily life. But the question is: do we see ourselves responsible enough to keep mother earth alive? Or are we satisfied to say that man is made so intelligent that the key to the planet's destruction has been entrusted into his hands? Today our country is facing a number of problems like poverty, booming population, unemployment, environmental pollution and degradation, expanding urbanization, etc., which only increase the burden on the natural resources in particular and the eco system in general. If man can explore the limits of science, then a solution to the problem can be sought, but only if there is a motivation. Environmental consciousness can be spread like the word of God, where transformation would take place in every nook and corner of the earth, and education is one way of combating this self-inflicted process of destruction. Let us be reminded of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, who was very keen that we should exercise restraint in using resources that nature has gifted to us. He said that nature has provided for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed. He advised the people to observe some self-restraint and restriction on their wants, and not greed and avarice. Today when the whole world is looking for an answer to contain the threat of

environmental pollution and to improve human consciousness, Gandhiji appears as the earliest voice of caution against disturbing the ecological balance and polluting the environment.

Fr. Barnes L. Mawrie's book, entitled *the Khasis and Their Natural Environment: A Study of the Eco-consciousness and Eco-spirituality of the Khasis*, is the outcome of the author's deep love and concern for nature and environment. This has been a fascinating subject for the author since his early years as he himself has confessed. The author expresses concern at the wanton destruction of the environment and the depletion of forests in the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills, which is known for its natural beauty. Earlier, the people lived in profound communion with nature, whom they held in high regard. The author laments that today there is a decline in their respect towards nature, and the people destroy their natural environment without any sense of remorse. The modern Khasis, he writes, have lost contact with nature, though in the rural areas, some sort of relationship still exists. Modern culture with its technological revolution and progress does not favour familiarity with nature. The pristine relationship between man and nature that existed once upon a time, has disappeared due to man's consumerist attitude resulting in a sort of hostility and estrangement. The author feels that in the near future, the Khasis would lose touch with their natural environment. This is the reason why there is an urgency to educate the new generation in eco-responsibility. Education has to foster in the young of today love and respect for nature.

The book has nine chapters, and covers the various aspects of Khasi culture and their relationship with the environment. The first chapter discusses the origin, history, culture and the ecological heritage of the Khasis. The second one attempts to understand the Khasi concept of creation which are valuable sources of information. This chapter also highlights the relationship of the people with God and creation. The third chapter deals with nature in Khasi ethics and

religion by analyzing the Khasi folktales, natural court of justice and the rites and rituals of the Khasi religion. Chapter four studies the ecological dimension of the Khasi idioms and couplets. The fifth chapter brings to light the natural wisdom of the Khasis as reflected in the various fields as of knowledge-astronomy, geology, medicine, system of calculation of time, etc. The sixth chapter highlights the place of nature in the Khasi festivals, music and dances, and how the various activities reflect the way of life of the people. The seventh chapter discusses the relationship of the Khasis with the animal world as seen in their various folktales. Chapter eight is a comparative study of the Khasi relationship with nature from a Christian perspective. The Khasi religion is based on a strong eco-theology, since nature forms part and parcel of the religion. The last chapter is the author's reflection on the present state of man-creation relationship and the destructive tendency which we witness today. The author wants to focus on the importance of eco-education in schools and colleges. It is only through education and awareness that our beautiful hills can be saved from an ecological disaster.

I hope that this book will have a wide readership and find a place in every home, institution and library. May the message of this book be heeded to by social and religious workers, educators, scholars, administrators, policy framers, youth and the general public at large.

Shillong  
May 2009

**Dr. Mrs. M.P.R. Lyngdoh**  
Principal – Shillong College

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Kamai ĩa ka hok* Literally means "to earn righteousness". This is one of the greatest ethical norms of the Khasis. It has both social and religious implications in it.
- Ka Nam* This is the name of a woman in one Khasi folktale. She was very poor and was persecuted by her enemies. So, she fled from her house till she reached the house of the moon and took shelter with him.
- Krem Lamet Latang* A mythological cave where the sun is said to have hidden herself because of the sin of man. The cock was the one who wooed her out of the cave.
- Kupli* This is the biggest river in the Jaiñtia Hills. It is a sacred river for the Jaiñtia people. The well known cascade *Īale* is located in this river.
- Dkhar* This is a term used by the Khasis to refer to people coming from the plains. It is not a derogatory term, but only a distinguishing term.
- Durbar* Village judiciary court where all disputes are settled. The head man of the village is the chairman of this *durbar*. Only men can attend the *durbar*.
- Hat* A market of a smaller degree in comparison to *Īewduh*. For the Khasis, each *hat* is associated with a particular place.

- Hima Maram* This is one of the oldest kingdoms in the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills. It occupied the whole of the western region of the Khasi Hills. It was a very powerful kingdom in the past and exercised its sovereignty even over a part of the Bangladesh plains.
- Hoi Kiw* This is a typical cry of the Khasis. It is used to express joy or to call the attention of people while announcing the news. It is also used as part of traditional songs, especially during the dances.
- Īar krad lynti* Literally it means "a cock who clears the path". This is the little given by the Khasis to the cock after the great legend of *Ka Krem Lamet Latang*. The cock is a sacred fowl and is considered the saviour of man.
- Īakjakor* A huge snake. Khasi legends consider such a creature as a monster representing the force of evil.
- Īngsad Īngsunon* Palace of the Queen Mother. According to custom, this house is to be built without any iron piece on it. Thus no nails are used to fix up the building but only by tying. Today there is only one such house and it is located in Smit.
- Jait* It indicates the clan of a person from the maternal line. Among the Khasis, this is a very important aspect of their lives. It gives them indentity, respect and a sense of belonging.
- Jhum* This is a method of cultivation that is very common among the people of Northeast India. It is the burning of tress and shrubs, and fertilizing the soil with the ash that comes from these.

- Labasa* It comes from two roots "Khla" meaning tiger and "basa" means house. The Khasis believe that this is a man-tiger. Usually it is the maternal uncle of the clan who assumes this form after his death in order to safeguard the clan.
- Law Lyngdoh* Literally means "Priests' grove". It is a sacred grove which is preserved from any form of destruction.
- Lum Diengiei* This is another legendary peak of the Khasis. It was on this peak that once upon a time a gigantic tree grew up which covered the sunlight coming into the earth. It became a symbol of sin for the Khasis.
- Lum Makashang* This is the Khasi term for the Himalayas.
- Ma-lyngkhoit*
- Ma lyomboit* This is the title of the cock. It is said that the cock was a poor creature and was almost naked when he appeared in the great *durbar*.
- Mar Phalyngki* A famous warrior of the Jaiñtia Hills. Legends say that he was the strongest man of his time and used to pick up big boulders for his pillow.
- Ramew* Mother earth. She is considered a deity, put by God to look after the nutrition of every living species.
- Rngai* This term refers to the spirit of the dead person. The Khasis believe that the spirit of a person who dies roams these

- hills and continues to visit his house and village.
- Ri u soh u pai* Literally it means "land of fruits". This is how the Khasis refer to these hills. It signifies abundance and prosperity, especially in agricultural produce.
- Sang* A very great and unpardonable crime. The penalty for this crime is expulsion from the clan or from society. It also means a taboo.
- Seng Khasi* It is an organization started at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a group of Khasi young men with Jeebon Roy as the main spirit behind. It's goal was to preserve the traditional religion and culture of the Khasi people. Today it is gaining popularity in different parts of the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills.
- Sormoh, Sorphin* The two legendary brothers who are considered to be the first human beings on this earth. They were the ones who cut down the tree on Diengïei peak.
- Tip briew tip blei* Literally means "to know man and know God". This is another religio-ethical norm of the Khasis. It is equivalent to the greatest Christian commandment of "Love God and love thy neighbour".
- Tip kur tip kha* Literally it means "know thy kinsmen". For the Khasis, blood relationship is sacred and has to be maintained strictly. Respect for one's relatives (from the father's or mother's side) assumes a religious sanctity.
- Tulsi* It is a type of small plant that is very common in the plains. The Hindus grow them in their homes. It is a sacred plant

and is used during the religious rituals.

*Woh Ryndi*

this is a legendary personality. He is said to have been a fisherman who happened to catch a fairy whom he later on married. It is from from them that the Jaiñtia kings trace their origin.

NB: *The alphabetical order here follows the Khasi alphabets.*

# INTRODUCTION

Ecology has always been a fascinating subject for me since my early years. The realization that ecological movements have gained great impetus today, and the awareness that such an issue has become so vital today more than ever, has prompted me to undertake this study and research. Northeast India is truly going through a traumatic period, not merely because of ethnic conflicts and elements of violence, but also because there is a dangerous increase in the destruction of its natural environment. Recent study has shown that there is a massive depletion of natural resources like forests, minerals, rivers and lakes. Many regions that once upon a time wore a thick velvet of plantation, today look so empty and deformed. Many rivers in this region that used to roar and thunder with abundance of water supply, have been silenced due to the scarcity of water. Besides the destruction of natural resources, there is also the growth in the number of factories and automobiles that emit deadly poison into the atmosphere. Deadly smog hangs over our cities and they pose a perpetual threat to our survival. The irresponsible dumping of toxic wastes by factories, hospitals and people at large, have led to water poisoning and made life very risky. It is high time to realize the state of the situation in which we are now, or else we will have to face an eventual ecological doom.

Turning to the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills, we come to realize that we are no exception to this. The depletion of forests is in fact, the highest in this region. This is borne out by the existence of baldy hills all over this land. Whether we travel south to Shella or north to Guwahati, west to Shallang or east to Silchar, we feel sorry to witness signs of destruction and dissipation all over the place. It looks as if we have been struck by a meteor from space, while the truth is that all this is man made. It is a suicidal behaviour that we are indulging in, it is the game of death as deadly as the Russian roulette. If we do not put a check to this tendency, we will end up by destroying these beautiful hills of ours which, once upon a time, our people prided in. It is with the intention of awakening our people from this mortal slumber that I

undertake to write on this topic.

The Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills is known for its natural beauty. The exquisite natural panorama of these hills and valleys is by no means inferior to the Alpine beauty of Switzerland or any country in the world. The Khasis are a people who live in profound communion with nature. This is clearly seen in the attitude that the ancient Khasis used to have towards their natural environment. In many of their folktales, songs and dances, this rapport with nature comes out forcefully. The Khasis do not exclude the animal kingdom from their social environment. In fact, the animals and birds are often personified in their stories. They are made to speak the human language and they mingled freely with human beings. In the history of the Khasi people the whole of the created world assumes its irreplaceable role and it adds light and lustre to the people. The ancient Khasis could communicate freely with the rest of creation. They could read their signs and symbols, and interpret the future events from these signs. This was the reason why nature was held in great esteem by the Khasis of old. Today there is a decline in the respect towards nature, and people destroy their natural environment without any scruple. The chief reason for this attitude is the loss of contact with nature. Today the Khasis are gradually losing the rapport with nature. The modern culture with its fanfare and paraphernalia, its technological revolution and progress, does not favour familiarity with nature. This distance gradually leads to estrangement which, in the course of time, develops into indifferentism. It is this attitude that is permeating the minds and hearts of the Khasis today. As a result, there is a merciless rampaging of the natural environment without any sense of respect or reverence for the handiwork of God.

Nature is what supports life, and to destroy it is equivalent to cutting off one's life line. This is the reason why eco-consciousness should by all means, be fostered in the people. People should be taught to treat with respect this benign mother who sustains our lives. The old relationship that existed in the past between the Khasis and nature should be revived. Once again we have to learn to talk to things of

nature, to re-establish friendship with her. As a matter of fact, nature is already punishing us for our misbehaviour. Today we experience global warming, pollution, drought which result in terrible natural calamities and the appearance of sicknesses of every type. Through this book, it is my intention to arouse the minds of our people to the need of rediscovering our proper place in the creation of God. It is only through this radical change in attitude and behaviour that we can assure our own salvation.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter sets the context for the whole discussion. It seeks to throw light for the readers on the origin, history and culture of the Khasi people. The chapter also describes the ecological heritage of the Khasis, the beautiful land which they inhabit.

Chapter two is an attempt to understand the Khasi concept of creation by discussing at length the different popular creation myths. These stories are indeed valuable sources of information about the history and life of the people in the past. They contain in them the thought pattern and the vision of life of the people. The chapter highlights the aspect of relationship which the Khasis maintain with God and creation, namely the eco-theandric relationship.

Chapters three, four, five and six give a critical analysis of the various elements of Khasi culture, namely, religion and ethics, folklore, idioms and *phawars*, music and dances, etc. All these things are discussed in the perspective of ecology. The underlying intention or purpose of all these chapters is to show that, in all these aspects of Khasi culture and tradition, the eco-consciousness and eco-responsibility form the undercurrent. The Khasis are constantly in touch with their natural environment. There is mutual understanding and respect between the two. It can be said that the Khasis live in nature and nature lives in them.

Chapter seven in particular, discusses the close relationship that the Khasis used to have with the animal world. This intimacy is expressed variously in the different folk stories that are recounted among the people even to this day. Their affinity to animals and birds is proven by their

ability to understand and interpret the animal and bird behaviour.

Chapter eight is an attempt to theologize on the Khasi relationship with creation from a Christian perspective. Although eco-theology among the Khasis has never been articulated till now, yet it is not difficult to formulate theological assumptions basing ourselves on the rich content of Khasi religion and culture. If we speak of a theology of Khasi religion, we cannot deny that it is essentially an eco-theology. This is because nature forms part and parcel of Khasi religion. From here, we derive a Khasi eco-spirituality. It is a spirituality that is characterized by an eco-theandric vision. This spirituality seeks to re-establish the lost harmony between God, man and creation. It tries to restore the order in creation, one that has been ordained by the Creator since the beginning of the world (The Khasis refer to it as *Ka Sotti Juk*).

Chapter nine is a reflection on the present state of man-creation relationship. It describes the destructive tendency in human beings as it is witnessed today. It also examines the ways and means to correct this situation. Herein is discussed the necessity and importance of eco-education in schools and colleges. It is only through the awareness brought about by education that we can save these beautiful hills of ours from mass destruction.

In many cases, due to the lack of detailed accounts, no scientific conclusions are possible. For this reason we have to depend very much on a *hermeneutical method*. Many facts and events of the past are handed down to us only through oral tradition. Moreover, in many of them a great amount of mythologization has been done. For this reason, many important and significant conclusions are arrived at only through critical interpretation of these facts and events of the past.

This book is the result of a *para-historico-analytical approach*. Although the Khasis do not have a written record of history, yet history is interspersed in their folklore and

cultural practices. Folklore provides us with the source material for building up a comprehensive history of a people who live by oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> By analyzing these stories we come across many valuable data about the people, their past history and life-style. From these stories we are able to discern the psychological make-up, cultural attitude and philosophy of life of the people at large. Their behavioural patterns are to a great extent, revealed in these legends and cultural components.

This book is an attempt to study the subject that is presently new among the Khasis. Nothing much has been written on this topic in Khasi literature. The difficulty in obtaining materials related to the subject becomes, therefore, a great limitation for the study itself. Further researches on the same theme will surely lead to a better and more profound understanding of the topic. I do believe that the growing popularity of movements to safeguard environment will bring a greater number of people to the awareness of the ecological crisis that we are in. This will also enhance the importance, the need and the urgency to undertake similar studies on the subject. One may say that ecology has turned out to be one of the greatest moral issues of today both in the secular and religious spheres. To be responsible to one's natural environment is the need of the hour and it has become a struggle for survival.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. Sen, *Social and State Formation in Khasis-Jaintia Hills* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1985), p. 8.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

We are living in a world where we are threatened with every possibility of a nuclear holocaust, one that could destroy this beautiful planet at the press of a button. We have already seen the destructive effects of chemical warfare, which could bring about the doom of mankind. We have witnessed the eliminating tendency of man from time to time, his greed and ambition that have been responsible for the disappearance of many natural resources. In our own land we see the forests disappear at a very dangerous rate. We watch our rivers being polluted, our mountains balded and the whole landscape disfigured through the callousness and irresponsible behaviour of human beings.

It is deplorable to see that the Khasis who once upon a time, were staunch guardians of Mother Nature, have turned out to be her bitter enemies. Once we were so close to nature; but now we stand estranged from her due to our own behaviour. As we have seen, the ancient Khasis adored nature and treated her with due respect and reverence. They were so intimate with nature that they could understand her behaviour. Nature, on her part, revealed to them many secrets of her own which today's generation are unable to decipher. The Khasis of old directly communicated with nature, either verbally or through divination. They spoke to things of nature and to the guardian spirits and sought their blessing and protection. They always sought their permission before they undertook any work connected with nature. The Khasi folktales are usually centred round nature and they recount wonderful things about her. Man and his natural environment interact with each other and share many things in common in these stories. Nature was always a source of inspiration for the ancient Khasis. They looked

up to her for ideas, for modes of behaviour, for moral norms and for meting out justice. Nature was also to them a source of sustenance. She was the mother who provided them with food grains and vegetables, with fruits and plants, fire and water. She also furnished them with herbs to cure their illnesses, materials to build their dwellings. But above all, nature was always their constant mother and protector who looked after her children with meticulous care, love and concern.

Since time immemorial, the Khasis have cherished the idea of being nurtured by nature. They address her as *Ka Meirilung-risan*. They often use a phrase like "ha pneh ka Meirilung-risan" (in the bosom of Mother Nature). This phrase is significant for it describes a type of relationship between man and nature. It indicates a mother-child relationship, almost to the level of human beings. For this reason, the Khasis of old considered nature as a benevolent benefactor who deserved to be treated like a human person. When we speak of nature, we mean to include everything, living and non-living found in nature. The ancient Khasis treated everything in nature on an equal basis. There was no gradation of importance or status among the things in nature. The flower or the tree is as important as any living being and the animals are as important as human persons. This could be considered as the strongest point of Khasi ecological concept. The principal ideas that would emerge from such a concept would be as follows.

a) *Equality* – This is strongly upheld by the Khasis of old. It forms the basis of Khasi ecology. Although man is seen as a being endowed with more intelligence and skills, yet as a creature he is considered on par with other created things in nature. The constant references in Khasi folklore to the existence of a common dance, a common market and a common language indicate strongly the

sense of equality that existed among all the creatures in the order of creation.

b) *Co-existence* – The ancient Khasis always spoke of the golden era (*Aïom ksiar* or *Sotti Juk*) when men and beasts and every created thing lived in peace and harmony. They spoke a common language and had many things in common. This co-existence was lost when man sinned against God by cutting down the golden ladder on the *Sohpet-bneng* peak.

c) *Collaboration* – It is strange to note that, for the Khasis of old, there always existed a sort of collaboration between man and the rest of creation. Different things in nature played their indispensable roles as designed by the Creator. The sense of common good was very strong among all. Here we can see the seed of genuine democracy where all created beings, human and non-human, get their proper rights and perform their unique duties.

d) *Communion* – For the Khasis of old, communion was not something proper only of human beings, but they spoke of a universal communion between human beings and the whole of creation. The sense of integrity with the whole of creation was a predominant passion of the ancient Khasis. They passed their days in constant interaction with their natural environment.

Today, the modern Khasis seem to have lost much contact with nature. The pristine relationship that existed once upon a time is gradually disappearing due to man's consumerist attitude which results in a sort of enmity between man and nature. Although in the rural areas some sort of relationship still exists, yet in general one can see a decline in this. Today's generation of Khasis is no more able to communicate with nature nor are

they capable of reading the signs in nature. The age-old accounts of man's interaction with nature recounted in traditional Khasi folktales remain only as stories of the past and no more an experience of the present. With the forests rapidly disappearing and the landscape quickly degrading, there may not be left behind even the slightest trace of the past history of man's intimacy with nature.

There is a tendency in the young generation to trivialize the heritage of the past. In the nearest future, the Khasis would run the risk of losing touch with their own natural environment. This is the reason why there is an urgency to educate the new generation in eco-responsibility. Education has to foster in the young of today love and respect for nature. We have to rediscover our proper place in creation and rebuild the lost relationship that our forefathers had with Mother Earth. It is only when this is achieved that we can be sure that our planet will be safe. As long as this mentality is not fostered through eco-education, nothing can be done to put an end to the destructive behaviour of man. At the start of the new millennium, we look forward to create a renewed and healthy planet, where every creature can have its rightful chance to survive and to grow. To achieve this we have to permit our love to go beyond the human circle and embrace the whole of creation. The words of Perez de Cuellar, former UN General Secretary, remind us of something very true, when he says "what is needed is an earth patriotism as strong as any national patriotism to relieve the distress of our ailing and exhausted planet".

"Fr. Barnes Mawrie's work reveals his own depth knowledge of the Khasi psyche, custom, usage and close affinity to nature, as also the evolution of Khasi scientific understanding of nature itself through keen observation of its behaviour. The author has dwelt at length on every aspect of Khasi consciousness from its legends to its dance, music, poetry and couplets and its ethno-medicine which today has become an important aspect of nature cure.

Each chapter is very educative, interesting and holds the readers' attention. The short crisp sentences make for easy readability. This book will be of immense help to research scholars interested to know the Khasi value system and world view from times immemorial... It might even be able to revive and generate the interest of every Khasi generation in its rich cultural history. The book is a mine of knowledge and information. Its valuable suggestions, if taken seriously, will infuse the younger generation, to whom this world belongs, with a mission for the conservation of this planet".

Mrs. Patricia Mukhim (Editor - *The Shillong Times*)

## BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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2. The Khasis and their Natural Environment (VIP, 2000, Edition 1)
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