

# THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE IN THE KHASI WORLD VIEW

By

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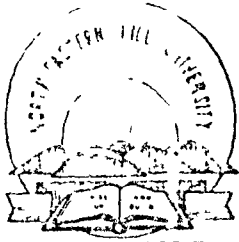
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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that the subject matter of this thesis is the record done by Miss Morning Lyngdoh, that the contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by her for any research degree in any other university.

In habit and character, Morning Lyngdoh is a fit and proper person for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Shillong  
September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1991

  
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## INTRODUCTION

Modern man's life has become so complicated, he has to perform more than one role and has to live his life through an infinite number of institutions. What he may do in his private capacity, he may not fully approve of in his public capacity and vice versa. He may have to face analogous conflicts when his institutions change, or when he changes his conception or evaluation of any of them.

Contemporary Khasi society because of its transitional character wishes to become modern and progressive without sacrificing its attachment to its ancient heritage (this is more true of non-Christians). With so many alternatives of moral orders prevailing in the environment, the selection of what is right in practical affairs has become most confusing.

This thesis is an attempt to give a clear exposition of the concept of virtue in the thought system or the world view\* of the Khasis, a tribe belonging to the state of Meghalaya. For this purpose, I need to explore their moral life as it is lived within the framework of traditional culture. However, this exercise also entails a general

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\* I have undertaken a detailed discussion of the religion of the Khasis in order to spell out the world view of the Khasis for I believe that the two are synonymous, that is, religion and world view as far as the Khasis are concerned.

discussion of the concept of virtue itself in both the Western and Indian tradition. The sources of information on these, I am aware, are enormous and I have not done justice to either of the traditions. As a lot of work has already been done in the field of moral philosophy, I have limited my task to engaging an enquiry into certain culture-specific concepts, namely the concept of virtue and other concepts interlinked with it in the Khasi world view.

The first chapter titled The Concept of Virtue tries to explain what is meant by a 'concept' itself. A concept is a general idea or a general knowledge, it is a general idea because the concept we have of a class being general it can be applied to any individual of the same class in the same sense. What determines the meaning of any class is the fact that each class connotes some common and essential attributes. For example, the knowledge or the concept of 'man' being general can be applied to any individual of the class 'man' in the same sense. And what determines the meaning of the class called 'man' is the fact that it connotes the attributes of animality and rationality, the most common and essential attributes found in all men.

Virtue is a moral concept, hence it is also a knowledge, being a moral concept it is applicable only in the context of morality; it is a value concept, it implies

moral goodness or moral excellence. The contemporary Western tradition seeks to reduce the discussion on moral issues to either emotive or prescriptive functions. Hume, for instance is of the view that there is no road from 'is' to 'ought' has involved contemporary moral philosophy into all kinds of debates which by and large do not enrich my inquiry into the Khasi world view. Hence, I have not made in indepth study of these.

The seven chief virtues according to the Greeks are wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, magnanimity or generosity, benevolence and love. The first four are called by Plato the cardinal virtues or the primary virtues because they correspond to the natural constitution of the soul, hence they are innate or inborn. One does not find a detailed list of virtues, cardinal or otherwise in the Khasi scheme of morality. All the do's and don'ts of the society follow implicitly in the demand of pursuing righteousness. This serves as its single core perception. The Platonic virtues of wisdom, temperance, courage and justice as also the addition made in the history of Western Philosophy by the other thinkers appear never to have seriously vexed the ancient philosopher. The assumption appears to have been that once we whole-heartedly commit ourselves to earning righteousness, we are temperate, courageous, wise and as a consequence, have a just society.

With reference to the above, I have tried to show that the Khasi concept of virtue is similar to that of Plato, who is of the view that ideas or concepts are already in us even before we were born into this world, "then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way we must have had the knowledge of absolute equality."<sup>1</sup> Hence, according to Plato ideas are innate or inborn. The Khasis would also say that virtue is innate or inborn, for they believe that man is born with ka Hok (righteousness) and ka Hukum Blei (God's will or God's righteousness), but that inherent quality of man needs to be awakened by practice. Though ka Hok is a central concept in the Khasi morality the elders prescribe a way of life which is called a virtuous life as opposed to a non-virtuous one. A man earns righteousness by leading a virtuous life, he is u riew tip-briew tip-blei or good and has a strong personality or ka Rngiew.

The second chapter contains an explanation of the moral life of the traditional Khasis on the basis of the traditional Khasi religion. According to the Khasi belief, based upon their legends, man was created by God in heaven. God created not only one man, but He created Sixteen huts or Sixteen families both males and females. Later, Seven huts out of the total group of Sixteen huts came down to inhabit

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1. Plato, 'Pheado', quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I, Translated by B. Jowett, p. 459.

this earth. God commanded the children of the Seven huts to earn righteousness here on earth.

God was no stranger to man before he came down to inhabit this earth, for the Khasis believe that before they came down to inhabit this earth, they lived with God in heaven. Hence it could be said that their religion is prior to their morality. But the religious rites and duties of the Khasis were given to them not in heaven but here on earth. It is only after the shortcomings of man, which were due to his ignorance, he seemed to turn away from the path of righteousness that God became displeased with him, and as a consequence of which, the earth was plunged into total darkness. But man by his free will sought God and began his negotiations with God, only then the Khasis came to know their religious rites and duties. Hence, though Khasi religion is said to be God given, yet it is given to them because they wanted it. Their freedom is prior to their existence here on earth, though one cannot deny that they arrived on this earth with God's assistance.

The religious laws and the moral laws of the Khasis are interconnected. If a person obeys the religious laws he automatically obeys the moral laws as well. For example, the laws of exogamy are the religious laws, if any one goes against the laws of exogamy, he commits a serious crime that

a Khasi could commit, in turn the laws of exogamy are the moral laws where the individual respects his clan members as brothers and sisters. "Members of the same kur, no matter how far removed cannot intermarry. Intra-clan marriage is one of the most grievous mortal sins that a person can commit. Subjects to the various kinship restriction imposed by religion, the Kha are the clans to which a person can marry."<sup>2</sup>

A coherent picture of the Khasi moral life does not emerge unless we explore the inter-relatedness of the Khasi concept of ka Rngiew and the concept of ka Hok. Let me explain: According to the Khasis, man besides a body and a soul, also has ka Rngiew. Of all the creatures of the world, man alone possesses ka Rngiew. Ka Rngiew is a kind of power bestowed upon man by God. But this power gets weakened if man drifts away from the path of righteousness, hence ka Hok is a central concept in Khasi morality. Ka Hok is both a cosmic and a moral law that ought to be followed not only by man but by nature and gods as well. In third chapter, I also refer to certain Khasi legends to show that ka Hok is both a cosmic and a moral law and that it is superior over the agencies of evil. Ka Hok is said to be a cosmic principle because it governs nature as well. If

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2. Kynphao Singh, "Khasi and Jaintia Religion" quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 94.

nature fails to follow the path of ka Hok, it suffers disaster, the same is true of animals and men as well, hence it is both a cosmic and a moral principle.

Here a comparison can be made between the Khasi concept of ka Hok and the Vedic concept of Rta. Rta is a law, the uniformity of nature or the order of course of things such as indicated by the regular alteration of day and night, the movements of the planets, etc. is due to the operation of Rta, Rta is also treated as a cosmic and a moral principle. "It is the cosmic order whence issue all things, whence the divine statutes or laws can be traced which even the gods follow, and the right following of which, or the right reflecting of which in any action, brings well being".<sup>3</sup> Both the concept of ka Hok and the Vedic concept of Rta were not created but prior to creation, where each of these concepts is a law unto itself and ought to be followed by man, gods and nature.

R.T. Rymbai, a noted Khasi intellectual, claims that when man lived in harmony with God in heaven he was in a state above both good and evil. The two categories in other words are true only of this earth and both are essential parts of it. The implication being that man is to exercise

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3. Macdonell, A.A. and Keith, A.B. 'Vedic Index of Names and Subjects', quoted in The Vedas Harmony, Meditation and Fulfilment, p. 51.

his freedom to consciously pursue the good and the right, in opposition to evil forces. Contrary to what is generally held by some sections of marxists, the Khasis claim this awareness of the opposition between good and evil as already and necessarily present in the very first conception of this earth in comparison to heaven.

The Khasi concept of evil, as I have shown in the third chapter, is interesting in the sense that according to the Khasis if one committed an evil act, as a consequence, he as well as his clan members will be affected by it, which is called ka siar ka lait kylla or ka raibi.

I started the introduction with modern man's confusion in deciding moral issues. This appears to be most true of the Khasis for they live today with two contrasting systems of morality. The indigenous Khasi morality and the Christian morality. In the same Khasi community the two religious sects interact and live together. The Christians try to convert the Khasis into Christianity whom they regard a primitive an immoral. (Refer IV chapter).

Both Khasi religion and Christianity believe in the theory of creation, where God is the Creator and man the creature of God. Yet the two are different in many ways; Christianity believes in the existence of the original sin, the sin which Adam committed in the garden of Eden and as a

result of this sin, the Christians believe that each man is born in sin being the progeny of Adam. But the Khasis believe that man is born with righteousness. The Christians believe that righteousness is a grace of God. While the Khasis believe that righteousness is earned by one's righteous deeds.

It could be said that Christian morality is prior to the Fall of man, for their do's and don'ts were given since the beginning of man's creation, where God commanded Adam not to take the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But the Khasi morality came much later, for at the beginning, that is, before the separation of the Seven Huts from the Nine Huts above, they were in a state of equilibrium between man, God and nature; but only when this equilibrium was disturbed that the Khasi morality was born. In this respect it is not an 'anti-natural' morality. In Nietzsche's words, "Anti-natural morality, that is, virtually every morality that has hitherto been taught, revered and preached, turns against the instincts of life."<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche charges that Christian morality is 'anti-natural' morality which implies the victory of the 'herd' over the 'masters'.

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4. Nietzsche, "Twilight of Idols", quoted in Twilight of Idols and the Anti-Christ, Translated by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 45.

The herd rebels against the strong and the independent, against the fortunate and against the exceptional in relation to all of whom they feel themselves and their sense of themselves to be imperiled."<sup>5</sup> Herd morality which Nietzsche also calls the slave morality is the one that is being practised by those who are weak and less powerful. The overcoming of morality that Nietzsche champions is basically the overcoming of the slave morality.

In the last chapter of my dissertation, I have relied heavily on the writings of Nietzsche. The entire endeavour of making others moral, what Nietzsche called the breeding of a definite race and species, which is basically a reaction against the master values, is shared by the Christian Khasis who wish to improve the immoral primitives.

This aim of 'improving' their fellow Khasis as I have analysed, has the following implications :

a) While the endeavour to become virtuous involves one in a constant struggle throughout one's life, making others virtuous is an easier task and absolves most of us from the effort of becoming virtuous ourselves.

b) Making others virtuous, gives power to the propagators, justifying all kinds of means for the

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5. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 274.

attainment of the end.

c) The third implication is since we cannot by ourselves know how to become virtuous we require today professional moralists.

d) The effort of 'improving' others has replaced the constant process of self-awareness and self-evaluation that the observance of ka Hok demanded.

In a nutshell, the Christian morality's demand for becoming virtuous is the demand for submissive values, while the ancient Khasis cultivated ka Rngiew (this partially explains the confusion prevailing in the field of moral education amongst the Khasis).

Let me restate, the Khasis insist on the importance of virtuous life. A man is responsible for his acts, so if his acts are in conformity with the first command of God that is 'to earn righteousness', then he can be called as u riew tip-briew tip-blei (a man knowing-man knowing-god). The Khasis believe that a newly born child is pure, innocent and hence sinless, there is no original sin as such that the child inherits from his parents or from his great grand parents or ancestors like the Christian belief.

In the conclusion of my work, I try and show the interlinkage of the concepts of ka Hukum and that of ka Hok

with some other concepts such as U Briew, U Blei and Ka Rngiew. As I have shown, the concept of ka Hukum as a religious concept is not only a commandment but rather a law, an eternal law prior to creation, for the creation begins with ka Hukum. Ka Hukum is connected with ka Hok, a divine law. Man is born into this world with ka Hok and ka Hukum Blei, he ought to conduct his life in accordance with ka Hok and ka Hukum. God is pleased with a man who conducts his life on such lines, and such a man's rngiew also gets strengthened.

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Chapter I  
THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE

Before describing the concept of virtue, I would like to give a brief account of what is meant by the term 'concept' itself. The theory of concept has been an epistemological problem since the time of Plato, where certain epistemological questions arise like: 'what is knowledge?' 'what is meant by saying that I have a concept of such and such?' Different philosophers would give different answers to the above questions.

For understanding any proposition, either true or false, we must have concepts in our mind. One cannot understand the proposition 'Man is mortal', if one does not have the concepts of the above words. Concepts are the acts of judgements or the mental acts. Being the acts of judgements or the mental acts, the concepts are private. For example X and Y may use the term 'Man' in the same context and attached the same meaning to it, but their concept of the same term may be different. If the child knows how to use the word 'God' correctly, he has the concept of God, but the child's concept of God is quite different from that of the adults' concept of God. Likewise, the people's concept of God differs from society to society. Hence a concept may be said to be subjective, it is a mental capacity belonging to a particular person possessing that concept.

When I say 'I have a concept of a dog', it means that I have a knowledge of a dog, I can also have a mental picture of a dog in its absence, I can also differentiate a dog from a cow or a cat, etc. Hence a concept is an idea, it is a kind of knowledge. Here again, the question arises, 'How concepts are acquired?' Some philosophers are of the view that concepts are innate or inborn, for example, the concept of Goodness, Truth, Beauty, God, etc., are all innate, Plato when he talks about the ideas he believes that they exist in the sphere apart. In the Pheado, he says: "The soul existed before its union with the body in the transcendental realm, where it beheld the subsistent intelligible or 'detached' essences."<sup>1</sup> Here Plato is of the view that ideas or concepts were already in us even before we were born into this world, but at birth we lose those ideas or concepts, later on by means of recollection we form those ideas again.

Plato holds that knowledge is simply a recollection, here it implies the immortality of the soul, for recollection would be impossible unless the soul existed before its union with the body, and it will also remain immortal when the body perishes. Recollection or the doctrine of Anamnesis, is an essential part of Plato's

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1. Plato, 'Pheado', quoted in History of Philosophy Vol. I by Copleston, p. 116.

philosophical outlook. The asking of the right question in the right time activates one's true beliefs, and enables him to "recover knowledge from his own resources - which is what we call recollecting."<sup>2</sup> Plato says: "We acquire this knowledge before we were born, and were born having the use of it, then we also knew before we were born and at the instant of birth not only the equal or the greater or the less, but all other ideas; for we are not speaking only of equality, but of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness and of all which we stamp with the name of essence in the dialectical process."<sup>3</sup> Here, we assume that Plato's conception of the soul as having existed before we were born and will also be in existent even when the body perishes proves the immortality of the soul. Hence the ideas and the soul belong to the intellectual world, and as such they are changeless. The ideas are absolute and universal, there are absolute Beauty, Truth, Goodness, etc.

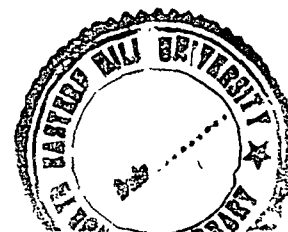
Plato in his theory of Forms made a distinction between the sensible world and the intellectual world, he also made a distinction between appearance and reality, or belief and knowledge. Belief and knowledge are used to

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2. Plato, 'Meno', quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I translated by B. Jowett, p. 364-365.

3. Plato, 'Pheado', ibid., p. 459.

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classify two attitudes of mind and not two classes of propositions. Belief is the state of mind in which the reason as to why, the answer must be right is not given, while knowledge is the state of mind in which you are certain by working out the reason why the answer must be right. This goes to show that belief is based on inductive approach while knowledge is based on non-inductive approach. There are many beautiful things in the sensible world which are always in a state of flux and change, but the idea of beauty is same, it is changeless and real in itself. The beautiful things may perish and lose their beauty, but the idea of beauty never loses its beauty. The beautiful things can be perceived by means of our senses for they are in the sensible world, but the idea or form of beauty can be understood only by means of our intellect, the beauty which we conceive by means of our intellect is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. The outward form of beauty are many in number, for example, 'the rose is beautiful', 'the moon is beautiful', etc. But the idea of beauty is not to be derived from different names of things as Plato has written in his dialogue 'Cratylus': "That the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No; they must be studied and investigated in themselves."<sup>4</sup>

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4. Plato, 'Cratylus', quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol.I, translated by B. Jowett, p. 228.

In the 'Republic' Book X, Plato speaks of the universal bed and the particular bed, he wrote: "God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and only one; two or more such ideal beds neither ever have been nor will be made by God."<sup>5</sup> The idea of bed is one which is created by God, but as we find innumerable number of beds in the sensible world which are only the imitations of the universal bed of God, all the beds which could be found in the sensible world are appearances only. "The imitator or the maker of the images knows nothing of true existence; he knows the appearances only."<sup>6</sup>

Let us try to find a satisfactory answer to the question 'what label he used in English in connection with this theory?' When Plato himself wants to refer to Beauty as opposed to the many particular beautiful things or Justice as opposed to the many particular just acts, he uses the Greek word for 'itself'. This Beauty is auto to kalon (literally 'the beautiful itself'). Justice is auto to dikaion (literally 'the just itself') and so on. He also uses the Greek words eidos and idea in this connection. Thus instead of speaking of 'the Beautiful itself', etc., he

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5. Plato, 'Republic' Book IX, quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I, translated by B. Jowett, p. 845.

6. Plato, 'Republic' Book X, quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I, translated by B. Jowett, p. 858.

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will speak instead of 'the eidos of the Beautiful' or 'the idea of the Beautiful'. Some English commentators speak of 'the idea of Beauty', etc. in Plato, and more generally of Plato's theory of Ideas. This sort of translation leads to a disturbing conclusion. The English word 'idea' involves the notion that ideas exist only in the mind and thus they are 'subjective' and not 'objective'. This goes contrary to the intention of Plato. Since the English word 'form' brings out clearly the intentions of Plato, let us call this theory, the theory of forms.

According to Plato the objects of knowledge are forms. Only the forms are perfectly real. The sensible particulars are not objects of belief. Forms are also ideal standards or perfection to which particulars only approximate. Forms are also considered as universals because they are being used to account for the fact that things in the world go together in groups or kinds though they differ from one another individually, for e.g., there are many particular chairs which differ from one another in size, colour, etc. Plato is suggesting that in each case there is a group or kind because there is a single characteristic, namely the one Form (e.g. chair) present in all the many particular instances (chair) within the group. There is, what is, one over the many in each case. He is also saying that it is because of this that we are also to use general terms or as

he calls them 'common names'. In Philosophy the term 'universal' has been used of that which is common to a group of particulars.

According to Locke's thesis of 'the psychology of learning concepts', the acquisition of concepts involves a process of discriminating attention of some feature given in experience while ignoring the other features simultaneously present, this process is generally known as 'abstractionism'.

Locke does not agree with the view that knowledge is innate or inborn. He is of the view that knowledge is gained by means of sense experience. Locke's theory of general ideas or concepts seems to contain two strands which are contrary to one another. Locke holds that general ideas or universals (concepts) are not at all distinct from particular ideas. They are in fact Ideas taken from particular beings become general representatives of all that of the same kind. Locke defines the term idea at the opening of the 'Essay' as "It being that term which, I think serve best to stand for whatever is the object of understanding when a man thinks. I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking."<sup>7</sup>

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7. Locke, J., 'Essay', quoted in John Locke by Richard, I. Aaron, p. 99.

Locke is of the view that all knowledge is derived by "reason by a right tracing of those ideas it has received from senses or sensations may come to the knowledge of many propositions which our senses could never have discovered."<sup>8</sup> But we cannot call those ideas as innate ideas. Ideas are acquired with the help of sensation and reflection. For Locke, ideas are mental entities. His notion of the term ideas can be understood in the context of his representative theory of perception and knowledge. According to which the knowledge of physical entities and their qualities can be acquired only through the mediation of ideas. "The object of our senses", says Locke; "obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds whether we will or not, and the operation of our minds will not let us be atleast some obscure notions of them."<sup>9</sup> Thus the ideas of physical reality are received by means of sensation, similarly, the ideas of psychical reality are received by means of reflection. These are the only series of knowledge. A concept is thought of as a mental entity which constitute an idea of a particular being chosen to represent all the other particular ideas.

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8. Ibid., p. 85

9. Locke, John, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding", Book II, 1, 25, p. 98.

According to Kant, the categories are the conditions of knowledge and experience. The notion of a category is introduced to signify a concept. The categories are the pure concepts of understanding, but Kant is not claiming that any concepts to be categories. Categorical concepts are the pure concepts of the understanding and they refer a priori to the objects of intuition. Sensibility alone is the source of intuitions, while understanding is the source of concepts. A concept has both denotations and connotations.

According to Kant, space and time are the intuitions but not concepts, but space and time have no reality apart from human minds. Kant holds that intuitions and conceptions are necessary for our knowledge of objects. Objects are given to us through our senses and they are thought of by means of our understanding. Kant is worth quoting here: "Thought without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."<sup>10</sup> For Kant senses mean both the inner sense and the outer sense. By means of the outer sense the objects are given to us and by means of the inner sense we are aware of our states of mind in time. But by means of the outer sense and the inner sense we know only appearance but not the things-in-themselves.

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10. Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason", translated by Norman Kemp Smith, p. 95.

Space and time are the ultimate facts which cannot be reduced to anything else nor can they be derived from anything else. Kant is of the view that space and time are apriori intuitions, because experience is not possible in the absence of space and time. Space and time are the two pure forms of sensible intuition. Kant holds that pure concepts are of two kinds according as they originate in sensibility and understanding. Space and time belong to the first kind. They are forms of sensibility and are concepts only in the looser sense of the word, being pure concepts. The categories are pure concepts belonging to the second kind.

Kant made a distinction between determinate concepts and formal concepts. Determinate concepts are empirical concepts according to which empirical concepts can be referred to the objects within the spatio-temporal framework. But formal concepts are intellectual concepts which have no reference to the objects within the spatio-temporal framework.

In the 'Critique of Pure Reason', Kant gives an elaborate discussion of 'phenomena' and 'noumena', according to which the formal concepts of 'fate' and 'fortune' are empty and useless, because they have no reference to the objects within the spatio-temporal

framework. All concepts which have no reference to an object within the spatio-temporal framework, Kant calls them as 'mere logical forms'. "What we are then left with is a mode of determining the objects by thought alone - a mere logical form without content, but which yet seems to us to be a mode in which the objects exist in itself (noumena) without regard to intuition, which is limited to our senses."<sup>11</sup>

Kant maintains that there are many formal concepts which are useless and empty, for example; the concept of 'fate' and 'fortune', 'spirit' and 'God', 'telepathy' and 'noumena'. He holds that the concept unicorn is also a useless concept. But the uselessness of the concept unicorn is different from the uselessness of the concept of spirit. The concept unicorn is only accidentally useless, it so happened because there are no living unicorns, otherwise the concept unicorn would be referred to the unicorn if they so exist. But whereas the formal concept in the case of spirits remain useless because there is no conceivable way of providing an objective reference for it. Formal concepts provide us with no means of empirical determination of the mode in which the object exists.

Kant in his notion of 'schema' holds that apart from

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11. Ibid., p. 294.

aposteriori and mathematical concepts there are certain apriori concepts also which are applicable to things given in sense perception. These concepts are the categories. I have been talking about the pure or apriori concepts of the understanding but Kant also calls them categories. Category, probably is a better word for the following reason, that the understanding, which is the unifying or synthesizing or judging power, possesses an apriori categorical structure, that is to say, because it is what it is, it necessarily synthesizes in certain fundamental ways, according to certain basic categories.

The application of the categories to the objects of experience would be useless unless they are provided with what Kant calls their 'schemata'. The schema of a concept is not to be identified with the concept itself or with any other particular image of the object to which the concept is applied. The schema represents a universal procedure of imagination in providing an image for a concept. The schemata is the link between the concepts and their respective instances. "The concept 'dog' signifies a rule according to which my imagination can delineate the figure of a four-footed animal in a general manner, without limitation to any single determinate figure ... or any possible image that I can represent in concreto, actually presents."<sup>12</sup> The categories are the pure concepts of

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12. ibid., p. 185.

understanding and as such they are empty and useless, for them to be meaningful they must be related to intuitions. The categories then when translated into terms of time then they ceased to be pure categories or concepts of pure synthesis.

A concept is acquired by means of synthesis and analysis. Synthesis is the act of arranging different representations together, and of comprehending what is manifold in them under one form of knowledge. Such a synthesis is pure if the manifold is not given empirically. Knowledge is first produced by synthesis of what is manifold whether given empirically or a priori. Synthesis collects the elements of knowledge and unites them to a certain extent. And by means of analysis different representations are brought under one concept.

To have a concept is to have an ability, for example, by having the concept 'dog', I have the ability to distinguish a dog from the other animals, by virtue of the understanding, we possess concepts and by the faculty of judgement we apply them to their instances to insist that having a concept requires the ability to use it in rules and under favourable sensory circumstances to apply it to its instance.

Concept is a general idea, it being a generic term,

it contains the particulars which are of the same class, for example, the concept 'man' is a general idea or a generic term, it is applicable to all men in general, but we can apply this concept to a particular man, and it applies only to that man but not to others. In a concept, it being a general idea we take only what is common and essential of the attributes found in a class, for example, the common and essential attributes found in all men are animality and rationality, whereas the concept we have of a particular man besides the common and essential attributes, there are many other attributes to be considered, for example the idea of a particular man say 'Mahatma Gandhi' besides animality and rationality he has other attributes as well, like courage, kindness, love, benevolence, etc. A concept has both denotation and connotation. But in the case of a generic term being general its denotation is wider than that of a particular term. For example, the concept of man denotes all men and connotes the attributes of animality and rationality only, whereas of particular man its connotation is much more wider than that of a general concept, for example, the concept I have of Mahatma Gandhi, being particular it denotes to only one man, but it connotes the attributes of animality, rationality, Indian, courageous, kindness, love, etc. The concepts are like the forms of Plato for they are changeless, but the concept we

have of a particular being is changeable.

By means of concepts we are able to communicate to one another, concepts serve as the link of communication, by using the concepts we are economising the words, for example, by the generic term man we refer to any man in general. The concept is a knowledge, when we have the knowledge we have the ability or the capacity to do things, we can distinguish one knowledge from the other, likewise we can distinguish one concept from the other.

Moral concepts are the concepts which a person conceives of when he talks about right, wrong, good, bad, virtue, vice, etc. The moral concepts are applicable only in the context of morality, for they are the opinion of the people about their approval or disapproval of the deliberate actions of the individuals that take place in the spatio-temporal framework. Moral concepts are the value concepts and as such they differ from one community to other and also from one individual to another. People never really dispute about value but only about facts, for example, if I say 'this saree is beautiful', it implies that I appreciate its beauty, I cannot influence the other person to appreciate its beauty too, I can only express my approval of its beauty, by saying that the colour is beautiful, the material is also good, that is why I like it

and I find it beautiful, but the other person may not agree with what I have said, so what I have to do is to keep quiet, I need not argue any more, for it is a matter of liking and disliking. But in the case of factual propositions for example if A tells B, 'the horse is a four-footed animal', but B does not agree with A, in this case A can bring a horse and show it to B, then B would have no other alternative but to accept the fact, if B is blind also he can still touch the four legs of the horse. But in the case of value judgement there is no case of seeing or touching. The theory of verification fails to apply in the case of value judgements. So different philosophers have different ideas and opinions about moral judgements. I.A. Richard and C.K. Ogden in their book The Meaning of Meaning, wrote: "The purely ethical use of 'good' so used, the words stands for nothing whatever ... Thus, when we so used it in the sentence, "This is good", we merely refer to this, and the addition of 'is good' makes no difference whatever to our reference ... it serves merely as an emotive sign expressing our attitudes in other persons or inciting them to actions of one kind or another."<sup>13</sup>

But according to C.L. Stevenson, the ethical terms

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13. Richard, I.A. and Ogden, C.K., The Meaning of Meaning, p. 125.

have both emotive and descriptive meaning. "I approve of this, do so as well."<sup>14</sup> This statement consists of both emotive and descriptive meaning, where the first part of it constitutes the descriptive meaning, where the individual describes his approval of a certain thing, whereas the second part of it constitutes the emotive meaning where the speaker wants to evoke the same attitude or emotion to the hearers. Stevenson in his book Ethics and Language remarks: "The emotive meaning of the word is a power that the word acquires on account of its history in emotional situations to invoke or directly express attitudes as distinct from describing or designating them."<sup>15</sup> But he also holds that the emotive meanings of the term depend totally or partially upon the descriptive meaning of the term, for example, if the emotive meaning of the term depends totally upon its descriptive meaning then the change in the latter will automatically bring a change in the former. But if the emotive meaning depends only partially upon the descriptive meaning then the change in the latter does not bring a total change in the former. Again Stevenson says that the emotive meaning of the term may be totally independent of the descriptive meaning, for

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14. Stevenson, C.L., Ethics and Language, p. 21.

15. Stevenson, C.L., Ethics and Language, p. 33.

example, expressions such as 'hurrah' or 'boo', these terms are purely emotive.

Moral concepts have prescriptive meaning also, because moral concepts play vital roles in guiding a man's conduct. Moral norms and the moral laws are the sources of inspirations prescribing man to organise his life accordingly. Hare says: "The Language of morals is one sort of prescriptive language."<sup>17</sup> Moral concepts or moral terms do possess a descriptive and evaluative element of meaning. For example, the moral concepts like good, bad, justice, injustice, etc., have no reference to the objects within the spatio-temporal framework, but these concepts can be referred or applied to the deliberate actions of a person within the spatio-temporal framework. For example, the concept of justice can be applied to the actions of a person when a person is being fair in his dealings with his other fellow beings, likewise, 'injustice' is applied to the actions of a person when he is being unfair in his dealings with his other fellow beings. We describe the moral concepts in terms of a person's behaviour and conduct. Moral concepts do also have evaluative meaning because when a moral concept is used, it is used as an approval or disapproval of certain actions and as such, moral concepts do have values. But they are not value free concepts,

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16. Hare, R.M., The Language of Morals, p. 1.

because their value is being identified only in relations to human actions.

It would not be entirely worthless to give a brief account of Hume's concept of morality who claims that in every move that he has encountered, a move is made from 'is' to 'ought' which means a move from factual statements to evaluative statements. Hume says that this move is a kind of deduction which he declares to be inconceivable. 'Ought' cannot be derived from 'is', hence there is a logical gulf between moral judgements and the statements of facts. No set of descriptive statements can entail an evaluative statement without this addition of at least one evaluative premise. The evaluative statement is different from descriptive statement. The job of an evaluative statement is not to describe any feature of the world but to express the speaker's emotions or attitudes. One cannot define evaluative statements in terms of descriptive words alone for values do not lie in the world. Hence 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is'. The descriptive statements are objective whereas the evaluative statements are subjective. Hence one cannot deduce evaluative words in terms of descriptive words, for if one did, one would no longer be able to use the evaluative word to commend but only to describe. "Any effort to derive an 'ought' from an 'is' must be a waste of time, for all it could show

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even if it succeeded would be that the 'is' was not a real 'is' but only a disguise 'ought' or, alternatively, that the 'ought' was not a real 'ought' but only a disguise 'is'."<sup>17</sup>

According to Hare, moral concepts or value concepts such as good, right, ought, etc., have a supervenient character because whenever a value word is delivered, it is legitimate to ask for a reason. For example, the value words such as : (i) This is a good book, (ii) This is the right road, (iii) You ought to pay your tuition fee. In each case the person addressed to, may ask the reason 'why'. The answer to this question no doubt would be some naturalistic description, for example, one can say, 'this is a good book because it will help you to get through your examination, it is easy to understand, so on and so forth. In the second example one can say, 'if you take this road you will reach your destination', and in the third example, one can say, 'you ought to pay your tuition fee, because when you join the school you join with the understanding that you would pay your tuition fee, and since you are studying in this school hence you ought to pay your tuition fee'. The justification of goodness, rightness or oughtness respectively lies in certain non-evaluative

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17. Searle, John S.R., "How to derive 'Ought' from 'Is'" quoted in Readings in Ethical Theory, Edited by Wilfred Sellar and John Hospers, p. 69.

characteristics of the actions being judged. According to Hare the non-moral language is a sort of prescriptive language, Hare remarks "They are used primarily for giving advice or instruction, or in general for guiding choice."<sup>18</sup>

As I have said earlier, Plato would say that moral concepts like the other concepts are innate or inborn. In the Phaedo, he says that the idea of Goodness, Truth, Beauty, etc. are changeless and Universal, in the same vein he would say that moral concepts are universal and changeless, for example, the idea or form of virtue, justice, etc., could never be destroyed. Moral concepts could be understood only by means of our intellect.

But Aristotle holds that moral concepts are real only in relation to the actions of a person. Plato speaks of the absolute Beauty, Goodness, Truth, etc. which belong to the invisible world of intellect. But Aristotle would speak of the beauty, goodness, justice, etc. which belong to the physical world.

— Locke since he is of the view that knowledge is gained by means of experience, holds that the knowledge of the moral concepts is not innate or inborn. Moral concepts are psychical concepts and they can be understood only by means

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18. Hare, R.M., op. cit., p. 155.

of our intellect and as such they could be derived by means of reflection.

The Greek Medieval Church enumerated seven chief virtues as the main type of all possible excellence. The seven chief virtues according to the Greeks are wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, magnanimity or generosity, benevolence and love. The first four are called the cardinal virtues or the primary virtues. The first four are already known to the Greek thought since the time of Plato, for they appeared firstly in Plato's "Republic". These virtues constitute the central core of morality. Plato says that these are primary or cardinal because they correspond to the natural constitution of the soul. Plato holds that as the human soul is of three parts, that is the rational and the irrational, where the irrational part of the soul is again sub-divided into the noble half and the ignoble half, hence corresponding to these three parts of the soul there should be intellect, feeling and will as the three main characteristics of the soul. Likewise, there should be virtues of wisdom, temperance and courage to fulfil the soul's desire. These three qualities have reference more particularly to the personal life of an individual. But the human individual being living in the society with the other human individuals around him hence Plato includes justice as a social virtue.

Aristotle accepts the four primary virtues of Plato, but he added to the above four 'magnanimity' or 'generosity', because we see that someone who is mean and selfish is unlikely to be loved and liked by others and as a result he is likely to be lonely and unhappy. Whereas someone else who is generous is likely to enjoy the benefit of being liked and loved by his fellow beings, but generosity should not be to the extent of letting other exploit our being generous and kind. In the later year of the history of Western Philosophy, other virtues are added to the list of Platonic virtues. For instance, in the 13th Century, Thomas Aquinas added benevolence, love, faith and hope to the Platonic virtues, he also talks about love, faith, and hope as virtues and also includes them in the list of the Platonic virtues.

In the "Meno", Plato raised a question whether virtue is acquired by practice or by teaching? In answering to this question, Plato says that one should know what virtue is, for unless one knows what virtue is, one cannot know whether it can be taught or not. Plato is of the view that knowledge can be taught, if virtue is knowledge it can also be taught. Knowledge is inborn or innate, as the soul is immortal and has a recollection of all that it has ever known in the former states of living and hence learning is only a process of recollection. There have always been

true thoughts in the soul of man even before he was born into this world, but these thoughts of man need to be awakened into knowledge by means of recollection.

According to Plato, all the good things are profitable, hence one can infer that if one is virtuous, he is likely to be profitable. The one who possesses the qualities of virtue would not be able to profit unless he acted by means of right knowledge or right opinion. Plato says: "And the same may be said of temperance and quickness of apprehension; whatever things are learned or done with sense are profitable. ... And in general, all that the soul attempts or endures when under the guidance of wisdom ends in happiness."<sup>19</sup> Plato holds that virtue is the quality of the soul and it is also profitable, and hence it must alone be a wisdom or knowledge, hence virtue can be taught. Plato remarks in the "Meno": "The only right guides are knowledge and true opinion - these are the guides of man; for things which happen by chance are not under the guidance of man; but the guides of man are true opinion and knowledge."<sup>20</sup>

All knowledge cannot be all true, there are false knowledge as well which a man sometimes thinks to be true.

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19. Plato, "Meno", quoted in The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. I, translated by B. Jowett, p. 368.

20. Ibid., p. 379.

False knowledge must be replaced by true knowledge or right knowledge, for only true knowledge or right knowledge could be equated with virtue. False knowledge would be incapable of producing happiness and virtue. But when we say that true knowledge or right knowledge is virtue it does not mean that virtue is merely true knowledge, for a person who possesses only true knowledge but does not act according to his knowledge of what is to be done in order for him to be virtuous, his knowledge will be of no use. Hence for a person to be virtuous, he should also develop a habit of putting his knowledge into practice, virtue is both good habits and right knowledge. One should also know the value of good life. The good life is the life of well being, of happiness, the virtuous life. The good life can be achieved only when every part of the soul is fulfilling its functions. For both Plato and Aristotle agree that only a man who performs just actions has a well ordered soul, and only a well ordered soul will be truly happy and hence he could be called a virtuous man.

The Khasis believe that man is the creature of God. "He also comes with God's righteousness and in his life he must reflect that divine righteousness, and as long as he lives he must act righteously, live righteously and earn

righteously."<sup>21</sup> Here it implies that according to the Khasis righteousness or virtue is innate or inborn, but one should not forget the fact that the Khasis advise their young ones to listen to the elders. Radhon Singh Berry says:

Be it in words or deeds don't be obstinate.  
Listen carefully to the elders' voice;  
May it be right or wrong don't argue;  
Show your opinion with reason and be humble;  
The elders' relic never disappear."<sup>22</sup>

The Khasis would agree with Plato in the sense that virtue is innate, because the idea of virtue or righteousness is inborn for it is believed that it is God-given, hence it should be inborn or innate, but innate ideas had to be developed and made perfect by practice, one can put his ideas into practice only in the society through his relationship with his other fellow beings. But one can imagine a situation where a man is left alone, no other human beings around him, but what he encounters in his life is nothing but nature. When a man is left in such a situation what kind of morality one can practice, the

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21. Mawrie, H.O., A Short View of the Khasis Religion, a paper presented at the IARF Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom in Holland on 25.7.1981, quoted in Where Lies the Soul of our Race, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 67.

22. Berry, Radhon Singh, Ka Jingsneng Tyimnen, p. 1.

concept of morality would be meaningless. But the Khasis would say that a virtuous man could still behave morally, he ought not destroy the nature around him, a single tree ought not be cut off without a purpose. In the Khasi society each state or village has certain prohibitory orders that the public are expected to abide, for example, the law such as no one is suppose to cut down the trees without the permission of the Lyngdoh (chief) or the syiem (king) especially in the sacred groves. One is not even allowed to make the groves dirty. "Mawphlang state strictly prohibits that no one is suppose to cut down any of the trees from any of the public forest."<sup>23</sup>

In the traditional Khasi society, meetings used to be held where the elders (ki basan) give advice and guidance to the young ones and also every evening stories are related to the young ones by their elders. The purpose of relating the stories is to give moral lessons to the young ones by their elders, stressing the need to make the pursuit of right action, a habit for the youngsters.

Foremost in the list of virtues is 'truthfulness', one ought to be truthful both in thoughts, inclinations and deeds. Also tradition demands that (a) one ought to be

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23. Ki Ain bad ki Adong Haloi ki khalaw Raj Jong ka Hima Mawphlang.

just not only with oneself but also with one's fellow beings, (b) one ought to restrain oneself or control one's passions and vulgar desires, (c) one ought to abstain oneself from unlawful sexual intercourse, (d) one ought to be courageous in doing good deeds, (e) one ought to be kind not only toward one's friends and relatives but also towards strangers and animals as well, and (f) one ought to love one another.

—It is also a taboo (a) to divorce a pregnant wife, (b) to keep the corpse of a person who died an unnatural death, (c) to attend the funeral of the one who died an unnatural death, (d) marriage within the same clan, (e) marriage with the father's brothers or with his sisters or cousins or aunts, (f) witchcraft, (g) adultery, (h) suicide, (i) to murder a fellow human being, etc.

The listed virtues by the different scholars for that matter would be acceptable by any tradition. To the Khasi community, the central core of Khasi morality is 'righteousness' (ka Hok), Ka Hok according to the Khasis is a generic term which governs all virtues prescribed by the Khasis under it. One who pursues the virtues of courage, temperance, justice, generosity and the like would necessarily be upholding the law, i.e. Ka Hok.

The Khasis usually taught their children to follow

good demeanour, there is a saying in the Khasi society ka akor kaba tam, which literally means 'good demeanour is worth than anything else'. "When a Khasi speaks of ka Akor (demeanour) he usually prefixes it with complementary or akin words ka Buit (skill) so that the complete phrase: ka Buit ka Akor. Ka Buit stands also for wisdom or knowledge, understanding and the faculty of reasoning and the decision-making which enables a man to develop in his profession and his relations with his fellow men. Skill (ka buit) has a great value but this alone without proper bearing or demeanour (ka Akor) become naked and incomplete and its value diminish. Demeanour is that which a man shows outwardly to others as his own nature and therefore, ka Akor Khasi (Khasi demeanour) is that which the Khasis show to the world as their nature."<sup>24</sup>

There is an old proverb which says 'charity begins at home', likewise the person's behaviour and conduct is moulded by his environment and his family background. The earth we are living in is a sort of an educational institution where we are learning about both good and evil. The process of learning does not seem to stop after the completion of our formal education, but we are learning many new things everyday while coming in contact with other people and with nature as well. But even though we

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24. Mawrie, H.O., The Khasi Milieu, p. 81.

are learning many new things in our everyday life yet the character and the personality traits of a person does not seem to change entirely. What a person learns from his home and community abide with him wherever he goes or who he may become, hence the children need to be trained of what to be done and what not to be done since they are very small. Usually the children learn to imitate their adults and they pick up the behaviour and conduct of their elders, hence the elders should set a good example to their young ones because merely by giving advice or lectures of what is good and what is bad, may not do much help unless the one who gives an advice is himself doing moral acts and refrain from doing immoral acts, because the little human creatures though their rationality is not yet fully developed, yet they are capable of thinking and reasoning. In order that the children should not doubt the goodness of moral ideals and moral rules the elders should behave morally, otherwise also they ought to conduct their life in an orderly manner. For the children are moulded both intellectually and morally by their environment. Though the young ones may not get a chance to doubt the goodness of the moral rules, yet the children should not be taught to practice or to follow moral rules blindly, every moral rule needs to be justified by an appeal to reason. To say that an action is right or good one must be able to give his reasons for

saying so.

Along with the moral injunctions, the Khasi child is told stories, legends or folklores as illustrations. In the end, I would like to relate two such folklores as an example :

### The Disobedient Children

There was a woman who has four children. The children spent most of their time only playing games from sunrise to sunset. They made their clothes very dirty and their home also became very dirty. They never listened to their mother. The poor woman had to wash up and clean up every now and then, besides that she had to work very hard to earn for their daily bread. As she worked very hard, she hardly found the time to take rest. One day she became ill, she then asked her children to bring her some water to drink, but none of them listened to her, she begged and called them to give her the water, but the children did not bother to pay attention to their poor mother. It went on like this for few days. One day her eldest son came home in search for food, he saw his mother who was lying in bed suddenly changed into a bird and fly away. He then called out for his other brothers, saying 'oh little brothers mother has changed into a bird and flown away.' They all came back home, not finding their mother in the house, they went running after her and at the same time they were shouting, 'mother, we have brought the water, please come back'. 'kuku, kuku, kuku' she cried and then said; 'it is too late my dear children, I am not coming back'. Since then everyday, her children spent chasing after her but in vain.\*

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\* As told by the village elders.

### The Peacock and the Sun

The peacock was the husband of the Sun (the Sun is regarded to be a female deity according to the Khasi belief). They both lived happily in heaven. One day the peacock looked down to the earth below, he then saw a beautiful lady on earth. He wanted to come down and meet that lady, but the Sun tried her best to stop him from coming down, but he paid no attention to her, she then wept, but her tears were in vain. The peacock, came down to the earth, but on reaching the earth, he found that he has mistaken the mustard flowers for the beautiful lady. The peacock regretted that he did not listen to his faithful wife, he wanted to come back to heaven to meet the Sun, but it was of no avail. Since then he remains on earth. Every morning when the Sun rises up, the peacock jumps up to reach the Sun but it was of no avail.\*

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\* A free translation from Ka Kitab Jingphawar by Rabon Singh.

Chapter II  
KHASI RELIGION AND MORALITY

The Khasis have a famous legend about their origin, which holds that at the beginning God created Sixteen huts in heaven. After creating Sixteen huts above, God created (the cosmos) along with ki laiphew jingthaw (including all animate and inanimate beings). ka meiramew (the cosmos or the mother earth) prayed to God to send down a ruler on earth so that ki laiphew jingthaw could live in peace and harmony. God then summoned the assembly known as ka dorbar blei kaba nyngkong (the first assembly of God). In the assembly it was decided that the Seven huts out of the Sixteen huts were fit to go down and rule the earth. God commanded the Seven huts to go down and rule the earth with loving kindness and justice - Ban kamai ia ka Hok. The literal meaning of the term kamai is to 'earn', but when the Khasis use the phrase 'ban kamai ia ka Hok', it does not mean just to earn righteousness but to uphold the commandment of God and to keep a permanent relationship with God the Creator, to glorify God in one's own heart. Man as the precious creature of God has the divine nature of God and when he does some wrong, it is not his real nature but the corruption of his nature.

To enable the Seven huts to come down from heaven to the earth, God provided them a ladder known as ka jingkieng ksiar sohpet bneng; God commanded the Seven huts to rule

the earth with loving kindness and justice and also to go and multiply (leit bad synshar da ka hok bad to nangkha to nangroi ban iar u tnuu u tyndai). But, when the Seven huts set down their feet on earth they were not able to control the different creatures, as a result, there was confusion all over the earth. Ka meiramew once again prayed to God to assign to each of the creatures their proper function so that there would be peace and harmony on earth. The second assembly of God was then held on earth at the base of U Lum Sohpetbneng (Sohpetbneng Peak). The chairman who presided over the assembly was God Himself, with His almighty power (da ka hukum), he gave the different creatures their share according to their wishes. When God had given the different creatures their shares, the children of the Seven huts (man) came and were then asked by God what they would like to have as their share. Man answered; 'Ban kamai ia ka Hok', which means 'to earn righteousness'. God was very pleased with Man (the children of the Seven huts). He, thus, said, 'because you want to earn righteousness you will get everything'.

When God had just finished His second assembly, U Thlen (a devil), an intelligent creature but obstinate and proud appeared. God scolded him, but instead of apologising to God for his misbehaviour, he neither felt ashamed nor humiliated in front of God. He chose for

himself his share. He said that he would earn wealth instead of righteousness. Thus, evil entered the earth.

For sometime everything on earth was normal, hence there was peace between God, Man and Nature. But things did not remain peaceful for long, U Thlen (a devil) who was on earth tried hard to convince man to follow his footsteps, and he succeeded. Since man had gone astray from righteousness, he could no longer rule the earth with loving kindness and justice. The ladder was disconnected and suddenly there grew a gigantic tree (U Diengiei) which covered up the whole surface of the earth. The earth was then plunged into total darkness. Man, realized that he had gone too far by disregarding his commitment to God and by neglecting the commandment of God as well. Man tried to cut down the gigantic tree without consulting God. The tree was cut down but the earth was denied of the light because the Sun and the Moon refused to give out their light. Men realized that there was no other way but to turn back to God for help. In the darkness, the assembly was held. A cock, as he was the only sinless creature to be found on earth, was sent to God as a mediator between man and God. This is how Khasi religion was born on this earth. The Khasis need the religion to enable them to correct their misdeeds, to ask for divine forgiveness, since then they have been communicating with God through

signs and symbols.

There are interesting accounts explaining the separation of the Seven huts from the total group of the Sixteen huts above who dwelled in heaven. According to Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh, Sixteen huts together with God and Creator stayed in heaven. They were the holy beings of God, they talked to Him in human language, they used to come down to the earth for cultivation, but they never spent their nights on earth. It so happened that once, there came a time when the inhabitants of the Seven huts came-down and settled down on earth, while the inhabitants of the Nine huts remained in heaven. The Seven huts below and the Nine huts above used to climb up and down from heaven to the earth through a golden ladder known as ka jingkieng ksjar Sohpetbneng. But the Seven huts below were influenced by the devil to feel jealous of the headship of God over them, they then cut down the ladder, that was how the Seven huts got separated from the Nine huts above.

According to R.T. Rymbai, at the beginning God created the heaven above and the earth below, and He created Man, not only one man, but all the human creatures who were living in the Sixteen huts. They stayed together with God in heaven. The inhabitants of the Sixteen huts could see clearly the beauty of the earth below, the beauty of the

earth bewitched them so much that they wanted to visit it. The thought of men was not hidden from God, God knew exactly what was in their minds. He was willing to grant them their wish. However, He forewarned His people about the blemishes of the earth, He told them that on earth there are two things which are diametrically opposed to one another, namely good and evil. Even after being forewarned by God, the inhabitants of the Seven huts were tempted to come down to the earth. They then expressed their desire to come down to the earth. "God granted them their wish and told them that henceforth they would remain on earth till their earthly days were done, that they would never again hear Him directly speaking to them as before but will know His will, if they honestly sought for it through signs and symbols."<sup>1</sup>

God gave the commandment to the children of the Seven huts that they ought to live righteously. "God gave this commandment to their first ancestors without dangling before them any hope of reward if they obeyed it or any threat of punishment if they disobeyed it. It is expected of them to abide by it."<sup>2</sup> God also promised the children

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1. Rymbai, R.T., 'The Concept of God', quoted in an article published in the Golden Jubilee Commemoration, Rama Krishna Mission, Laitumkhrah, Shillong.

2. Ibid.

of the Seven huts that as long as they kept ka Hukum (the commandment) they could climb up to heaven and climb down to the earth whenever they wanted. In order to facilitate the climbing up and the climbing down God provided them with a ladder which acted as a linkage between the heaven and the earth.

Ki Hukum (the commandments) on earth are as follows

i) Ban kamai ia ka Hok (earn righteousness), Man must live justly and work honestly, he should be fair in all his dealings both in thought and action or inclination.

ii) Tip-briew tip-blei (know-man know-God), Man must behave well with his fellow men to enable him to do God's will.

iii) Tip-kur tip-kha (know-maternal relations know-paternal relations), Khasis are matrilineal. The children take their surname from that of the mother forming the clan under that name from the first generations. Incest between the members of the clan is an unforgivable sin, both before God and man. Offenders are disowned, anathematized."<sup>3</sup>  
R.T. Rymbai says 'God sent the Seven huts down to the earth because they wanted. And when He gave them the

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3. Rymbai, R.T., Ibia

commandments He gave them the freedom as well, either to obey or disobey His commandments."<sup>4</sup>

Anyway as the legends claim, it is agreed that the children of the Seven huts had to settle down on earth. There are various accounts narrating the period of peace, when man lived in harmony with nature and God. All the animals and the human beings could speak to one another in common language. The Seven huts below and the Nine huts above could climb up and down the heaven and the earth through a golden ladder known as ka Jingkieng ksiar Sohpetbneng. That was the golden age which is known as ka Aiom ksiar. During that time the human beings did not know how to cheat nor to tell lies. They all worshipped God. Soso Tham in his poem Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep says:

When the Sun and the Moon were young;  
The earth began to shine,  
The man, the animal, the tiger, the snake;  
The same language they communicated;  
They know not about the devil;  
They all worshipped God.<sup>5</sup>

Before the separation of the Seven huts from the Nine huts above, the concept of morality or virtue and vice did not arise, because in heaven there is nothing like evil. The concept of morality or virtue and vice came into

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4. Rymbai, R.T., Ban Pynieng La Ka Rasong, p.44.

5. Tham, Soso, Ka Duitaia Ksiar, p.54.

existence only when the children of the Seven huts came down to settle on earth, because on earth there are both good and evil, virtue and vice, etc. Sib Charan Roy says :

There are two ways on earth,  
 One leads to the house of God;  
 The other leads to Niamra (Hell);  
 These two can never be falsified."<sup>6</sup>

Since man settled down on earth, he feels that he ought to be moral so as to enable him to live happily with his other fellow beings as well as with God the Creator.

The Khasis believe that there are free agents, they all believe that they are the originators of their own actions. Therefore, it necessarily follows from this that the human beings are accountable for their actions and that God will punish them for their wrong actions and reward them for their right actions. When God gave them ka Hukum He gave them the freedom to act as well. The Seven huts were able to keep ka Hukum for only a very short time, the devil who was on earth eventually succeeded in misleading the Seven huts. As a result, God became displeased with them, so much that the golden ladder was disconnected.

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6. Roy, Sib Charan, ka Niam K1 Khas1, ka Niam Tip-Briew Tip-Blei, p.34.

Man on earth was sinful,  
 Inside him God was lost;  
 Then ended the climbing up and down  
 Surrounded the frightening,  
 Because the devil covered up;  
 Our beloved where He is?<sup>7</sup>

Once the Seven huts lost the access to heaven they could neither hear God nor have a direct communication with Him. They were greatly confused and unhappy for having lost the privilege of being in communion with Him. But God is ever loving and merciful, and once again in his kindness, He gave them the seeds of different herbs and crops. He also taught them the art of cultivation of the different seeds of herbs and crops in appropriate seasons so that the seeds could bring forth good results.

Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh describes the origin of the Khasis as follows: "He gave them (the dwellers of the Seven huts) the religion (ka Niam) as well, He laid down the norms and rites, duties and so on for them to follow strictly, so as to enable them to go back to the house of God. After having done so, God warned them that He would never appear to them again unless they follow His instructions faithfully. He also said that as long as they could not make themselves perfect, He will communicate with

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7. Tham, Soso, Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep, p. 24.

them only through signs and symbols."<sup>8</sup> Here lies the origin of the Khasi belief that there is a Covenant (ka Jutang) which is given to them by God the Creator from the beginning of time. "The Khasis have a strong belief that their religion is the Covenant that they have with their God from the beginning of time. For this reason persons performing their religious rites and ceremonies and who firmly hold the tenets of their religion never forget to begin their prayers by saying :

Oh God, Lord Almighty, Founder and Giver  
Of a religion unto me, a Khasi child;  
Hear, oh hear, I keep the Covenant  
Given from the beginning of time.<sup>9</sup>

Besides containing the norms of actions, the covenant contains rites and customs that are to be observed faithfully. The Khasis are expected to strictly obey the covenant, which is why they consider the rightness and the wrongness of an action before actually performing any action. This is equally true of rituals as well. They believed that anything done against the spirit of the covenant is highly immoral. It is believed that the consequence of any action would harm not only the doer but also his family members. The Khasis believe in ka siar ka lait kylla, ka siar ka lait kylla can be roughly explained

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8. Lyngdoh, Homiwell, ka Niam Khasi, p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 1-2.

as follows : suppose I perform an action with the intention of harming another fellow being or beings, the being or the beings concerned may not harm me immediately in retaliation, but ultimately my clan members or I, will be harmed by someone else or some other people because of my wrong actions.

I have been using the term 'covenant' loosely hitherto, the Dictionary meaning of the term 'covenant' is "a mutual agreement", the writing containing the agreement; an engagement entered into between God and a person or a people."<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the English term 'covenant' is not exactly the same as that of the Khasi term ka Jutang. I think, there is no equivalent English word for ka Jutang. It is obvious that literal translation of Khasi terms into English is rather pernicious. In order to bring out the real meaning of the term ka Jutang, we need to bring out its similarities as well as its dissimilarities with that of the term 'covenant'. The term 'covenant' could be found in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and The New Testament. The biblical meaning of the term 'covenant' is an agreement which is between God and his people and also among people themselves. For example, the covenant made between God and Noah, and Noah's sons, the account of this

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10. Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, p. 289.

covenant is found in the book of Genesis; "God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your decendants after you, "and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."<sup>11</sup> (Genesis 9:8-11).

The covenant between God and Noah is a promise, but ka Jutang of the Khasis is not only a promise but it also enshrines the instructions for following the religious duties.

Let me give another instance of biblical covenant; that is between God and Abraham. God said to Abraham; "My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." (Genesis 17:4).<sup>12</sup> This covenant is also a promise. Again in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews we find the new covenant which the Lord made with the people of Israel which is as follows : "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After

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11. The New King James version, Holy Bible, Genesis 9:8-11, p. 5.

12. Ibid., p. 9.

those days", says the Lord, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. "None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying 'Know the Lord', for all shall know Me, from the least of the them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8: 10-12)<sup>13</sup>. The covenant that the Lord made to the people of Israel is also a promise and the Lord also offered His forgiveness to the people of Israel which is unlike ka Jutang of the Khasis. Ka Jutang does offer forgiveness but it emphasises the duty of the people to follow the religious norms and rites.

As the children of the Seven huts did not know exactly how to follow the instructions of God, they sent a cock as a mediator between man and God. When the cock met God, God had the following to say: "As you are a creature still free of evil and not under the control of ka tyrut (she-demon), I want your promise to take care of man to the extent of dying for his sake, so that I may forgive him, when he offers sacrifices to condone for his sinful acts, I will explain how man could find and recognise my word, it is through the signs and symbols that appear in the intestines of the cock he will sacrifice."<sup>14</sup>

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13. Ibid.,

14. Ibid., p. New Testament, 161.

It is believed that since that time of intervention by the cock on behalf of the children of the Seven huts, the traditional Khasis have been communicating with God through signs and symbols. These signs and symbols are manifested while breaking the eggs (chickens' eggs) and the signs and symbols that could be examined at the intestines of the sacrificial cock.

The Khasi term for religion is 'ka Niam', according to H.O. Mawrie, the term Niam is a combination of the two words 'Nia' and 'Im', where the word Nia means 'reason' and Im means 'alive or living'. The Khasis hold that man is a rational being, his life has a rational foundation which is derived ultimately from God. Hence man ought to conduct his life rationally by observing and following the religious rites and norms meticulously. Khasi religion is characterised as 'Ka Niam ka Rukom' which means the religion of correct observance of norms and rites. Though the religion is same, the norms and rites are many and they differ from place to place and even from clan to clan as according to the people's needs and demands. H.O. Mawrie says: "For a Khasi ka Niam (religion) necessarily complements ka rukom (rites) hence the phrase ka Niam ka Rukom. ka Rukom indicates the ceremonial aspect of religious observance which must be according to the norms laid down in ka Niam."<sup>15</sup> For the Khasis by the term

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15. Mawrie, H.O., The Khasi Milieu, p. 53.

Niam, it does not mean simply the act of invoking God but it also comprises rites and ceremonies to be performed. "In the completion of these rites and ceremonies we have the duties to perform as the bond of human family and society. Thus we have the marriage and birth ceremonies, the naming ceremony, the death and the bone keeping ceremonies. These are the emotional and the practical aspects of the Khasi religion - Niam as interpreted in act and behaviour and as embodied in custom and as forming family ties and social bonds. In these ceremonies we have the manifestation of the Khasi mind in words, deeds, customs and institutions, and as of their idea of the ultimate cause."<sup>16</sup>

The rites and ceremonies of the Khasis are not static but dynamic, they are changing with the change of time as according to the people's needs and convenience. For example, in ancient times the naming ceremony was usually held the very next day after the child was born, but in modern time, any day is chosen for the naming ceremony of a new born child.

Khasi religion is also characterised as 'ka khein ka bishai' (calculations and judgements). ka khein ka bishai

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16. Roy, David, 'Khasi Religion' in ka Syngkhong Jingtup, Vol. II, No. 9, published by Khasi Authors' Society, April 1919, p 55.

is the procedure of performing the religious rites and rituals. It is characterised as ka khein ka bishar, because the Khasis before performing any ritual they usually calculate and judge whether it is right or wrong for them to do so. And also suppose there is any affliction in the family, the ancestral uncle or the person performing the ritual tries to find out the reason or the cause of suffering by means of correct calculations and judgements. "When a Khasi suffers affliction or if there is any abnormal conditions in his family, he believes that there is a cause behind it and he remembers the covenant. He believes that there must have been some breach of the commandment of God and that he has been given away to some other power to be punished. In order to find out the cause he makes divine consultation through ka shanam or cowries, egg-breaking or ritual of a cock. He has to do this in order to know his account with God and find out his mistakes of omission and commission. For this reason Khasi religion is sometimes referred to as Ka Niam ka Rukom".<sup>17</sup>

Man is a self conscious creature, he suffers pains and afflictions, he, therefore, tries to find out the reason for his sufferings. When a man suffers, he believes that he must have done something wrong which has displeased

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17. Mawrie, H.O., Op. cit., p. 36.

God. Man, due to his imperfections, sometimes does some wrong which displeases God. Accordingly, the Khasi try to find out the reasons of his sufferings by means of correct calculations and judgements. The act of finding the reason of suffering by means of certain rituals according to the Khasi religion is a negotiation between man and God. It is only when man begins his negotiations with God that God also responds. "A Khasi in his religion never goes to God without a reason and God Himself would not listen to Man if Man has no reason."<sup>18</sup> This may sound contrary to religious dogma for theology ultimately rests on truths which are held on the assurance of faith, not on logical demonstration. But for the Khasis, this is not a dogma at all, for they believe that man's negotiations with God could be demonstrated with the signs and symbols as they appear in the intestines of the sacrificial cock. "A Khasi attributes to his acts of transgression against god and his sins of omission and commission, the cause of sickness and calamities in which the spirits and forces of nature take an active part. Thus the Khasis practise divination to find out the cause and propitiate these spirits and forces. But these forces are under the control of God, and the Khasi as a last resort when everything else fails, leaves

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18. Mawrie, H.O., The Essence of Khasi Religion, p. 37.

it to the will of God."<sup>19</sup>

Khasi religion is also known as ka niam tip-briew tip-blei which means the religion of knowing man knowing God. U Blei (God) is considered to be the highest value in Khasi tradition. He is but an abstract Being which can neither be seen nor be heard. "It is the truth that God cannot be seen with these eyes we have got, but with our soul, we understand that He is He and only He, who is all-powerful and truthful."<sup>20</sup> Hence, to love God implies that one ought to love and care for his other fellow beings, as it is said that the knowledge of man and God always go together. A man who conducts his life in a good way in his relations with his other fellow beings is called u riew tip-briew tip-blei (a man knowing-man knowing-god) but he is not called u riewhok (righteous man). The human beings do not come into contact with God face to face as they do with their fellow human beings, so if one does not learn how to love and care for his other fellow beings, he cannot love someone else whom he does not even see nor hear.

The Khasis believe that man is not the only creature possessing a soul, but birds and beasts also do possess

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19. Roy, David, Khasi Religion, quoted in ka Syngkhong Jingtip, Vol. II, No. 9, April, 1939.

20. Roy, Jeebon, ka Nitao Ba Batai Pynshynna Shaphang U Wei U Blei, p. 15.

souls or spirits, which is why the Khasis regard all the animals as ki para mynsiem (fellow creatures possessing the same kind of soul). Moreover, the human soul and the animal souls are the same in kind but differ only in degrees, in the sense that the human souls are endowed with more talents and skill than the animal soul. "The forefathers realized that God has given a spirit to all the living creatures, accordingly he (forefather) has taught us to address the animals as ki para mynsiem (which means the spirit of man and that of the animals is same but differ only in form and skills).<sup>21</sup>

After the death of the person here on earth his soul will go either to the house of God or it will roam on earth in the form of an evil spirit as a punishment for his deeds here on earth. "From the norms and the customs which we have, they show as it is taught in the covenant that the soul of man after his death here on earth has to go to the house of God, and the rites and norms are given to make him fit to go there. The Khasis worshipping God here on earth, is, therefore, observe the religious rites and norms correctly which will make the soul fit to enter the house of God."<sup>22</sup>

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21. Roy, Sib Charan, ka Niam ki khasi, ka Niam Iip-Biew Iip-Blei, p. 5.

22. Ivngdoh, Homiwell, ka Niam khasi, p. 2.

"The Khasis compare life on earth to a dewdrop hanging from a leaf. Just as the delicate dewdrop glitters and sparkles with all the beautiful colours of the rainbow so also life on earth. Life of a dewdrop is short, it vanishes but it continues to exist. The body of man disintegrates but his soul and identity continue to live. If he has lived a meaningful life and a fruitful life then his ethereal life is one of bliss. He does not attain the attributes of godhead but he is free from the spiritual weaknesses of earthlings. If his life on earth was a history of acts and deeds unforgiveable, then his spirit becomes a 'wandering soul', wandering in space without peace."<sup>23</sup> According to the Khasi belief, there is no rebirth, the spirit of man lives but once in the body, once the soul leaves the human body, it remains on its own either on this earth or in the house of God. If it goes to the house of God, it attains a state of perfect bliss and happiness, but if it is a wandering spirit on earth, it is a curse, for it will be wandering immortally in space.

The body is only a temporary residence of the soul, and after the death of the body, the body will become dust or it will perish, but the soul will continue to live in the house of God or on this earth according to the deeds of a person.

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23. Singh, Kynpham, "Khasi and Jaintia Religion", quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 99.

Let me summarise the discussion as follows :

Man is created by God and he has a destiny and a mission, and a specific role to play in the divine scheme of things. He has come into this world with a Commandment from God, his mission is 'to earn righteousness' in order to be in communion with God. H.O. Mawrie says, that the Khasi concept of man is similar to that of the Jewish concept of man with a difference, both agree that man is the creature of God. While the Jews believe that God created man after His own image, God said: "Let Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness". (Genesis: 1:26),<sup>24</sup> the Khasis did not claim that God created man after His own image, "A Khasi believes that God made him a full-fledged man to inhabit this world."<sup>25</sup>

When God created man, He made him not only a body and a soul, but He gave him reason as well, being rational, man understands that he ought to follow the commandment of God and that failing to do so would amount to punishment.

Earning righteousness or living righteously is a self-imposed duty. Duties are apprehended by reason, and

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24. The New King James Version - Holy Bible, p. 1.

25. Mawrie, H.O., The Khasi Milieu, p. 24.

man's rational faculty or conscience inspires him to live righteously. Jeebon Roy holds that Ka jingtip ha lade (conscience) is the precious gift that God has given to man. "We have the conscience which is the one that when we do vicious acts, it condemns us in our heart and leads us back again to the right path, if we do anything sinful we feel defeated in our heart."<sup>26</sup> For an action to be a duty in the larger sense of the term the doer ought to perform it irrespective of its consequences and with no reference to any emotions, desires or passions.

Man's duty here on earth is to worship God and to love the truth, to respect lawful authorities, to refrain from violence and robbery, to live in chastity, to be fair and merciful in his dealings with his other fellow beings, these are all the virtuous deeds which a man ought to follow. But sometimes a man out of ignorance or out of temptations, turns away from the virtuous path and commit evil acts. Ignorance, therefore, may be regarded as the source of evil and the way to escape evil lies through right knowledge or right understanding. Due to man's ignorance and weaknesses he is not strong enough to control his desires and passions. When he realizes that he had been moving away from the commandments of God, man turns

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26. Roy, Jeebon, Ka Kitab da Batai Pynshynna Shaphang U Wei U Blei, p. 42.

back to God asking for forgiveness, and he prays to God in the following way: "Oh Lord of lords ... as a human being I have been wrong, and what was right, I said 'it was wrong', and what was wrong, I said 'it was right', when I have come to this situation I found myself worthless and defeated, shalt Thou leave me worthless and dishonoured, thy own creature? No, Lord, it is not wise, forgive me for my wrong deeds, do not judge my misdeeds, from now on, I shall remember and I shall realise."<sup>27</sup>

Man is not perfect, what he thinks to be right may not be truly right, hence a man ought to have right knowledge and right understanding and he should also have the patience to learn from his elders and his other fellow beings of the right knowledge and wisdom. This comes close to the right understanding which is one of the eight steps in the eight-fold path of Buddhism.

Right understanding according to the Buddhist ethics is the understanding of life and its nature, one must have a clear understanding that life is suffering and impermanent and that there is no soul. A good Buddhist must also have a clear understanding of the four Noble Truths, namely: (a) There is suffering, (b) There is a cause of suffering, (c) There is a cessation of suffering, and

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27. Mawrie, H.O., Hei! Nga Bat Ho ia ka Nia, p. 42.

(d) There is a way leading to the ceasation of suffering. Right understanding is necessary as a person tries to conduct his life by means of his understanding, so if a person has right understanding his actions will also be right, otherwise not. Likewise, the Khasis try to cultivate in their children 'right understanding'. Sib Charan Roy says that this world is only a temporary abode of man, but the permanent abode of man is the house of God, so one ought to have a clear understanding that the purpose of man's life is 'to earn righteousness'.

A virtuous individual in the Khasi society is the one who not only acts righteously but also thinks righteously and he also ought to sacrifice himself for the sake of his other fellow beings. Unless the individual sacrifices himself for the sake of his other fellow beings he could not be called a virtuous person in the larger sense of the term. A person who thinks only about his personal interest but has no regard for the interest and welfare of his fellow beings or for the welfare of the society as a whole turns out to be selfish and egoistic. Selfishness is not appreciated in the Khasi society even though it is not sinful or vicious, and selflessness and generosity are always good and virtuous. But selflessness and generosity ought not go to the extent of letting other people take the advantage of our being generous and selfless. We should

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know whom to help and whom to be generous. Generosity does not mean that one should help and finance someone who is bone lazy. Man should be active and smart; laziness should be discouraged so that we learn to work and desire only what we ourselves earn. Right livelihood is another prerequisite of life as advised by Buddhism. Right livelihood is attainable when one gives up all impure means of earning a living. "Right livelihood or vocation: the layman should only pursue an occupation that does not cause harm or injustice to other beings."<sup>28</sup>

In the Khasi society, the term respect as a moreal concept or virtue is very important. One should respect one another without any distinction for we are all equal in the sight of God, one should love and care for the aged and the needy ones. Sib Charan Roy says: "To live a respectable life on earth as human beings, the Khasi religion points out that only by knowing the relationship between our fellow beings inside one's own clan and outside one's own clan as well. To love and respect one another throughout the world as brothers and sisters, friends and relatives."<sup>29</sup>

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28. Saddhatissa, H., Buddhist Ethics, p. 72.

29. Sib Charan Roy, Ka Niam Ki Khasi Ka Niam Tip-Briew Tip-Blei, p. 21.

A person should also have self-respect, in the sense that the should not indulge himself in evil deeds such as quarrelling, stealing, immoral sexuality etc. In most societies sexual behaviour is being governed by certain rules, so also in Khasi society. A marriage is considered to be a sanctity, pre-marital sex is strictly prohibited for it is considered as sinful acts. "Do not have sex immorally ... for it is shameful."<sup>30</sup> Bodily pleasure are the sources of all evil and likewise sexual freedom is regarded in most societies as the paradigm of immorality.

The Noble Eightfold path of the Buddhis are: (i) Right understanding, (ii) Right thought, (iii) Right speech, (iv) Right action, (v) Right livelihood, (vi) Right effort, (vii) Right mindfulness and (viii) Right concentration. Most of the above Eightfold path are in conformity with Khasi morality. In every community or tribe the moral laws and the religious laws are intrinsically interconnected, the religious laws are the guiding principles which are guiding the individuals' actions and behaviour in their day to day life, likewise the Buddhist social life is being influenced by their religious laws, but the difference between the Khasis and the Buddhists is that the Buddhists do not believe in the

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30. Roy, Sib Charan, Op. cit., p. 23.

existence of either soul or God, they believe in rebirth, in the sense that if a person does not follow the Noble Eightfold path faithfully he will be born again into this world and as a result he would have to bear the sufferings of this life once again. Hence, one ought to live virtuously so that one could attain a state of perfect bliss or a state of perfection, so that he would not be born again into this world. The idea of living virtuously for the Buddhist is to attain Nirvana or perfect bliss here on earth. But the idea of the Khasis of living virtuously here on earth is not only to gain happiness but also to enable them to gain a place in the house of God after their life here on earth. The Khasis do not believe in rebirth, but they believe in the soul's immortality, so if a person lives a good life here on earth, his soul will enjoy a perfect bliss and salvation in the house of God.

In the field of moral philosophy, there is a long drawn out debate about the relation of morality and religion. Some scholars are of the view that religion is prior to morality, that morality is born in religion. Descartes, Locke and others believed that morality is born out of religion, where the religious laws and norms are the moral standards. God creates morality according to what He thinks is fit for human beings in their relations with each other in the society. "We ought to obey moral laws, he

teaches, because it is God's will that we should obey them. To enforce His will upon us God gives rewards for obedience and punishes disobedience."<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, some scholars believe that morality is prior to religion. For instance, according to Kant, religion is based on morality and it is a moral postulate. The existence of God is due to the existence of ethics. "A conviction of a supreme being can be based on moral laws."<sup>32</sup> Kant argues that virtue is of course the ultimate good, but without bliss it is not a complete good. It is seen quite often while good people suffer in a number of ways, the bad ones enjoy themselves. Thus Kant imagines a God who arranges pleasure with virtue and pains with vice, it is God who conjoins pleasure with virtue because while virtue depends upon our volitions, pleasure depends upon the concern of external conditions. Thus Kant is of the view that God becomes the postulate of ethics.

Then again Bradley holds that morality and religion are one and the same thing. In his book Appearance and Reality remarks: "Morality in brief calls for an unattainable unity of its aspects, and in its search for

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31. Richard, I.A., John Locke, p. 267.

32. Kant, quoted in Acton, H.B., Kant's Moral Philosophy, p. 53.

this, it naturally is led beyond itself into a higher form of goodness. It ends in what we may call religion."<sup>33</sup>

In the light of the above, we can draw a distinction between Khasi morality and Khasi religion inspite of the fact that the two are inextricably connected. Though we can draw a conceptual distinction between the laws of morality, that is, 'Ka Hok' and the supreme being, that is, 'U Blei' in the Khasi world view, in practice I do not think that the two can be separated, for the moral person is necessarily the religious person, who pursues ka Hok is also pursuing Ka Hukum the divine commandment, as we see a vicious person cannot be religious, unethical religion is merely a blind faith. Religion and morality are based on each other, religion is the ideal basis of ethics, morality is the expression in the society of our spiritual consciousness. A person who sees God in every object turns to social service automatically. A truly religious person sees the entire world as permeated by God., Religion and ethics both make important contribution to the development of human personality. In human development both religion and ethics develop side by side and influence each other.

In the final analysis I would say that according to Khasi tradition, religion is prior to morality, because

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33. Bradley, F.H., Appearance and Reality, p. 388.

even before the children of the Seven huts came down to inhabit this world, they had a clear conception of God. But the concept of morality came into existence only when man started to inhabit this world, because on earth, there are both good and evil. Hence the Khasis would say that morality is born out of religion. In fact, since the children of the Seven huts came down to inhabit this earth there is no distinction between their religious laws and their moral laws, for the Khasi religion points out that to live a good life here on earth one should know the relationship between man and man (ban tip kur tip kha) within the society, to know this relationship means to know morality, hence one could say that the Khasi moral laws are same as their religious laws. This, however, should not lead us to the conclusion that being religious, moral laws are fixed for all times to come and the possibility of change is denied to them. The emphasis on various taboos in Khasi society in today's age may differ radically from that of the past.

Chapter III

THE CONCEPT OF KA HOK AND KA RINGIEW

"Man should know that he comes into this world with God's decree. His life has a mission and a purpose and whatever power he has it is the one bestowed upon him by God. This power is called 'Ka Rngiew'. It is that power of man which is inherently born in him and he has it by virtue of being a Man. It is both kinetic and dynamic, kinetic in the sense that it is there with him and in him as solid as anything to uphold him against anything that might shake him in his life and dynamic in the sense that it is ever-sustaining power into success in all his endeavour and undertaking."<sup>1</sup>

The Khasis hold a view that man has not only a body and a soul, but he also has Ka Rngiew. The body is sensuous, the soul is rational and Ka Rngiew is believed to be a mysterious power which only man possesses. "The body being sensuous, it is appetitive and lacks reason, sometimes the body behaves irrationally for it has desires, lusts, passions, etc. But the soul being rational its duty is to control the body, as temperance and self-control has always been regarded as virtues. That is why the Khasis say to a person who is good and kind hearted or gentle 'U briew uba bha mynsiem', which can be translated into English as 'a person having a good soul', and to the one who

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1. Mawrie, H.O., The Essence of Khasi Religion, p. 8.

is bad temper or mischievous they say 'U briew uba sniew mynsiem', which can be translated into English as 'a person having a bad soul'.

The animals and the other living creatures do possess a body and a soul, but the animal soul is not considered to be rational, that is why no moral judgement is passed on the actions of animals and the other creatures. What makes man different from the other creatures is that he has reason and Ka Rngiew. Without Ka Rngiew, man would have been incomplete and would be no better than the animals. Ka Rngiew can be said to be a kind of power given to man by God. A person who lacks reason, who is full of lust and passions is condemned to the status of the beasts and more importantly, he loses his Ka Rngiew too. Ka Rngiew, however, can neither stop a man from doing evil deeds nor can it inspire him to behave morally good. But a person who is morally good possesses a stronger Rngiew than the other one who is not morally good. A person who has a strong Rngiew is capable of resisting temptations and does not get easily involved in evil deeds. Ka Rngiew, though irrational, yet exercises an indirect control over man's life. A vicious person due to his evil deeds loses his Ka Rngiew as he is being influenced by the evil spirits and the she-demon (Ka tyrut). "No other power on earth can make him regain it unless he lives happily with God."<sup>2</sup>

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2. Mawrie, H.O., Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, p. 3.

Virtue or righteousness gives man a kind of power (Ka Rngiew), if one follows Ka Hok (righteousness), one has a strong Rngiew. Ka Rngiew is within the control of man, because if he wants to possess a strong Rngiew, he ought to follow Ka Hlok. Ka Hlok is similar to the law of karma, the law of Karma is within the control of man, for according to the theory of Karma, if a man leads a good life he will be born as a saint or to a divine state of living, but if he leads a vicious life he will be born as an animal or something lower than what he is in this present life. "The Hindu thinkers, however, who accept the view of Karma equate it with the will of God. God is the universal background providing scope and expression for the different possibilities but the actualization depends on the will of man."<sup>3</sup>

As pointed out earlier, Ka Hok is both a cosmic and a moral principle, which governs gods, man and nature. Moral laws according to the Khasis ought to be followed not only by man but by all the beings both animal and inanimate, in the sense that if gods, men and nature do not follow the laws of ka Hok they will be punished accordingly.

The following legends describe ka Hok as both a cosmic and a moral law :

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3. Radhakrishnan, S., An Idealist View of Life, -p. 233.

## (i) The Sun and the Moon\*

Both the Sun and the Moon lived happily with their parents in heaven, but later, when their parents died, they both lived by themselves. Once, there came a time when an evil thought entered the Moon's mind, that he felt in love with his own sister the Sun. He was trying to flirt with her, the Sun got very angry and threw hot ashes on his face. As a punishment the Moon bears the scar of the ashes on his face to this day. Since then, out of shame, the moon shines only at night but never in the day time.\*\*

## (ii) Ka Umngot and Ka Umiam\*\*\*

Ka Umngot and Ka Umiam are the two rivers, these two rivers are regarded as the female deities, they are also believed to be the spouses of the deity of U Shyllong Peak. The two rivers entered into a racing competition, challenged each other as to who would reach first, into the plains of Sylhet.\*\*\*\* The starting point of these two rivers is at Shyllong Peak. Ka Umiam being proud of her strength, thought that she would be able to climb over the rocky hills, as a result, her way was blocked and could not reach the plain. On the other hand, Ka Umngot being humble took an easy way to reach her destination, without

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\* The above legend is a free translation of a Khasi legend of Rabon Singh in his book Ka Kitab Jingphawar, p. 29-30.

\*\* The Sun and the Moon are believed to be the children of the same parents, where the Sun is female and the Moon is a male according to Khasi mythology and belief.

\*\*\* The account of this legend could be found in the book, The Khasis by P.R. Gurdon, p. 177 and Ki Khanatang U Barim by H. Elias, p. 47-49.

\*\*\*\* Sylhet is now a part of Bangladesh.

any difficulties, she managed to reach her destination safe and sound. On reaching the plains, Ka Umngot not seeing Ka Umiam, turned round to look for Ka Umiam, but Ka Umiam was nowhere to be seen; Ka Umngot then turned backward to the north. There is a rough horse-shoe bend in the course of Ka Umngot that looks like a silver-necklace which makes it very beautiful. For that beauty of Ka Umngot, she got the name of Ka Wah Rupa Tylli which means the 'river of solid silver'.

While Ka Umngot was looking for Ka Umiam, Ka Umiam was still struggling her way to reach her destination by digging out her course, and somehow managed to reach Shella (a place in the east of Khasi hills near Bangladesh border). When Ka Umiam looked down to the plains, she saw Ka Umngot who already reached the plains is now dancing away to glory and looks very beautiful. Ka Umiam was broken-hearted for having lost in the competition and split herself up into five branches which are known as Ka Umtong, Ka Tosbiria, Ka Pasbiria, Ka Kumarjani and Ka Dwara.

In the above accounts all the events in nature, the movements, the appearance or the shape of the animals or the appearance of the mountains and rivers is teleologically understood. Significantly it is the consciousness of ka Hok <sup>which</sup> imparted the feeling of oneness with God and nature. It offered man solace and security. The earth for the Khasis is not a place where blind capricious forces held sway, but a benevolent habitat in which man could expect to enjoy all the good things of life both material and spiritual.

Ka Hok as the central concept in the Khasi world view

can be expressed in different ways; like Ka Hok U Blei, Ka Hok ka Hukum, Ka Hok ka Sot, etc. When the Khasis say Ka Hok U Blei, they mean God the Almighty because it is believed that Ka Hok like God ~~is~~ is not created, it is what it is. "Ka Hok is not created by God. It is rather another term for God."<sup>4</sup> But when the phrase Ka Hok Ka Hukum is used, here it implies 'divine commandment', where Ka Hukum means 'the commandment' or 'the law'. "Ka Hukum is, therefore, the underlying reality, the foundation stone of everything else."<sup>5</sup> "Ka Hukum originates from God, Ka Hok kat kum Ka Hukum, is the outward manifestation of God Himself."<sup>6</sup> Hence Ka Hok Ka Hukum means 'the divine commandment, which cannot be other than an eternal law. And when the phrase Ka Hok Ka Sot is used, here it refers to the Truth or the Reality. The Khasi term sot can be understood with reference to the Hindu term sat. "Ethically, the term Satya means good and its epistemological meaning stands for truth as the opposite of falsehood. Thus 'Sat', the being, is not only real but good and true as well or whatever exists is true and good."<sup>7</sup>

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4. Lyngdoh, Sngi, quoted in Khasi World View : A Conceptual Exploration, by Sujata Miri, p. 43.

5. Ibid.

6. Lyngdoh, R.S., Ibid., p. 44.

7. Khan, Benjamin, The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana, p. 51.

The Khasi concept of Ka Hok can be compared with that of the Vedic conception of Rta. Rta, a cosmic order which served as the foundation of the ancient Indian thought. The conception of Rta finds a conspicuous place in the Mantras. The term Rta means the uniformity of nature or the order of course of things such as indicated by the regular alteration of day and night. Rta is the conception pertaining to the physical universe denoting the law of nature operating in the movement of the planets, the changing of seasons, etc. The beauty and the uniformity of the heaven and the earth were looked upon as proceeding from their unalterable observance of the cosmic law. In the Mantras, Rta not only bears the significance of a cosmic law but it also signifies the 'moral law'.

"The word Rta has been derived from the Sanskrit root r to go, to change. Rta plainly is the immanent dynamic order or inner balance of the cosmic manifestations themselves. The inherent equipoise of cosmic processes, their inner beauty, for example, is displayed in the shining of the Sun, Moon, stars in the flowing of the waters, in the motion of the wind and in the secretion of 'animal and plant'. By force of Rta, the milk in the cow's udder is produced, by force of Rta, too, the human brain functions, and so with all cosmic activities."<sup>8</sup>

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8. Ibid., p. 25.

The cosmic sense of Rta as a natural law developed into the social sense of Rta as a moral law. It is meant that virtue was given the same immanent position in the physical world. The moral law, like the law of nature was intrinsically real and it endowed the chaotic form of nature with order in the same manner as Rta, cosmically conceived, imposed beauty and order upon the physical chaos.

"As rta is not created, rta is prior to creation; rta is order that comprehends order: serial order, casual order, regulative order, hierarchical order, order of sequence and order of co-existence. The Vedic chant of hymns is order, and the Yajna "sacrifices" symbolises rta. As rta is not what is created or made, rta is what is, what has been, what exists in itself or what subsists. As unrta is what is untrue or false, rta is truth or what is true; therefore, rta is the same as satya; and rta is the world-order manifests itself in man and society as dharma, moral law and social order; therefore rta is natural order and moral order, both rooted in divine order; Rta is a conception which unifies Science, Philosophy and Religion."<sup>9</sup>

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9. Nikam, N.A., Some Concepts of Indian Culture, p. 5.

Radhakrishnan holds that even Karma is rooted in the concept of the Vedic Rta, because Rta embraces the natural as well as the moral order to the universe which both gods and men ought to follow. Karma signifies any action or deed. Every action by its own nature produces an effect. The effect is either physical, psychological or moral. According to the theory of karma, what we are now in the present life is to be traced back to what we were then in the previous life or lives. "On desire man's nature is founded; as his desires so are his endeavors, as his endeavors so are his deeds. ... If his karma in a given life has accumulated for him a good balance, as it were, the next life will be delightful and noble; conversely, if his life is evil, the next birth will be, consequently, as a low and degraded being."<sup>10</sup>

Human life is not to be considered as a product of chance or of fate, it is the result of man's own actions and deeds. "The theory of karma recognises the rules of law not only in outward nature, but also in the world of mind and morals. Rta manifests itself equally in nature and in human society."<sup>11</sup>

Hinduism believes that the law of karma operates only

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10. Bloomfield, Maurice, The Religion of the Veda, p. 259.

11. Radhakrishnan, S., The Hindu View of Life, p. 72.

as long as man does not reach the Absolute. Rebirth is not an eternal recurrence leading to nowhere, but a movement from man to animal or from man to divine or from a wild life to a future kingdom of God as according to the past deeds in the previous life.

The laws of God or the moral laws are not external to man but they are internal to him. If man violates the laws of God, he is not so much defying God but he is defying his own self. If a man is going against his own nature he is always tied up in the law of karma, the effect of karma is carried over from one birth to another. Though the Khasis do not believe in the theory of karma, yet they believe that the wrong or the evil deeds committed by their forefathers are hereditary from the mother to the daughter, unless and until the evil done is purified.

If a member of a clan committed an evil act (ka pap, ka sang), the effect of his evil act will affect his clan members. The bad effect of the evil acts which are called ka raibi or ka siar ka lait kylla, may not affect his clan members immediately after the evil act is done, but sooner or later ka raibi or ka siar ka lait kylla will occur within his clan members unless and until a cleansing ceremony for that evil act is performed.

"Ka siar ka lait kylla is something like an effect

which comes as a consequence of bad deeds performed."<sup>12</sup> Ka raibi is a kind of evil passing from generation to generation. There is no etymological meaning for this term raibi it is the evil force. In the Khasi world view, evil can affect not only the wrong doer but also those who are in and around him. It is a serious sin which takes its origin from a very serious pap or sang."<sup>13</sup>

Ka raibi or ka siar ka lait kylla occurs only within the clan, it does not affect the members belonging to another clan. It also does not affect the members of the whole clan, but only to those clan members of the same kpoh or sub-clan to which the wrong doer belongs. It is not necessary that it occurs only after the death of the wrong doer, it may occur even during his life time, and it keeps occurring from generation to generation unless and until it is purified. Here the question arises, 'in what way ka raibi or ka siar ka lait kylla affect the clan members?' Ka siar ka lait kylla affects the clan members in the form of sickness or suffering, that is why in the Khasi world view, when a member of the clan is sick or suffering, the cause of the sickness ought to be found out by means of divine consultation so that the sickness would be dealt with accordingly. "The evil (U ksuid) cannot harm man

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12. Synrem, H.K., quoted in Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration by Sujata Miri, p. 61.

13. Lyngdoh, Sngi, Op. cit., p. 68.

unless Ka Blei (She-God) permits the evil to do so because of man's evil deeds."<sup>14</sup> Ka Blei takes care of the members of the clan, but man by his evil acts displeases Ka Blei. However, when the evil is purified, and man turns away from his evil deeds and back to God, he lives again in peace and harmony with Ka Blei and as a result ka siar ka lait kylla also stops occurring. Ka raibi does not usually occur in the form of sickness, but the evil effect of ka raibi is that if a member of a clan has committed a serious crime, for example, like killing a fellow human being, or living an immoral life, his or her clan members even after generations would commit those very evil acts which is called ka hiar raibi.

The concept of ka Hok is the core of the Khasi religion, it plays a central role in guiding man and his relation with God, with his fellow beings and also with animals and nature. Hence, the concept of ka Hok can be regarded as the central concept in the Khasi world view. "Ka Hok is the moral order of the universe, and as such it is equitable with God. Like God, ka Hok is invisible, or rather more appropriately transcendent, which simply means that nothing in nature can exhaustively represent it. The invisible moral order makes itself accessible through ka

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14. Singh, Rabon, Ka Kitab Jingphawar, p. 47.

Hukum, particularly moral commandments. The moral order is also the real order of things. Ka Hok is thus equated with the real."<sup>15</sup>

Before analysing the concept of Ka Hok as a moral concept in the Khasi world view, I will first try to explicate the meaning of the term ka Hok. Very often the Khasi term of Ka Hok is translated into English language as 'righteousness'. The Dictionary meaning of the term 'righteousness' is "rectitude, righteous acts, right, wise, prudent, etc."<sup>16</sup> 'Righteousness' by itself may not be a sufficient term to explain Ka Hok for it stands for that which is good in itself, and is both a cosmic and a moral principle.

To clarify the meaning of Ka Hok and also to show its ambiguity, I would like to take certain examples: (a) when a Khasi says: 'I have come to this world to earn righteousness' (nga wan long briew sha kane ka pyrthei ban kamai ia ka hok), by saying 'to earn righteousness' he means not just to earn righteousness, but to live a good life and to uphold a permanent and right relationship with God. (b) Each individual does possess Ka Hok, the term Ka Hok here stands for 'reason' or 'capacity', as the Khasis say ka sap tip-briew tip-blei. "Man as a special creature

15. Miri, Sujata, Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration, p. 41.

17. Chambers 20th Century Dictionary.

has been bestowed upon and endowed with ka sap tip-briew tip-blei that inherent and instinctive power for him to know himself as well as his attachment to his fellow-men and to God."<sup>17</sup> Ka sap tip-briew tip-blei is ka hok kynti of man bestowed upon him by God Himself and if man tries to misuse that power he is likely to ruin his own life.

At this juncture I would like to clarify the concept of God in Khasi religion. The Khasi term for God is U Blei. U Blei is believed to be prior to all existence, hence the Khasis never seek an argument to prove the existence of God. It is an unquestionable fact that there is a God who is the Creator of everything. "The Khasis like the Jews, never seek to formulate arguments to prove that God exist and that there is only one God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and eternal."<sup>18</sup>

Kynpham Singh describes the Khasi concept of God as follows: "God is ethereal and formless. He is in us and around us. He is infinitude. We cannot see Him nor can we hear Him. God is indivisible and, therefore, He is one. Being indivisible there can be no other God. God is the Creator and we are His creatures. As the Creator, He is

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17. Mawrie, H.O., The Essence of Khasi Religion, p. 17.

18. Mawrie, H.O., The Khasi Milieu, p. 27.

like a benign father and we are like His children. But as a father cannot be his own son and a son cannot be his own father so also with the Creator. He can never take the form of His creatures or be like them nor his creatures be gods."<sup>19</sup>

The Khasis have attributed certain qualities to God. Sib Charan Roy in his book Ka Niam Khasi Ka Niam Tip-Briew Tip-Blei says: "our forefathers have given a name and explained about God (U Blei) from time immemorial that He is:

U Blei ha jrong ha tbian - God from above from below.

U Blei U Trai Kynrad - God the Lord and the Master.

U Blei U Nongbuh Nongthaw - God the Designer and the Creator.

U Blei U Nongsei ia ka Rynnieng ka Rta - God the Sustainer.

U Blei U Nongsam-bynta Nongbuh-bynta - God the Distributor of human fate.

U Blei Shihajarnguh - God, the Lord of lords."<sup>20</sup>

When the Khasis appeal to God, they usually begin their innovation with the following words: "God, the Lord,

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19. Singh, Kynpham, 'Khasi and Jaintia Religion', quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 97.

20. Roy, Sib Charan, Ka Niam ki Khasi Ka Niam Tip-Briew Tip-Blei, p. 2-3.

the Master, the One who assigned to me the religion (Ka Niam Ka Rukom) to me, a Khasi child (U Khun Khasi), lo! I uphold the covenant (Ka Jutang) which is given to me from time immemorial. I am not like the other race who seek thee through written books or by bowing down in front of the idols or the images."<sup>21</sup>

God being so great, He is above all genders. He is all in all. He can be addressed as U Blei (God) or Ka Blei (She-God) or Ki Blei (the Gods), by putting the articles 'Ka', 'U' and 'Ki' in front of the word Blei it does not mean that the Khasi God is a male or a female or that there are many gods. "In their daily life they speak of God as U Blei (He-God), but in their prayers and invocations they say Ka Blei U Blei (She-God, He-God). Ka takes precedence because Khasis feel the honour should be given to the one who gives birth, namely the mother. ... The Khasis also speak of God as Ki Blei (the Gods). Ki is a plural form of either Ka or U. But when this article ki is applied to God it does not mean that there are more gods than one: it is an honourific term of respect and reverence. This is applied to high personages too. The Khasis address their syiem (king) as phi ki syiem (you the kings), not phi u syiem. And this applies equally whenever

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21. Singh, Rabon, Ka Kitab Niam Khein Ki Khasi (Preface).

they address any dignitary personally."<sup>22</sup> "From Him emerge the beginning of all things and in Him lies the end of all things. Therefore, whether we call U Blei (masculine) or Ka Blei (feminine) it makes the same sense."<sup>23</sup>

The relationship between God (U Blei) and man is based on Ka Jutang, the covenant which is made between them. The commandments which was made in Ka Jutang became ki hukum (the laws). "It is for this reason that for the Khasis God becomes the supreme commander and the ruler (Ka Nonghukum bad ka Nongsynshar)."<sup>24</sup> "They consider God to be the mother or the ancestress, and he is often addressed as Ka Blei (feminine), Ka Blei Nonghukum (the commanding goddess)."<sup>25</sup>

Different names such as U Lei-Muluk - god of the state, U Lei-Longspah - god of wealth, U Lei-Longkur - god of the clan, U Lei-Umtong - god of the water, and there are many others. The Khasis also do have sacred groves, sacred forests, sacred rivers, sacred mountains, etc. All the different names and the different sacred places are called ki phan ki kyrpad. "Every sub-clan or family have ki phan

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22. Rymbai, R.T., 'The Khasi Concept of God', quoted in Golden Jubilee, 1937-1987, Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong, p. 47.

23. Mawrie, H.O., The Khasi Milieu, p. 28.

24. Mawrie, H.O., Ka Pyrkhath U Khasi, p. 8.

25. Lyngdoh, Homiwell, Ka Niam Khasi, p. 6.

ki kyrpad ... those could not be had without the consent or the commandment of Ka Blei (She-God), in memory of their demands from Ka Blei to get the prosper and the well-being of anything in their demands, and for that purpose they have the deities like U phan longbricw (clan's god to multiply the members of the clan), U phan longspah (god of wealth) ... all those could not be done without ka hukum (the consent) of Ka Blei (She-God)."<sup>26</sup>

This is why the Khasi religion appears to be polytheistic and animistic. P.R. Gudon in his book The Khasis says: "The Khasis have a vague belief in a God the Creator. ... The Khasis cannot, however, be said to worship the Supreme God, although it is true that they sometimes invoke him when sacrificing and in times of troubles. The religion of the Khasis may be described as animism or spirit-worship."<sup>27</sup>

The Khasis do not have a vague idea of God. It is true that they believe in the existence of the other spirits both good and evil, but this does not imply that they have a vague idea of God the Creator. Giving different names to God does not mean that Khasi religion is a polytheistic or animistic, it is monotheistic in nature because the different names given to God apply to the one

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26. Singh, Rabon, Ka Kitab Niam Khein Ki Khàsi, p. 105.

27. Gurdon, P.R., The Khasis, p. 105.

and the same God (U Blei). A reference from Sib Charan Roy, here would explain the concept of U Blei (God); "This God is the only God and there is no other God besides Him. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient. He is the Lord of lord. ... As the Creator, He controls over man and all the creatures, He never rests, He works eternally."<sup>28</sup>

Man's duty to God is to love and to worship Him for the good things we have in life and also to pray to Him so that He would lead us and guide us in the right path. "Pray to God earnestly, so that He would give us the way to tread through the path of righteousness. ... no one else but God alone can give us the strength and the light."<sup>29</sup> The Khasis never give animal sacrifices to God the Almighty, but the animal sacrifices are being performed only to the female deities and the male deities. The animal sacrifices which are performed to the deities is a debt that man owes to those deities. For example, in the Khasi society 'Thunder' is considered to be one of the deities, suppose there is a member of one clan who is seriously sick, when all the medicines failed to heal him, his clan members would then pray to the Thunder, that if the Thunder could take away the sickness and heal the patient, the Thunder in return would be paid with animal

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28. Roy, Sib Charan, Op, cit., p. 3-4

29. Ibid., p. 11.

sacrifices. In like manner many animals sacrifices were performed to the other deities. The animal sacrifices performed to the deities in some cases may not be a debt that man owes to the deities, but they may be performed as a means for the propitiations of the deities. The deities called ki phan ki kyrpad (the deities who uphold the clan or the family), grant favours like welfare or material prosperity. To these deities a pig is sacrificed in the house, after having performed a hen and a goat sacrifice to the She-God (Ka Blei Nonghukum)."<sup>30</sup> But to God the Almighty no animal sacrifice is needed to be performed, but only self-sacrifice which means that one only ought to pray to God whole heartedly with humility. "Don't forget, don't forsake the only God, the Designer, the Distributor, pray day and night to Him, to God the Lord of lords."<sup>31</sup>

The desire for material gifts or sensual pleasures in itself is not bad, but it has to be within the control of Ka Hok. The eternal predicament of man is to make a choice 'either or' as Kierkegaard has put it. But self-control is essential, self-control is the assertion of the freedom of man to stand above the swarm of temptations, self-control alone can save man from the sinking to the level of the

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30. Singh, Rabon, Op. cit., p. 5.

31. Roy, Sib Charan, Op. cit., p. 35-36.

animals. No virtue is possible without self-control, it alone gives man a governing mind and wisdom.

Here I find a close resemblance between Khasi sacrifice and the Vedic sacrifice. "Vedic sacrifices were sometimes propitiatory sin offerings to avert a god's wrath (e.g. Varuna) or his dangerous presence (e.g. Rudra), and get reconciled with him. But as the Nirtti and Varunapraghasa rituals show, confession and self-humiliation of the sinner should accompany an expiatory sacrifice."<sup>32</sup> "Sacrifices remove evil (duritani), and confer sinlessness and freedom."<sup>33</sup>

The Atharva Veda consists of four sections namely (i) the Samhitas, (ii) the Bramanas, (iii) the Aranyakas and (iv) the Upanishads; wherein the Brahmanas and in the Aranyakas five different forms of sacrifices or the mahayajnas are found which a man ought to perform throughout his life in his dealings with the gods, his fellow beings and the other beings. The five mahayajnas are (i) Brahmayajna, is a sacrifice performed to the Brahman, "the oblations is offered to Brahman and the results of scriptural study are mental concentrations and peace, control of the sense, steadfastness, growth in

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32. Rig Veda, I. 185.8; quoted in The Realm of Between by K. Satchidananda Murty, p. 89.

33. Rig Veda, IX, 97; IX. 110, VII. 51.1, Ibid., p. 89.

spiritual insight and fame,"<sup>34</sup> (ii) Devayajna - is a sacrifice to God or the act of worshipping God, (iii) Pitryajna - is a sacrifice to the dead ancestors for the welfare of both the dead ancestors and living ones, it is a homage paying to the dead ancestors, (iv) Manusyajna - is another form of sacrifice where offering and help is rendered to the poor and the needy, it is a sacrifice to the whole of mankind, (v) Bhutayajna - is the sacrifice for all beings like giving food, helping and caring for the animals like the beasts and the birds.

"Man is indebted to gods, ancestors and sages, for the first two are responsible for his existence and well-being, while it is the writings of the sages which awaken him to his situation and enable him to work for his salvation. He discharges these debts by performing these sacrifices to them. All life is one, all men and living beings are kin; so it is every man's duty to do what he can to serve them by caring for them and by sharing with them what he has."<sup>35</sup>

The sacrificial act of the Brahmayajna is somewhat like the Khasis way of worshipping and praying to U Bici,

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34. Satapatha, XI, 5.7.1.; ibid., p. 97:

35. Murty, K. Satchidananda, The Realm of Between, p. 98.

the God Almighty. The other four types of sacrifices also performed by the Khasis in different times and stages of the various clan's existence. "The Khasi religion says, one cannot reach the house of God by means of animal sacrifice or one cannot take away upon oneself; somebody else's sins."<sup>36</sup> Salvation cannot be gained by means of animals sacrifices, for neither the animals nor any one else can take away the sin committed. But here it does not imply that Khasi religion is against animal sacrifices, but it simply states that the animal sacrifice can be performed for the purification of sins with humility. For the Khasis say that if the animals can take away the sin of man, it would be like encouraging one to commit even more sins, for one can always commit sins after sins if the animals can vouchsafe one's own sin.

I have tried to show that the Vedas assumed a very close relationship between men and the gods. The life of men had to be led under the very eye of God. Apart from the duties owed to the gods, there were also duties owed to man. Kindness to all was enjoined, hospitality was reckoned as a great virtue. Virtue was obedience to the law of God and vice a disobedience to this law.

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36. Roy, Sib Charan, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

The Vedic man does not merely stop with enumerating virtue and vice, but seeks a foundation for them. He sees that he can build his moral life on the pattern set by the gods. This would give him something permanent to hold on to. Thus, religion comes to the aid of ethics.

According to the Khasis, the duties of man to nature is to preserve the beauty of nature which implies that no one is supposed to cut down the trees or the bamboos or spoil anything that belongs to nature. The trees and the bamboos can be cut only when needed. "A good life is the normal Khasi life ... To do right is to obey the laws of nature and of society and to live in conformity and harmony with them. Failure to do so brings retribution, disharmony, disruption and consequent misery."<sup>37</sup>

The duties of man to his other fellow beings is to love and care for each other like brothers and sisters. All these are the laws of Ka Hok, which are very much similar to the moral life enjoined in the Veda. The former would be seen in rites and rituals, and the latter would be seen in human relationships.

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37. Miri, Sujata, Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration, p. 11.

The life here on earth for the Khasis is viewed as a training ground for man to unfold his potentialities and integrate them into a pattern, for man is a combination of both material and spiritual. The Khasis proclaimed a scheme of Ka Hok or righteousness as a governing law for the growth of human life.

Does the centrality of Ka Hok as a divine commandment in the Khasi scheme of things give rise to determinism? The question arises, whether the Khasis are free to make moral decisions and act on them, or whether they are determined by some force over which they have no control. If to do Ka Hok is the commandment of God, one can assume that the Khasis had no free-will but followed the commandment of God as they could not do otherwise.

Determinism is the view that everything that happens is determined, which means that everything that happens has a cause, hence determinism could be defined as a universal causation, which holds that every event has a cause. "Determinism means the same thing as universal causation; that is for every result, effect, and event that occur in reality there is a cause or there are causes."<sup>38</sup>

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38. Thiroux, Jacques P., Ethics Theory and Practice, p. 66.

In the context of morality we are not dealing with natural events, but rather with human actions. There is a difference between events and actions. In the case of events there is a causal connection between the cause and the effect. "Causal connections are either there or not there, and it does not make sense to say of a causal connection that it ought to be there or ought not to be there, that it is right for it to be there or wrong for it to be there, that it is proper or improper, that it is justified or unjustified, that it is good or bad."<sup>39</sup> Determinism being the law of universal causation, cannot be applied to human actions, because human actions are not prompted by any cause but by the reason one has. "While the concept of a cause is wielded in the explanation of what may be called natural events, the idea of reason is employed specially in the explanation of human actions."<sup>40</sup> Since the Khasis hold that man is a rational being, hence his actions also ought to be explained in terms of reasons but not in terms of causes, which means that determinism has no role to play with regard to human actions. The Khasis conduct their life as according to Ka Hok a divine

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39. Miri, M., 'Understanding People and' the Science of Man', quoted in The North-Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol. II, No. I, January-March, 1984.

40. Ibid.

commandment no doubt, but one should not forget the fact that when the children of the Seven huts came down to inhabit this earth, God commanded them to earn righteousness but at the same time He gave them the freedom to do otherwise if they so wish to go against His commandment. As pointed out earlier, "He gives them free will, it is for them to choose the right or the wrong. And so we find in their prayers they invariably beseech God to grant them knowledge, understanding and strength to live a good and beautiful life worthy of His love."<sup>41</sup> Religion provides laws and norms of conduct for the proper use of man's freedom of the will, understanding the laws of right conduct as propounded in their religion, demands of the Khasis, their freedom to choose and to follow those rules. As a matter of fact, the Khasis, set themselves to discover the principle upon which their morality is established and which enables them to discriminate what is good and what is bad that is Ka Hok (righteousness) through their freedom to will, thought and action.

The Khasi concept of freedom, resembles Sartre's concept of freedom. For the Khasis since freedom is given to them by God Himself, man is free as long as he lives, freedom is his very being, which is somewhat like Sartre's

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41. Rymbai, R.T., 'The Khasi Concept of God', Op. cit., p. 50.

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view. He says: "I am condemned to be free. This means that no limit to my freedom can be found except freedom itself. ... that we are not free to cease being free."<sup>42</sup> According to Sartre "action, as opposed to mere happening, entails a motive. A human action, therefore, arises from a thought about the world, a desire to change some feature in the agent's situation. It is only because we always perceive the world from the stand point of the potential agent, and because we can project ourselves forward into a future which does not yet exist, that we can act at all."<sup>43</sup> Sartre holds that freedom and existence are identical, hence the end of the former necessarily implies the end of the latter. The central assertion of Sartre about human freedom as 'condemned to be free', says that man carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders, he is responsible for everything that happens to him as way of being.

The complex view of the reality and the interconnectedness of its various parts as foreseen by the Khasi elders, however, differs radically from here on with Sartre. Man is never alone but always with mother-earth, God, fellow human beings as well as ancestors. Whatever

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42. Sartre, Jean-Paul, Being and Nothingness, p. 567.

43. Sartre, quoted in Existentialism by Mary Warnock, p. 118-119.

happens to him thus is a consequence of so many other events happening all the time. Even if he freely chooses to live virtuously, the degree of happy results will depend on whether his clan members are choosing to live righteously.

Before ending this chapter, let me refer to a debate about the concept of ka rngiew in the Khasi thought. Khasi scholars generally differ in their opinion about the existence of ka rngiew after the death of the body. Some are of the view that ka rngiew does not live after the death of the body which means that the death of the body implies the death of ka rngiew as well, but some other scholars are of the view that ka rngiew of a person exists even after the death of the body of that person. The existence of ka rngiew on earth after death brings all the death members of the clan or kur close to together.

However, there are some others who do not believe in the existence of ka rngiew after the death of the body, for instance H.W. Sten says, "Ka rngiew kum ka kynja mynsiem ia kaba la pynkup pynphong da U Blei bad ka long kaba iar haduh katta katta (The rngiew is a sort of spirit given by God and its role is very vast)."<sup>44</sup> But he does not believe

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44. Sten, H.W., quoted in Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration by Sujata Miri, p. 51-52.

in the existence of ka rngiew after the death of the body, he says: "The rngiew cannot live after death, if it lives after death the problem will arise - how does ka rngiew detach itself from the soul which goes to heaven."<sup>45</sup>

It is indeed a difficult task to talk of the existence of ka rngiew after the death of the body. As per the Khasi belief the presence of ka rngiew in man can be seen in his face, here ka rngiew stands for a personality, but the Khasis also claim that a person who has a strong rngiew is not likely to be the victim of misfortune and suffering, here one can say that ka rngiew stands for good luck, hence one could raise a question, 'how can the Khasis claim in the existence of ka rngiew after the death of the body? Ka rngiew goes with the body to which it belongs for ka rngiew brings good luck or good fortune to the person to whom it belongs. It would be easy to talk of the existence of ka rngiew in heaven along with the soul, that is in the compound of God, a place where the Khasis believe that the soul goes when it leaves the body than to talk of the existence of ka rngiew here on earth after the person's death. But ka rngiew and the soul do not go together. A person who has a weak rngiew is always suffering and does not prosper in anything he does he is likely to get sick all the time, for such a person the Khasis would perform a ceremony :

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45. Ibid.

called ka ksan rngiew, to strengthen his ka rngiew. When a person prospers in life and is also in good health, it is the body which is enjoying rather than the soul, but the Khasis say that the body is only a cage where the soul resides temporarily, one day the soul will leave the body for its eternal abode which is the house of God. Sib Charan Roy says: "Oh my soul what is there to worry about, there is nothing you can carry, naked you came, naked you shall go, there is nothing worth on earth. You don't know that you -neither eat nor drink."<sup>46</sup> The upshot of the argument is that, ka rngiew and the soul do not go together. However, ka rngiew being a spirit does not perish even after the body perished, it remains in existence here on earth. "Ka rngiew is present in history. It is a self-experience of a man in history. There is no doubt about its existence, it begins here and after death remains here."<sup>47</sup>

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46. Roy, Sib Charan, Op. cit., p. 77.

47. Lyngdoh, Sngi, quoted in Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration, by Sujata Miri, p. 52.

Chapter IV

CHRISTIANIZATION AND KHASI MORALITY

Since the coming of Christianity to Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1841, there had been a change in Khasi society, for some Khasis have been converted into Christianity (refer Appendix) though some others are still following their traditional religion. Hence there is a need to undertake a brief discussion of Christian morality, so as to compare it with the Khasi morality, for in the Khasi community one finds practitioners of the two different kinds of moral systems.

Christianity maintains that man is created by God, man entered into a covenant with God, that, he would worship Him and Him alone. He also commanded in no uncertain words that he should not worship any other gods than the God Almighty. "Take careful heed to yourself, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Hober out of the midst of the fire, "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male and female, "the likeness of any beast that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, "the likeness of anything that creeps on ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. (Deuteronomy: 4:15-18) To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? (Isaiah: 40:18), "I am the Lord, that is My name;

and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images. (Isaiah: 42:8)."<sup>1</sup>

Christian morality demands the development of specific attitudes and policies of life, the pursuit of personal perfection in the moral agent himself and not just obedience to moral laws or bringing about good ends in the world. It is authoritative in nature and as such it could be said to be objective because the Christians accept the norms and rules as written down in the Bible without any question and they try to conduct their life accordingly. It becomes a habit to pray to God or to attend prayer meetings and to go to the church. A child when he grows up to be a full rational human being may still continue to attend prayer meetings and go to the church as well, recite prayers, and so on, but he may do these things only mechanically, for reasons other than worshipping God. But, however, badly one pursues the act of worshipping, it is undoubtedly true that as human beings we are not self-sufficient, we always feel dependent, we depend upon our parents, upon God, on our community, etc. "The believers attitude to each and every experience will be one which is specified by the concept of 'God' as Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. His reactive attitude to

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1. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

each experience will be an attitude as a sustaining, providential, personal being; ... The aim of the Christian's life is to achieve and maintain the attitude to experience which are specified by theistic descriptions of religious objects."<sup>2</sup>

The main constituents of Christian morality is that of thanksgiving, hope and commitment. The object of thankfulness is the redemptive act of God in Christ and the object of hope is the promise of the fulfilment of this redemption after death. The Christians assert the authority of Christ for their faith, believing that Jesus apprehends the truth and he would give them the strength and the power. That is why a sinful person once he is changed is called a born-again Christian or as they say he has gained a new life in Christ.

The Christians, for example, on the authority of the New Testament, accept the fatherhood of God, the concept of Heaven and Hell, the coming of the kingdom of God or the Second Coming of Christ. The Christians accept all these concepts because they believe that Jesus gave them the authority.

As the ethical and the religious laws derived their origin from the Almighty Himself, they are to be strictly adhered to. Interestingly, the laws laid down in the New Testament are even more strict than the laws laid down in

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2. Ward, Keith, Ethics and Christianity, p. 190-191.

the Old Testament. For example, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew: 5:27-28).<sup>3</sup> This stretching of the scope and area of jurisdiction makes sin and guilt more crucial to Christian morality than the object of thanksgiving, hope and commitment which is just mentioned above.

The concept of sin is a crucial concept in Christianity. Sin is an offence or a revolt against God. To sin means to commit an offence against God or to be wicked. According to the Christian doctrine, Man's first disobedience to God was the sin of Adam, which came to be known as 'the original sin', this ōrīgīnāl sīn is believed by the Christians to be hereditary. That is why the Christians hold that all men are sinners, for man is born in sin due to this original sin which Adam had committed, accordingly all human beings deserve punishment and will receive condemnation and the wrath of God. Hence, all will be thrown to hell unless they believe, and accept the teachings of Jesus Christ. To enable one to follow the teachings of Jesus one needs to repent. Repentance is a change of mind a feeling of remorse or regretting what one

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3. The King James Version, Holy Bible.

had done or failed to do; a turning away from sin and back to God, or a state of being penitent or contrition for past actions or conduct. The notion of repentance and the forgiving nature of God have ample evidence in the Bible. Jesus said: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.: (Luke: 5:32) "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts: 3:19)<sup>4</sup>. "To repent is to accept God's judgement upon us and to confess that in His sight we are sinners, whatever our own feelings in the matter may be. And the genuineness of our repentance is to be measured more by our actions than our professions or penitence. If we truly turn from our sin to God, we shall cease to do evil and learn to do well, we shall seek to do no harm but all possible good to others; and we shall not neglect but take every opportunity of using the means of grace which God has provided so that we may seek Him where He could be found."<sup>5</sup>

A leading Khasi thinker, H.O. Mawrie sees certain similarities between the Christian doctrine and the Khasi

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4. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

5. Richardson, Alan (Ed.), The Dictionary of Christian Theology, p. 289.

philosophy. He talks of the Khasi legends, describing the separation of the Seven huts from the Nine huts above (refer Chapter II, p. 45-46), as a consequence of Man's Fall and Man's transgression. The growing of a gigantic tree in the same legend is Man's repentance and a Cock which is a mediator between Man and God is Man's Reconciliation with God. "U Hynniew Trep U Hynniew Skum", the ancestors of the Khasi race, drifted away from God to choose his own way and thus the golden bridge had to collapse. This parable speaks of one thing and that is Man's Transgression and Man's Fall. ... The more he groped in the dark the more he stumbled and the more he advanced the more he got lost and finally he turned to God with repentance. ... Finally a Cock was used as a messenger and with its crowing the Sun reappeared and there was light again and Man's Reconciliation with God was thus affected and re-established."<sup>6</sup>

Now, the Dictionary meaning of the term 'transgression' is "The violation of a law, command, or duty; a crime or sin."<sup>7</sup> The Christians also define 'transgression' as a sin or a rebellion against God's will or rather Man's Fall. Man's Fall is described in the Book of Genesis as follows : "Then the Lord God said, "Behold,

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6. Mawrie, H.O., The Essence of Khasi Religion, p. 5-7.

7. Reader Digest Universal Dictionary.

the man has become like one of 'Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also the tree of life, and live forever" - therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man; and He placed Cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life. (Genesis: 3:22-24). The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the 'everlasting' covenant. (Isaiah: 24:5)".<sup>8</sup>

In the original Khasi mythology, there is no account of either a first man called Adam who rebels against the Divine Dictum or any talk of man receiving the law and then violating it. The children of the Seven huts drifted away from God (in Mawrie's own words) and did not oppose or break any of the commandments consciously for there were actually no commandments during that time. Only when there was darkness that the members of the Seven huts turned to God and sought for help.

Mawr. does not differ from other Khasi thinkers regarding the theory of creation. I quote R.T. Rymbai, who is Mawrie's contemporary. He says: "The Khasi-Pnars

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8. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

say that God gave them their religion when He sent their first forebears, Ki Hynniew Trep (the Seven Huts) from heaven to live on earth. According to them, God, in the beginning, created Sixteen families of them and made them stay with Him in heaven. They had the freedom to go between heaven and earth by means of a golden ladder which touched the top of a mountain peak named Sohpetbneng. ... A time came when Seven of these families expressed a desire to remain on earth. God granted them their wish but removed the ladder. Since then the Seven families known as Ki Hynniew Trep could no longer come and go between heaven and earth at will, nor could they converse direct with God anymore. When God allowed the Seven Huts to stay on earth He gave them three commandments to observe and follow to enable them to join the Nine families known Ki Khyndai ha Jrong (the Nine Above) who stayed with Him, not allured by the earth, and to whom they wanted to return when their earthly term was over."<sup>9</sup> Mawrie's view resembles that of Soso Tham, a Khasi poet I quote :— — —

Of the Sixteen Up Above,  
Seven settled down below,  
To uphold the Truth in God's eye,  
The earth is ruled;  
To make the creatures happy,  
To enable the mother earth to talk!"<sup>10</sup>

9. Rymbai, R.T., 'Some Aspects of the Religion of the Khasi-Pnars', quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by U Hipshon Roy, p. 110-111.

10. Tham, Soso, Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep, p. 54.

Though Mawrie is in agreement with the others regarding the theory of creation, yet he could not convince himself that the Nine above are in existence. He says: "As the children of the Seven huts, we believe they are dead."<sup>11</sup> The Nine above had never come down to the earth even during the period of the golden age, a period when the heaven and the earth were in connection. The Khasis believe that the Nine are always there up above. "The Nine are always there with God in heaven."<sup>12</sup> "A Khasi-Pnar believes that when he dies his soul which he calls maina wings its way to God to be with the Nine Above."<sup>13</sup> The above quotations clearly show that the Nine above are always there. The children of the Seven huts who have come down to the earth are believed to go back to join the Nine in the compound of God. Hence, the Khasis never raise the question of the whereabouts of the Nine as they are permanently stationed in the house of God up above from the very moment God created the Sixteen huts.

Mawrie's concept of the Nine as dead contradicts his own concept of the immortality of the soul where he says: "After his life here on earth, he (man) will go to the

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11. Mawrie, H.O., Ka Risaw Jong Ka Niam Khasi, p.1

12. Rymbai, R.T., Ban Pynieng La Ka Rasong, p. 79.

13. Rymbai, R.T., Some Aspects of the Religion of the Khasi-Pnars, quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 144.

house of God to chew betel-nut in the hosue of God. The body will rot but the soul belongs to God and goes back to Him."<sup>14</sup>

When the Khasi say 'chewing betel-nut in the house of God', here it does not imply that the Khasis want nothing more besides betel-nut, but chewing betel-nut is a sign of friendship and happiness. In Khasi community, betel-nut is always shared between friends, if someone comes to the house, a betel-nut is offered to him, which means that he is welcome to the house, and if a betel-nut is not offered to him, it means just the reverse, that is, he is not welcome. It is the custom in the society that when the corpse of a person is cremated on the funeral pyre, friends and relatives go and throw a betel-nut on the fire where the corpse is being cremated, here also it does not mean that the dead man is supposed to chew the betel-nut, but the act is symbolic of their respect and gratitude to the departed soul. In the like manner the Khasis call their deads 'bam kwai ha ing U Blei' (chewing betel-nut in the house of God) which indicates the Khasis faith that God would welcome the dead man. "The saying 'bam kwai ha dwar U Blei' (chewing betel-nut in the compound of God) is the Khasi belief that God would welcome the dead in honour as

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14. Mawrie, H.O., Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, p. 1.

as according to their righteous deeds here on earth."<sup>15</sup>

I find Mawrie's understanding of the role of sin in the Khasi moral system, deficient for the following reasons: for the Khasis, there is but one sin which is unforgivable, that is 'ka shongsang' (having sexual intercourse among the members of the clan), let me quote: "Marriage is strictly exogamous outside the 'Kurs'. There cannot be a greater sin than a coition between members of the 'Kurs'. Other sins are forgivable, but not this, before God or man. Persons guilty of the sacrilege are outcasted. Any member of the 'Kurs' taking the side of the transgressors are also similarly outcasted. The outcasted are not only disowned and dispossessed, but are also denied the solace of religion. No religious rite or ceremony can be performed for them; and when they die their ashes have no place in the cairns of the 'Kurs', They have sunk lower than the beasts."<sup>16</sup>

The daily moral lapses called 'ka lait ka let' are those shortcomings of man which are forgivable. As matter of fact, there is no doubt a disturbance between man and God for the heaven and the earth have been disconnected. But this was because of man's shortcomings rather than

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15. Laitphlang, W.R., "Ka Niam Ha U Khasi", quoted in Seng Khasi Journal, 1976.

16. Rymbai, R.T., "Certain Customs of the Pnar and their Changing Patterns", quoted in Khasi Heritage, p. 76.

man's sin or man's fall. Then again, after the separation of the heaven and the earth, there grew a gigantic tree (U Diengiei) which plunged the earth into total darkness (refer Chapter II, p. 47). The children of the Seven huts did not sin rather did not realise their misdeeds nor their shortcomings, which is why without consultation with God they tried to cut down the tree, but when the tree was cut down still the earth was denied the light of the Sun. The children of the Seven huts had to find out Ka Daw (the reason). Every incident, however, unusual noise made by the birds or beasts or it may be in the course of natural events or a reflex action in the body like the winking of the eye-lid or the ears getting warm or red, has always a reason. I quote here a few stanzas from the poem Ka Don ka Daw (There is a Reason):

Why the right eye-lid moves  
 Or the left one is shaking?  
 Why at times you are restless,  
 In one place to sit you are bored,  
 There is a reason.

When the owl in spring chirp,  
 At night on top of the roof  
 When the bird sings  
 Before the spring comes  
 There is a reason.

Suddenly the branch of a tree fell down -  
 Or suddenly cries ka thabalein (a bird)  
 When a black snake lays across  
 On the way to your field  
 There is a reason.<sup>17</sup>

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17. Dkhar, E. Weston, Ki Siej Khongpong bad ki Sai Rupa, p. 44.

The Khasis believe that nothing happens by chance, there is 'ka daw' or the reason which is somewhat like the unseen principle or Adrsta of Indian philosophy. As we are aware, the potential force adrsta determines the merits and the demerits of the good actions and the bad actions respectively. The adrsta determines all the consequences of an act prior to its actual happening. According to the Nyaya and the Vaiseska Schools of Indian philosophy, God directs this unseen principle adrsta, it is subject to God. "For the followers of the Nyaya and the Vaiseska schools, it is the will of God that directs adrsta. It is inconceivable, therefore, that the adrsta be subject to any fallibility as human beings are. As a matter of fact, the Unseen Power is both an ethical tribunal operating within every acting individual and the code of justice pervading the whole of the universe. Roughly speaking, it is God Himself displaying His righteousness and sovereignty in the world of animate and inanimate beings."<sup>18</sup> The Khasis faith in there being an explanation for all events that take place in the world roughly corresponds to this idea of an Unseen Power operating under God's guidance, mooted by the ancient sages. The ancient Khasis too tried to find out ka daw or the reason for every incident that happens. Likewise, when the earth was in darkness, they tried to

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18. Ramakant, A. Sinari, The Structure of Indian Thought, p. 34-35.

find out ka daw, which they realised was because of their ignorance, as a result of which, the harmony between Man, God and Nature was disturbed.

Reconciliation is a restoring friendship, especially the friendship and the right relationship with God. In Khasi religion, the relationship between Man and God though restored, yet is not the way it used to be. Had there been reconciliation as Mawrie said (refer page 111) the children of the Seven huts could have been able to go back to the Nine above and they would also have been able to communicate with God in human language as they used to during the golden age. But there is no reconciliation, that is why the children of the Seven huts have been communicating with God only through signs and symbols.

The Khasis undoubtedly believe in the supremacy of the only one God the Creator, but, as I have pointed out earlier, Khasi religion is said to be a religion of knowing-man knowing-god, and not the other way around. Man in order to know God, ought to respect his fellow beings, help the poor and needy, take care of the aged and the helpless ones, etc. (refer chapter II, p. 68). Christianity also teaches us to share our food with the hungry, to open our door to strangers, to shelter the homeless, to clothe some one who has nothing to wear and to help one another

generally. "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah: 58:7)"<sup>19</sup>. However, it does not regard the knowledge of man as subservient to the knowledge of God, for the Christians hold that God manifest Himself in Christ, hence one could know God through Christ only. "Sharing in Christ we stand at one in both the reality of God and the reality of the world."<sup>20</sup>

Generally, the large scale conversion of the Khasi-Pnars to Christianity is explained on the ground that the high weightage given to self-sacrifice and service given in the Christian religion attracted the Khasis to Christianity. In the first place, Rev. G. Angel Jones remarks: "One of the reasons that impressed the people is the Christian way of life, a life of self-respect, kindness and love."<sup>21</sup> Christian way of life is no doubt a life of self-respect, kindness and love, however, what is missed by the converting agencies is the fact that other people who do not belong to Christianity also conduct their life in like manner for no religion teaches man to act immorally. The Khasis hold that they have come to this world to earn righteousness, so if one lacks self-respect, kindness and

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19. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

20. Bethge, Eberhard, Ethics, p. 196.

21. Jones, G. Angel, Ka History Jong Ka Balang, p. 20.

love towards his other fellow beings, that fellow could not be said to conduct his life as per the Khasi morality. The ancient Khasi fully occupied pursuing the life of righteousness, have no time to demand a recognition of his service or kindness from others. "To love the truth and to serve our fellowmen, is one of the fundamental teachings of the Khasi religion."<sup>22</sup> The Khasis to this day are very helpful to their fellowmen. In the villages if one is building a house, the neighbours and friends are helping either with cash or with actual labour. At the time of collecting firewoods in the forest, the villagers help each other in bringing home the firewoods. As a matter of fact, Khasi religion holds that man ought to be kind and merciful not only to his fellow human beings but to animals and nature as well, hence Khasi morality could be said to be wider than Christian morality. "The Khasi way is a way of life not a school of thought, it can be fully understood only by being lived. ... Theirs is one of joyousness, of an open-hearted acceptance of life which regards the universe as basically good rejecting indulgence as well as puritanism as aberrations and a denial of life. The good man does not close his eyes to the beauty of the world

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22. Khongphai, A.S., "Shad Suk Mynsiem" (Thanks-Giving Dance) quoted in Khasi Heritage, edited by Hipshon Roy, p.129.

around him, but is not, on the other hand, distracted by its merely sensual attractions."<sup>23</sup>

According to 1981 census, the percentage of the Christians in the Khasi and Jaintai Hills districts of Meghalaya was 52%. Now, the question arises, 'why did the traditional Khasis convert to Christianity?' R.T. Rymbai says: "It was the missionaries who, with their educational, medical and proselytising mission, gradually converted more and more Khasis not only to Christianity but to a way of life imitating the mores and manners of the West."<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly, the early converts were attracted to the more powerful Western religion and Western culture as pointed out by R.T. Rymbai, also Christianity was a novelty and in that sense attractive. The rewards if offered were not limited to the other world, but were also available right here, as has been pointed out by Nalini Natarajan in her book The Missionary Among the Khasis. She says: "Admission to educational institutions, hospitals, jobs, help in case of kind were offered generously to the Khasis by the Missionaries and the Christians who were given preference

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23. Miri, Sujata, Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration, p. 10.

24. Rymbai, R.T., "Evolution of Modern Khasi Society", quoted in Khasi Heritage edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 62.

over others."<sup>25</sup> The view of Nalini Natarajan, however, is not appreciated by the converted Christians who wish to claim otherwise. As for instance, Hamlet Bareh says: "The main factor for the success of Christianity in the Khasi Hills was that the earlier converts found in Christ a true solution to their spiritual problems."<sup>26</sup>

Then again, the cumbersome Khasi rituals necessary for undertaking religious sacrifices have been held responsible for the rejection of their indigenous faith by the early converts. Partly, this is true for the following reasons: In the fast moving world today, it is easier to have rituals that can be done anywhere. —Though—according to Khasi religion God can be worshipped anywhere, for He is omnipresent, but in connection with rituals, if any rituals need to be performed, one must go back home to one's native village no matter how far the village may be. For example: if there is a Khasi family even in a foreign country, and the members of the family are still following their Khasi religion (ka Niam), they have to come back home to their native village for any ritual ceremony, the same is true for the burial of the bones of their dead. The corpse can be buried or cremated anywhere, but the bones must be kept in the clan's cairn, because unless the bones are kept in the clan's cairn, it is believed that the person will not gain salvation. Because of

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25. Natarajan, Nalini, The Missionary Among the Khasis, p.93.

26. Bareh, Hamlet, A Short History of Khasi Literature, p.20.

such inconveniences some Khasis, might have converted to Christianity. There are also cases of persons who became Christian after having committed the unforgivable sin such as 'Ka Shongsang' (having sex within the members of the clan) and who were excommunicated from their own clan. As per the tradition, if the excommunicated person happened to be a girl, she is deprived of her rights of inheritance. When such cases occur the excommunicated person embraced Christianity, for in the Christian world view, even these sins are forgivable provided the persons concerned repented.

It is of interest to note here that due to the rapid growth of Christianity in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Khasi intellectuals who are following their own Khasi religion felt that Khasi culture and Khasi identity would disappear, hence an association was formed, namely, the 'Seng Khasi'. "Urged by a deep concern for the future of their race whose social structure was being eroded, whose moral fibre weakened and whose bond of unity, disintegrating by the inroad of foreigners, especially the Welsh Calvinistic Mission who mercilessly attacked, denigrated and maligned their religion, condemned their culture, belittled and actually encouraged its followers to discard and disown the Kur-Kha concept of kinship which is the source and fountain of existence of the race, sixteen

Khasi non-Christian youngmen met together on the 23rd November, 1899, in the Brahma Samaj Hall at Mawkhar to form an association to forge and mould again its people, to foster a sense of unity and oneness founded on the tradition handed down by their forefathers and to revive the moral teaching and tenets passed on from generation to generation."<sup>27</sup> The founder leaders of this association were U Rash Mohon Roy, U Jeebon Roy, U Chandra Nath Roy and others, where U Rash Mohon Roy and U Chandra Nath Roy were the chairman and the secretary of the association respectively.

The aims and objectives of the Seng Khasi association are as follows :

"(i) To foster a sense of brotherhood among the Khasis who still retain their socio-cultural religious heritage.

(ii) To encourage national sports like archery cultural dances and other social festivals in which people from all over the districts participate.

(iii) To undertake welfare and developmental activities such as maintenance of cremation ground for those who dispose the dead according to tradition and religion, advancement of education and so on. It will be relevant to mention that the Seng Khasi is maintaining a

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27. Singh, Kynpham, "Seng Khasi", quoted in Where Lies the Soul of our Race, edited by Hipshon Roy, p. 7.

Higher Secondary and a College in Shillong."<sup>28</sup>

The Khasis of all sects were invited to join the Seng Khasi Association, but the Christians refused to cooperate, hence it became a body of the orthodox Khasis only. The purpose of forming this association was to enlighten their kinsmen about Khasi culture and Khasi identity so that they would not be influenced by Western Culture. "The missionaries have come not only to preach Christianity but they have also come like the evil-givers and magicians tempting those who have converted to their religion (Christianity) not only to hate the culture (Khasi culture) but to weaken and uproot the Khasi identity to the extent of abolishing the kinship (ka rukom khein kur khein kha)."<sup>29</sup> "Any Christian Khasi who attended and participated in the traditional dance was liable to be excommunicated by the denominational church to which he belonged."<sup>30</sup>

Though the avowed purpose of forming the Seng Khasi Association is basically to strengthen the Khasi culture and to retain the Khasi identity, the Seng Khasi Association is practically a revivalism against

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28. Quoted in Khasi Heritage - Introduction by Hipshon Roy.

29. Singh, Kynpham, Ki Kam bad Ki Por U Rash Mohon Roy (Jaid Nongrum), p. 30.

30. Mathur, P.R.G., The Khasis of Meghalaya (Study in Tribalism and Religion), p. 143.

Christianity, for according to the Khasis conversion is not necessary. As per the Khasi religion, if a man lives a good or a virtuous life according to the laws and norms laid down in Ka Niam (Khasi religion), he will gain salvation. Hence if one can gain salvation in his own religion, conversion to any other religion is not necessary. Sib Charan Roy stresses this point when he says: "Each man gains or loses according to his righteous deeds or vicious deeds but not by changing his religion."<sup>31</sup> But according to Christians conversion is necessary, the reason they give is that three days later after Jesus was buried in a tomb, He appeared to his disciples and said unto them: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew: 28: 18-20).<sup>32</sup>

Khasi morality is said to centre round the three commandments namely: (i) Earn Righteousness, (ii) Knowing-man Knowing-God, and (iii) Know the relationship between

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31. Roy, Sib Charan, Ka Jingsiapyni Ka Kmie Bad Ki Khun, p. 32.

32. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

one's own clan and also outside one's own clan members. (refer chapter II, p. 50).

On the other hand, Christianity holds that God is the Creator and man is the creature of God, his duty is to worship and respect his Creator and to obey God's commandments. The ethical laws of the Christians could be said to centre round the ten commandments which the Lord God had given to Moses, the Ten Commandments are : "(i) 'You shall have no other gods before Me, (ii) 'You shall not make for yourself any carved image, (iii) 'You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain, (iv) 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, (v) 'Honour your father and your mother, (vi) 'You shall not murder, (vii) 'You shall not commit adultery, (viii) 'You shall not steal, (ix) 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, (x) 'You shall not covet your neighbour's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's." (Deuteronomy: 5:17-19).<sup>33</sup> The Ten Commandment are being followed by morally good Christians since time immorial till the present day. Even Jesus Himself did not dare to change any of the Commandments which the Lord had given to Moses. When Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, he said: "Do not think that I

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33. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one little will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew: 5:17-19)."<sup>34</sup>

Of the Ten Commandments, the first four concentrated more on the unique and exceptional God of Christianity. If one rejects other gods and avoids participating in the prayer meeting and social gathering of the heretics one can easily claim that he is a good Christian. Compare these with the two commandments of the Khasi morality, the first and foremost requirement for a good Khasi is to earn righteousness, a constant demand allowing no holiday from pursuing good, theological debates about the true God and right mode of worship are replaced here by service to man, the journey to God is only through man. (refer second commandments of the Khasi morality, p. 50). So also commandment No. 5 of Christian morality stresses on honouring one's parents, reminding one of the third

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34. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

commandment of the Khasi morality namely, the demand for right and honourable relationship between not only one's entire clan but also members of other clans.

The converted Khasis have adopted a path where they can if they so wish claim to be morally good without earning righteousness, for they can refer to their newly adopted criteria of moral judgement provided by the first four of the Ten Commandments. They also insist on being identified first and foremost as Khasis and only secondarily as Christians, for they have learnt to divorce religion from their social laws and customs. The Khasi Christians as per the legends still consider themselves to be the descendants of the Seven huts, and as such their social laws are same as that of the other Khasis following their traditional religion. For example, both the Khasis Christians and non-Christians are matrilineal, where the lineage is being followed from that of the mother. But one should not overlook the fact that though the Khasi Christians consider themselves to be the children of the Seven huts, accepting all the incidents that took place and happened to the Khasis in the good old days as the Khasi legends claimed, yet their concept of the future life could not be said to be the same as that of the other Khasis, being Christians the Khasi converts have to believe that

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righteousness is a grace of God. Grace the unmerited and abundant gift of God's love and favour to man is particularly made effective in Jesus Christ for the Christians. "But the gift is not like the offence. For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many' (Romans: 5:15). Paul says: 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I but the grace of God which was with me' (1 Corinthians: 15:10)"<sup>35</sup> All the Christians believe that righteousness is a gift of God, likewise the Khasi Christians must accept his authority. But for the Khasis (non-Christians), righteousness is earned by oneself through one's own righteous deeds. "Khasi religion clearly states that this earth is a place where righteousness ought to be earned. ... so the Khasis want to live a long life here on earth so as to enable them to earn as much righteousness as they could."<sup>36</sup> This implies that the Khasis have a firm belief that righteousness is earned and is not a grace of God. Khasi Christians are in a state of dilemma, for they cannot break away from their traditional

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35. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

36. Roy, Sib Charan, Ka Niam Khasi Ka Niam Tip-Briew Tip-Blei, p. 8.

myths and legends. They abandoned Khasi religion but at the same time they still retain the Khasi custom of kinship. They claim themselves to be both the descendants of the Seven huts and also the descendants of Adam and Eve which is a contradiction. Mr. C. Lyngdoh, an advocate, in his paper The Rudiments of the Khasi Law of Inheritance, says: "Now a Khasi is a Khasi because of his religion (Niam) more than anything else. This is a great fact. To understand him, therefore, one has got to go deep down into the very root of his religion. It is religion in the sense of his 'Niam', which regulates all his thoughts and activities. Forget his religion and you will never understand a Khasi."<sup>37</sup>

According to the Christians the do's and don'ts of morality were there since the time God created man, where man (Adam) was not allowed to take the forbidden fruit. Hence the Christian concept of morality could be said to be in existence even before man (Adam) committed his first sin. But for the Khasis as has been pointed out earlier the concept of morality came into existence only when man (the children of the Seven huts) came to inhabit this earth. Otherwise, they were in a state of perfection where there was no evil, likewise -no morality. The question of

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37. Lyngdoh, C., "The Rudiments of the Khasi Law of Inheritance" quoted in Na ka Thiar Ki Long Shuwa, published by The Khasi Authors' Society, p. 53.

any commandment to guide man in his choice of the right action did not arise at all. Was this a state of affairs that Nietzsche calls Beyond Good and Evil? Let me elaborate; Nietzsche is quite emphatic that there are no absolute moral values. For him moral judgement is an illusion, he says: "There are no moral facts whatever."<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche is aware of the existence of various types of moralities in different cultures and communities which need a great deal of attention. These different types of moralities have played a very significant role in human life and human development. All moralities are of extra-moral origin and derive whatever force and standing they may have from factors and considerations which are quite immoral rather than moral in nature.

He considers morality to be a problem that needs to be investigated rather than embraced. In the Will to Power Nietzsche writes: "To see and to demonstrate the problem of morality that seems to me the new principal task."<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche says that the philosophers tried to establish 'a science of morals' but what exactly these moral philosophers wanted to establish is not the science of morals but to supply a rational foundation for morality of

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38. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, p. 55.

39. Nietzsche, Will to Power (263), p.151.

their environment, their class; their church, their climate and part of the world, etc. They have never laid eyes on the real problem of morality, for these emerge only when we compare many moralities. "In all science of morals' hitherto the problem of morality itself has been lacking: the suspicion was lacking that there was anything problematic here. What philosophers called 'the rational ground of morality' and sought to furnish was, viewed in the proper light, only a scholarly form of faith in the prevailing morality a new way of expressing it, and thus itself a fact within a certain morality, even indeed in the last resort a kind of denial that this morality ought to be conceived of as a problem - and in any event the opposite of testing, analysis, doubting and vivisection of this faith."<sup>40</sup>

Nietzsche is of the view that moralities came into existence because human beings live in a society for he takes moralities to be social phenomena, his point is that moralities as a rule are primarily the moralities of certain societies, people or group and are only secondarily the moralities of the individuals. "Morality is preceded by compulsion; indeed, it itself remains compulsion for sometime, to which one submits to, avoid disagreeable

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40. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 91.

consequences. Later it becomes custom, later still free obedience, and finally almost becomes instinct: then, everything long customary and natural, it is linked with gratification - and now is called virtue."<sup>41</sup>

In short, Nietzsche points out that it is society which is the source of all morality and all celebration of moral action. He writes: "In the tour of the many finer and courser moralities which have ruled and still rule on earth, I found certain traits regularly recurring together and bound up with one another: until at length two basic types were revealed and a basic distinction emerged. There is master morality and slave morality - I add at once that in all higher and mixed cultures attempts at mediation between the two are apparent and more frequently confusion and mutual misunderstanding between them."<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, Nietzsche is of the view that such moralities can have the character of an aristocratic code, embodying aristocratic value judgement reflecting the self-affirmative, self-conscious of the noble, powerful, high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is of the first rank, in

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41. Nietzsche, Human all too Human (1.99) quoted in Nietzsche by Richard Schacht, p. 429.

42. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 175.

contradictions to all the low, low-minded, cannon and plebian. On the other hand, they may have the character of the expression of the 'herd instinct' of the latter which at last gets its word in prescribing what the herd finds threatening and prescribing what seems advantageous to it.

'Herd morality' may thus be malice spiritualised, the subtle and favourite revenge of the spiritually limited against those less limited. In Nietzsche's words, "Moral judgement and condemnation is the favour form of revenge of the spiritually limited on those who are less so, likewise a form of compensation for their having been neglected by nature, and finally on occasion for acquiring spirit and becoming refined-malice spiritualized."<sup>43</sup>

Herd morality which Nietzsche calls 'slave morality' has had a significant influence upon the development of modern morality beyond its origin in more primitive stages of 'herd morality'. What gives slave morality its distinctive flavour and orientation, is to its re-active character in relation to the qualities possessed by the 'masters' which appear to the 'slaves' to be linked to the ascendance of the 'masters' over them and so to threaten them, which means that it is bound up with the obtaining of a rather specific sort of social situation. This situation is one in which there is a ruling group and a ruled group, and in which the former is strikingly different from and

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43. Ibid.

quite indifferent to the latter. "A morality of the rulers is, however, most alien and painful to contemporary taste in the severity of its principle that one had duties only towards one's equals; that towards being of a lower rank, toward everything alienc, one may act as one wishes or as the heart dictates' and in any case 'beyond good and evil'.<sup>44</sup> Slave morality stands in marked contrast to the sort of noble morality or master...morality which develop from the triumphant affirmation of itself on the part of a dominating group which feel itself to be on top of the world. Nietzsche writes in 'Will to Power', that the origin of moral values is the work of immoral affects and considerations. That is why Nietzsche believes that there is no morality as such, morality is a lie. Moralities merely play particular roles, and the victory of a moral ideal is achieved by the same immoral means as every victory, force, lies, slender, injustice, etc. "One must destroy morality if one is to liberate life."<sup>45</sup>

Though Nietzsche wants to destroy morality and proclaim that there are no moral facts, yet moral philosophy takes a new turn in his writings, where it is provided with new tasks, when its subservience to prevailing modes of moral interpretation is ended.

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44. Nietzsche, Ibid., p. 177.

45. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 189.

Nietzsche wants to revolutionize moral thinking. "The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality: let this be the name for that protracted secret labour which has been reserved for the subtlest, most honest and also most malicious conscience living touchstone of the soul."<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche maintains that society must not exist for society's sake, but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which a choice type of being is able to raise itself to a higher task and to a higher state of being. Nietzsche writes: "The dangerous and uncanny point is reached where the grander, more manifold, more comprehensive life lives beyond the old morality; the individual stands there reduced to his own law-giving to his own arts and stratagems for self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption."<sup>47</sup> However, Nietzsche's higher morality assumes a different aspect to which there is in principal, no limit according to his critics.

Morality of any community derives its sanctity from the other world, where the omnipotent God gives the laws and norms for men to be followed, that is why Nietzsche says that all moralities are of extra-moral origin. In

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46. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 46.

47. Ibid., p. 182.

like manner Christianity derives its moral codes from God, God's commandment becomes necessary at the very moment of man's creation. Man becomes the slave where he has not other alternative but to follow the commandments of God, failing to do so, man would be punished. As it is shown in the Bible that after man disobeyed the commandment of God by eating the forbidden fruit, he is cursed by God. To the women, He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'you shall not eat of it': curse is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life". (Genesis: 3:16-17).<sup>48</sup>

The Khasis, on the other hand, project a state of affairs where man, God and nature exist in perfect harmony without the need of any moral injunction. It is only after man settled down on earth that one could see the birth of Khasi morality.

Nietzsche's point here explains the status of morality as a discipline to curb individuality and to force

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48. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

obedience from the majority in the institutionalised religion like Christianity. Here, the commandments of life is fulfilled by a determinate canon of 'shalt' and 'shalt not'. "Anti-natural morality, that is virtually every morality that has hitherto been taught revered and preached, turns on the contrary precisely against the instincts of life - it is a now secret, now loud and impudent condemnation of these instincts. By saying 'God sees into the heart' it denies the deepest and the highest desire of life and takes God for the enemy of life. ... The saints in whom God takes pleasure is the ideal castrate. ... Life is at an end where the kingdom of God begins."<sup>49</sup>

Nietzsche rejects both ethical naturalism and ethical institutionism. He rejects Christian ethics for he is of the view that Christian dogma is untrue and it also does not have respect for human power. Christianity teaches one to submit to the will of God. "What is it that we combat in Christianity? that it aims at destroying the strong at breaking their spirit, at exploiting their moments of weariness and debility, at converting their proud assurance into anxiety and conscience trouble that it knows how to poison the noblest instincts and to infect them with diseases, until their strength, their will to power turns

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49. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, p. 45.

inward against them."<sup>50</sup>

Nietzsche writes: "Every morality is as opposed to *laissez aller*, a piece of tyranny against nature likewise against reason."<sup>51</sup> Then again, "Christianity pre-supposes that man does not know, cannot know what is good for him and what is evil: he believes in God, who alone knows. Christian morality is a command: its origin transcendental; it is beyond all criticism, ... it stands and falls with the belief in God."<sup>52</sup>

Nietzsche argues that the situation of such moralities with respect to their justification is hopeless. They cannot stand in the absence of the other world. The points of Nietzsche is that the Christian God is unbelievable and requires to be abandoned.

Some of the conclusions that follow from this I will discuss in the last chapter. Here I would only like to stress that a look at the concept of ka Hok as a central concept in the Khasi world view which not only man ought to follow but it is a law to be followed by man, God and nature shows that the charge of Nietzsche against Christian morality is not applicable to Khasi morality. For the

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50. Nietzsche quoted in The History of Western Philosophy by Russell, p. 733.

51. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 92.

52. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, p. 70.

Khasis, morality does not have its origin in the other world, it begins here in this world, hence it could not be said to be of 'extra moral origin'. Though in the beginning when man comes down to inhabit this world God commanded him to rule the earth with loving kindness and justice as has been explained earlier. But one should not forget the fact that 'earning righteousness' is a free choice of man (refer Chapter II, p.46) for when asked by God what man would like to have for his share, man answered 'to earn righteousness'.

Chapter V  
CONCLUSION

Till the emergence of Christianity in the Khasi hills, Khasi morality consisted in the conscious endeavour to be virtuous. The ideal of earning righteousness as I have explained earlier, involved in the living with ka llok, in rhythm with nature. This ideal seems to get replaced by the endeavour to make people virtuous (with the introduction of Christian values, which of course involve its theology) and consequently be called virtuous. It is tacitly implied that since the ideal of perfection is super-human, divine and transcendental, it can never be achieved by man. One can at the most approximate towards it. While an endeavour to become virtuous involves one in a constant struggle throughout one's life. The exercise of making others virtuous not only absolves the modern Khasis from the effort of becoming virtuous oneself, it also provides them with the means of dominating over others. It is no surprise to find the propagators of Christian values, adopting means such as slandering and undermining the virtues that oppose them.

The immoral means, is justified as part of the endeavour to rebaptize and, therefore, make others virtuous. If one makes oneself a Christian, and, therefore, approximates towards the ideal of 'the good man', one can always make oneself virtuous, the implication here is that

one no longer knows by oneself how to become virtuous, it is an activity acquiring learning to be what one can by himself not become.

While the observance of ka Hok needed no professional moralist in the shape of a preacher, there is now <sup>an</sup> abundance of propagators of Christian virtues today, consequently, as a result of their ability to make individuals Christians, they are able to exercise domination over others who lack either the means or the opportunities to make their fellow beings virtuous on their lines.

With the above aims of improvement of others who they perceive as immoral, they attempt to dominate, an attribute which when bared of its hypocrisy appears narrow minded and false. I cannot help but interpret this scenario with reference to Nietzsche's thesis of how the herd because of their envy, destroy the strong and the independent in society.

Nietzsche considers human beings to fall into one or the other of the two radically different and disparate groups, one very numerous and occupying "the human lowlands, and the other very small in number constituting a higher, brighter humanity, standing from above the rest."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 993.

On the other hand, there is "the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal man - the Christian."<sup>2</sup>

There are also exceptions, the fortunate accidents of great success, which are encountered in the most widely different, places and cultures. In Nietzsche's own words, "There are cases of individual success constantly appearing in the most various parts of the earth and from the most various cultures in which a higher type man does manifest itself: something which in relation to collective mankind is a sort of superman. Such chance occurrences of great success have always been possible and perhaps always will be possible. And even entire races, tribes, nations can under certain circumstances represent such lucky hit."<sup>3</sup> In Nietzsche's opinion "every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society - and it will be so again and again - a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank differences in value between man and man."<sup>4</sup>

Then again, Nietzsche says, "When ever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. The valuations and order of

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2. Nietzsche, Anti Christ, quoted in Twilight of Idols and The Anti-Christ, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 116.

3. Ibid.

4. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, quoted in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann, p. 391.

rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and a herd."<sup>5</sup> In the same vein in his book Beyond Good and Evil, he says: "Behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, too, there stand valuations, or, more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life."<sup>6</sup>

He observes that "our opinion, valuations, and tables of what is good, certainly belong among the most powerful levers in the involved mechanism of our actions."<sup>7</sup> He insists upon the value of the human herd to be instrumental and so far it is indispensable to the preservation and enhancement of life as their pre-condition. However, the overestimation of the importance of the values of the slave not only represents an error, but more over, itself can be detrimental to the enhancement of life.

The herd ensures that life goes on and establishes conditions through the exploitation of which the qualitative enhancement of life may occur. The exceptions on the other hand should they manage to escape its rule and develop their greater powers and abilities, may bring about

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5. Nietzsche, The Gay Science (116) quoted in Nietzsche by Richard Schacht, p. 352.

6. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (3) quoted in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann, p. 201.

7. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Op. cit., p. 364-365.

their enhancement, but only on the condition that their separation from the herd is sufficiently great to establish a pathos of distance, a disdain for the concerns of the herd, for without it Nietzsche contends "that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either - the craving for ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states - in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "man", the "continual" "self-overcoming of man".<sup>8</sup> This makes it clear, however, that for him the proper condition of value human beings do or may possess, requires shifting attention away from the individual as well as from mankind in general and focussing it upon the various human types which may be distinguished with respect to their value of life.

The same sort of contrast and relation is to be seen between that spiritual superiority which characterises this higher type and renders it of higher rank and value, and that attainment which consists in being civilized, for Nietzsche does not so much endow human beings with high status on his scheme of revaluation, for by itself it means only that they have been well tamed and socially

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8. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (257), quoted in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann, p. 391.

integrated, and thus turned into good 'herd animal'. So he suggests that "the meaning of all culture is the reduction of the beast of prey "man" to a tame and civilized animal, a domestic animal, then one would undoubtedly have to regard all those instincts of reaction and resentment through whose aid the noble races and their ideals were finally confounded and overthrown as the actual instrument of culture."<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche insists upon a distinction between the taming of the beast man and the breeding of a particular kind of man, where he says: "Both the taming of the beast man and the breeding of a certain species of man has been called 'improvement', ... To call the taming of an animal its 'improvement' is in our ears almost a joke."<sup>10</sup>

The refinement of 'herd morality' is commonly considered to represent the essence of 'true morality', and a high point of enlightenment, but Nietzsche takes a different view of it, when he says: "Behind the basic principle of basic moral fashion, 'moral actions are actions of sympathy for others', I see a moral impulse of fearfulness at work, which dresses itself up intellectually

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9. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, quoted in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann, p. 478.

10. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, quoted in Twilight of Idols and the Anti-Christ, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 55.

in this way. This impulse has at its highest, most important and immediate aim, the removal from life of everything dangerous which was earlier associated with it, to which end everyone is supposed to contribute and make every effort: consequently only actions conducive to the common security and feeling of security are permitted to be accorded the predicate good."<sup>11</sup>

The herd rebels against the human beings who are stronger through the reinterpretation as vices of their natural devices by asserting it to be that of the herd, the suffering and the mediocre, and it is held to be directed not only toward the establishment of the conditions of their preservation and flourishing, but also "against the strong and independent, against the fortunate and against the exceptional in relation to all of whom they feel themselves and their sense of themselves" to be imperilled."<sup>12</sup>

The morality centering upon the herd may be allowed to play a significant role in human life and have a genuine basis in fact. But if larger claims are made for them, and they are taken to involve the radical transcendence of all

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11. Nietzsche, Dawn (174) quoted in Nietzsche by Richard Schacht, p. 433-434.

12. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 274.

more mundane elements of human nature and conditions of human existence, they turn out to be among the grand illusions and errors by means of which human life has been sustained and transformed, but which can not be philosophically countenanced.

The herd animal moralities among whom I am placing the emerging Christian morality prescribed for the Khasis, aiming at a universal green pasture and happiness on earth is suggested to have exerted a profound influence in recent human history, and to stand malignantly in the way of the rise and evolution of men of great creativity through whom human life might be further enhanced.

Precepts one calls "morals" are in truth directed against individuals in the event that they have been so thoroughly schooled by morality that they know no form of felicity other than which they arrive from adherence to it. And with respect to the latter, Nietzsche reflects: "The precepts have equally little relation to the happiness and well-being of mankind which words cannot even be given any strict meaning, must less be used as guiding stars on the dark ocean of moral endeavour."<sup>13</sup>

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13. Nietzsche, Dawn (108), quoted in Nietzsche by Richard Schacht, p. 452.

Nietzsche focusses upon the possibility of modifying the prevailing notion of morality in such a way that the impersonal would no longer be considered the true identifying mark of moral action, and suggests replacing it with the idea of a type of personal action. A morality of self-mastery and self-overcoming, which is the traditional Khasi of living rightly involves restraint and prescription no less than do other form of morality. Moralities of this type too have their 'shalls' and their 'shall nots' as does every healthy morality along with all anti-natural morality. The restrictions and prohibitions they impose, however, have the significance of conditions and the possibility of attainment of states representing an enriched, strengthened, refined and more creative form of life. "In so far as morality condemns and morality and not with regard to the aims and objects of life, it is a specific error ... which has caused an unspeakable amount of harm."<sup>14</sup> But the qualification, Nietzsche attaches to this negative assessment is of great importance and should not be overlooked, when a morality condemns in such a way that one living accordingly is thereby enabled to achieve that combination of 'spirituality superiority' and heightened vitality Nietzsche associates with the

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14. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, quoted in Twilight of Idols and Anti-Christ, p. 46.

enhancement of life, his estimation of it is very different. For Nietzsche, the capacity for self-control it cultivates represents a 'power' (ka rngiew) one may employ in the free development of oneself and the very possibility of this development depends upon it.

The Khasi morality as I have tried to show was a mortality practiced by what Nietzsche calls "the noble type of man" who can determine his own values without the need of a judge or a priest to justify his values nor to set the values for him. "The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself'; it knows itself to be that first accords honor to things; it is value-creating. Everything it knows a part of itself it honors: such a morality is self-glorification."<sup>15</sup> With the pursuit of virtue according to the Khasis is the feeling of fullness resulting in the power or ka rngiew (refer Chapter III page 76-77). It is the rngiew that gives happiness and the conscious feeling of abundance to bestow on others what you possess. And as Nietzsche points out, "the noble human beings, too, help the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power. The noble human being honors himself as one who

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15. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, quoted in Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 395.

is powerful, also as one who has the power over himself."<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the morality of the noble type of man as I have pointed earlier, Nietzsche recognized another type of morality that is slave morality which he calls the herd morality. Slave morality or herd morality is the one that is being practised by those who are weak and less powerful, who cannot decide their own values for themselves and as a result their morality arises out of fear and hatred. Nietzsche says: "Slave ethics, on the other hand, begins by saying not to an 'outside' and 'other', a non-self, and that no is its creative act. ... Slave ethics requires for its inception a sphere different from and hostile to its own. Physiologically speaking, it requires an outside stimulus in order to act at all; all its actions is reaction."<sup>17</sup>

The master morality by contrast, is specified independent of external criterion, masters simply are distinguished individuals of whatever sort who impose values on the world.

The critics of the earlier masters if I might call the Khasi ancestors, that, have misinterpreted their self-

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16. Ibid.

17. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, quoted in Approaches to Ethics, p. 352.

dignity and poise. They see them as uncontrolled beasts with no moral sense. In their scheme of things, morality is meant to 'improve' mankind, but the introduction of this kind of improvement instead of improving the Khasi has weakened and made him sick, unstable, if not as Nietzsche says, animals. "It is no different with the tamed human beings whom the priest has 'improved'. In the early Middle Ages, when the Church was in fact above all a menagerie, one everywhere hunted down the fairest specimens of the 'blond beast' - one 'improved', for example, the noble Teutons. But what did such a Teuton afterwards look like when he had been 'improved' and led into a monastery? Like a caricature of human being, like an abortion he had become a 'sinner', he was in cage, one had imprisoned him behind nothing but sheer terrifying concepts. ... There he lay now, sick, miserable, filled with ill-will towards himself; full of hatred for the impulse towards life; full of suspicion of all that was still strong and happy. In short, a 'Christian' ... In physiological terms: in the struggle with the beast, making it sick can be the only means of making it weak."<sup>18</sup>

A facet of ka Hok is the clear emphasis that the ancients stressed on thinking about not only the outside

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18. Nietzsche, Twilight of Idols, quoted in Twilight of Idols and the Anti-Christ, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, p. 56.

world, but more importantly man's self-awareness and self-evaluation.

The Khasi elders are always insisting that if man follows the path of ka Hok, he has nothing to worry about, for not only God is pleased with him but nature as well, is in harmony with man. When all the three are in harmony, man lives a happy and prosperous life here on earth.

Once Man was in the right path,  
That was before the bull's teeth fell down;  
The paddy corns were stout and healthy,  
A handful of rice sufficed the day;  
In the days gone by.<sup>19</sup>

But if man neglects ka Hlok, nature also suffers disaster. R.T. Rymbai refers to the 1887 earthquake which hit Shillong very badly, he says that ka Meiramew or the mother earth had to cry till it cracked because it was hurt for its children have turned away from the path of righteousness.

The Khasis believe that man, animal and nature have their role to play according to ka Hok and ka Hlukum can be roughly translated into English as 'a commandment', the dictionary meaning of the term 'commandment' is 'a command', 'an edict' or 'a divine commandment'. The

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19. Tham, Soso, Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep, p. 10.

biblical meaning of the term commandment is any of the ten commandments of the laws given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai (refer Chapter IV page 128 ). To bring out the full implication of the Khasi term ka Hukum, I would like to bring out its similarities as well as its dissimilarities with that of the biblical term commandment. Strictly according to the Bible, when one talks of the commandment, it means any of the Ten commandments. The Ten commandments for the Christians come only after the Fall of Man. But before the fall of Man, the first command of God to Man was to stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is a negative commandment. The Bible says that first of all God created the heaven above and the earth below, after which He created all the other creatures both animate and inanimate. Lastly, God created Man, that is, Adam, male and female. He created them and kept them in the garden of Eden. In the garden God grew trees that are good for food. Besides other trees, there were also two different types of trees, one is the tree of life and the other is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man is allowed to eat freely from all the other trees but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I quote: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for the day you eat of it you shall die." (Genesis: 2:16-

17)).<sup>20</sup> That was the first command that God had ever given to man which was given only after the creation of man. But if ka Hukum is taken in the sense of a commandment, it could be said that God's commandment to man is also given only after the creation of man. But the difference between the two doctrines is that while the Christians claimed that the Ten Commandments are given only after the Fall of Man, the Khasis claimed that the commandments were given to them before man could commit his shortcomings (refer Chapter II, p. 45). Ka Hukum if it is taken in the sense of the commandment it could be said that it was given to man at the time when he came down to inhabit this earth, for according to the Khasi belief, man was created in heaven and stayed therein with God, during that time no commandment was given to him. But if ka Hukum is taken as a law, it is said that the law was already there even before God created man. For with ka Hukum (law) man was created, and as such had there been no Hukum man could not have come into existence. Ka Hukum originated from God, Ka Hok kat kum ka Hukum which could be interpreted as the outward manifestation of God Himself'. God is not visible but only ka Hukum is visible. "So when we are addressing God we are addressing ka Hukum."<sup>21</sup>

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20. The New King James Version, Holy Bible.

21. Lyngdoh, R.S., quoted in The Khasi World View, A Conceptual Exploration by Sujata Miri, p. 44.

Though I have tried to list a few virtues in the first chapter of the thesis, I have not really found a great deal of abstraction about what must be the great virtues for all the Khasis. This is because as I have tried to show all virtues are contained implicitly in the demand of pursuing righteousness. In that sense it serves as its single core perception.

The Khasis in their communion with God, asked for ka Hukum from God or ka Blei Nonghukum (she-god). Ka Hukum which the Khasis asked from Ka Blei Nonghukum could not be said to be the commandment or the law, but actually the signs and symbols of the agreement or the disagreement of ka Blei in their demands. The Khasis make it a rule of life to ask for ka Hukum from ka Blei Nonghukum before actually performing any ritual or ceremony.

The members of the kur asked ka hukum from ka Blei Nonghukum in any of their demands according to their needs and requirements. The procedure of asking ka hukum is through the cowries or the breaking of the eggs and the signs are shown accordingly, the signs could be either positive or negative. The positive signs means ka Blei Nonghukum is in agreement with the members of the kur, otherwise not.

At this juncture, I would like to stress that the

Khasi concept of ka hukum is interlinked with other concepts, such as ka Hok, U Blei, etc. The Khasis are fond of joining one word with the other to form a phrase, hence when one word is talked about it is mostly combined with the other word that are related to the former and a phrase is formed accordingly. Likewise the concept of ka Hukum is being combined or connected with other words that are related to it. For example, 'U Blei-ka Hukum', or 'Ka Hukum-Ka Hok', etc. As ka Hok is a central concept in Khasi morality, ka Hukum is a central concept in Khasi religion, for each and every religious ceremony is being conducted according to ka Hukum. Here one can find the impact of religion on the morality of the Khasis, but one is not inferior to the other. A person who follows ka Hok according to ka Hukum, conducts his life meticulously in his relations not only towards his other fellow beings but towards God as well. His Rngiew is strong and when he dies his soul will go to the house of God, he is a man who upholds ka Hukum. The idea of ka Hok or righteousness originates along with the creation of this world, mother-earth and man. This concept is not arrived at by man's intellect rather, it is grounded in man's soul.

In conclusion, let me repeat: the entire endeavour of making others moral, what Nietzsche called the 'breeding of a definite race and species which basically is a reaction

against the master values is shared by the Christian Khasis who wish to improve the so-called "the immoral primitives, for example, while the ancient Khasis stressed and lauded the possession of ka Rngiew, today in its place, the Christians applaud the cause of slavish mentality and submissive postures.

In the traditional morality also, the external standards, social and religious, demanding duty are part of the Khasis' moral consciousness. No writers appear to conclude with confidence that the primitive tribesman pursued duty for fear of spirits, ancestors and other types of external forces, alone. Undoubtedly, though some Khasi intellectuals identify ka Hok with ka Hukum, I do not think that thereby they are offering a theonomous interpretation of the origin of moral virtues. The concept of ka Hukum appears complete and conclusive, it would prevail with or without divine intervention. Calling to mind the principle of rta in the Rig Veda, the moral system of the Khasis *was not created, but prior to creation, rta is also a cosmic law, likewise* whereas a result of moral choice ka Hok in one sense brings man, God and nature together, for it is and ought to be not merely the divine will but the law of all existence. The detailed discussion of the Khasi legends in the Chapter II, I think bears these out quite clearly.

A virtuous man in the Khasi scheme of things had an

instinct for a healthy self-preservation as his world had a healthier and higher atmosphere. With the introduction of the new morality what he has got is alcoholism. This consequence brings out the confusing amalgamation of the two kinds of morality in the present Khasi society, one could say that modern education should include education of moral values but when to such contrary ideals, that of the 'herd' and the 'master' remain in the vision of the planners of education, how will the society through education seek to preserve and promote its values?. Let me add, so far as serious dialogue between the upholders of the two different kinds of visions has not even started. Then again, the Khasi insistence on the inter-relatedness between the concepts of ka Hok and ka Hukum amounts to saying 'yes' to life, a summation which is the manifestation of the strong and hard, and as a matter of fact assessment of life.

Doubts can be expressed about what course of action in a particular situation is to be followed, here the role of reason as well as reference to authority (the elders, for instance) is recommended. The Khasis hold that the guide of man is not only his right opinion or conscience, but the elders (ki basan), "We should have faith in our ancestors for faith is the foundations of inspiration but it must be an enlightened one based on more intimate

knowledge about them and about ourselves as well. Such knowledge is the everlasting source of strength."<sup>22</sup>

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22. Costa, G., 'The Origin of the People', quoted in Ka Syngkhong Jingtip, Vol. III, December, 1960. Published by the Khasi Authors Society, Shillong.

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## APPENDIX

The earliest attempt to christianize the Khasis was made in 1813 by Dr. William Carey, a Baptist Missionary who set up his mission in Serampur. The first Hindu to be converted into Christianity at Serampur was Krishna Chandra Pal. In 1813, Krishna Chandra Pal was sent to the Khasi Hills by Dr. William Carey to preach the Gospel of God to the Khasi people. Krishna Chandra Pal arrived at Sylhet on the 20th March, 1813, and on the 7th April, 1813, he left for Pandua, a small town situated at the base of the Khasi Hills, now a part of Bangladesh. Once upon a time Pandua was a big shopping centre where the Khasis and the plains men exchanged their goods, that is where Krishna Chandra Pal met the Khasi people. At Pandua, he could baptize seven persons whom of two were Khasia, U Duwan and U Anna of Shella village. After a stay of eight months in Pandua, Krishna Chandra Pal left for Serampur. For a long period of time no conversion took place, though Dr. William Carey's translation was made available to the Khasis, but it was of no avail since the translation was written in Bengalee scripts, it may be noted here that the Khasis did not have their own scripts.

In 1829, James Rea a devoted young Christian from Scotland came and settled down in Gauhati for the purpose of spreading Christianity among the Khasis, the Garos and

the Manipuris. He went to preach Christianity in some villages of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. But he did not succeed in converting the Khasis.

The first missionary who settled down in Khasi Hills was Alexander B. Lish who was also sent by Dr. William Carey in 1832. He settled down in Cherrapunjee and worked among the Khasis. He prepared some books and he also translated the Gospel of Matthew into Khasi. He established three schools, one in Cherrapunjee, one in Mawmluh and one in Mawsmai. Though in the beginning many appreciated his work, his six years labour was in vain because the students quit the schools one after another. He left in 1838 without making a headway. As a result the Baptist Mission of Serampur stopped its missionary work in the Khasi Hills. It is believed that even U Duwan and U Anna went back to their original religion.

Rev. Jacob Tomlin B.A., a Presbyterian Missionary came to the Khasi Hills in 1837. His coming to the Khasi Hills was accidental. He was on his way to China but he stayed back in Cherrapunjee for nine months. When he went back home he suggested to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission to establish its mission in Cherrapunjee. In 1841, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission sent Thomas Jones to Cherrapunjee. On the 22nd June, 1841, Sir Thomas Jones along with his wife

arrived at Cherrapunjee. He first learnt Khasi language in order to strengthen his missionary work. He was convinced that unless the Khasi people know how to read and write it would be useless to talk to them about the Gospel and the Word of God. He taught some Khasis to read and write, he also structured Khasi alphabets after the Roman alphabets. He chose the scripts that are suitable to fit in the Khasi dialect on the basis of the dialectical morphology and phonetics. It was the beginning of the written Khasi literature. Sir Thomas Jones is remembered with fondness by the Khasis as 'the father of the Khasi alphabets'. The Khasi scholars are quite satisfied with the alphabets structured by Sir Thomas Jones though there had been slight modifications and the introduction of some more alphabets.

Sir Thomas Jones after structuring the Khasi alphabets, translated a part of the Lord's Prayer into Khasi, the prayer runs as follows :

Our Father who art in heaven  
Hallowed by Thy name  
Thy kingdom come  
Thy will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

He also translated Rhodd Mam (Mother's gift) from Welsh into Khasi, a book which contains the teachings of

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1. Jones, G. Angel, Ka History Jong Ka Balang, p. 20.

Christianity. He also established three schools, one in Cherrapunjee, one in Mawmluh and one in Mawsmi. Every morning he would call the children and read to them the Lord's prayer, he also taught them how to read and write. The elders used to come to his place to watch what he was doing out of curiosity. Thus, he got the opportunity to talk to them as well though in an indirect way.

In 1854, on the recommendation of the Governor General of India, the Government gave a grant of Rs. 50/- per month to the mission for the development of the educational institutions. This helped in establishing other schools in the other places of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Christianity is spreading so much that every year the Khasis have been converting into Christianity. That in the year 1891 the number of Christians in Khasi and Jaintia Hills was 6862. All these Christians belonged to the Presbyterian denomination.

The Roman Catholic Missionaries also like the Presbyterian missionaries worked for the educational advancement of the Khasi people. At present the number of Catholic educational institutions are comparatively higher than that of the Presbyterian educational institutions.

Besides Presbyterian and Roman Catholic, there are other Christian sects belonging to the other denominations

in the different parts of Khasi and Jaintia hills. The other denominations were the then Anglican Church, which was established in 1841 in Shillong. The Unitarian Church was founded by Hajom Kissor Singh in 1887, this church belongs neither to Christianity nor to Khasi religion, it based its foundation on the One True God whom it considers to be the Creator. It propagates love and service for mankind. During the reformation of the Sixteenth Century, those who rejected the dogma of the Trinity (the conception of God as three persons in One - Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and stressed the unity of God were called the 'Unitarians'. Such theological controversy about the doctrine of the Trinity plays almost no part in the lives of the modern Unitarians. But when the Unitarians say they are Christians they are proclaiming their loyalty to the life and teachings of Jesus, yet they do not believe that Jesus is the son of God, they see Jesus as a man born in the normal way and subject to the inevitable limitations of genuine humanity not as an exclusive incarnation of God but as a profound revealer of spiritual light and life and love. But when Unitarians disagree with Jesus or with the teachings of the Bible they are prepared to say so openly, and not fudge the issue, because they believe that such honesty is important. Unitarians reject the label 'Christian' because they associate it with narrowness and

bigotry. Some if forced to wear a label, would prefer the word 'Universalist', wishing to stress their reliance on the complementary truths of the world's great faiths. Others would call themselves humanist, wishing to stress that religion must be concerned with human needs, with compassion and justice in this world, with the awakening within people a valiant determination to bless and prosper the human enterprise. Their motto is 'seek the truth and serve humanity'.

Christ National Church was founded in 1921, Christ Immanuel was founded in 1931, Church of Jesus Christ was founded in 1932, Seventh Day Adventist established in Shillong in 1937, Church of Christ was founded in 1940, Turoi Gospel was founded in 1941, All in One Church was founded in 1955 and Pentecostal Mission was established in 1968.

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