

## Khasi Renaissance

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When we speak of Khasi Renaissance, we may be reminded of the Great Renaissance, the revival of learning, the rebirth which took place in Europe. Several scholars explain that the Renaissance of Europe is not just the revival of learning, but the entrance of Europe into a fresh stage of energy, an intellectual consciousness and an emotional attachment to one's own culture. D.H. Lawrence observes,

*....The human spirit was then like a butterfly which bursts from the chrysalis into the air. A whole new world lies about it. The narrow, devouring little world of the caterpillar, has disappeared, all heaven and all earth flash around.....  
.....Men do not live just to fight and conquer and capture possessions ..... So Europe begins to weave and work, instead of fighting or fasting or making crusades..... Men shake themselves even more and more free..... and against the slowly rising flood of commerce moves the almost invisible power of learning, wisdom and understanding.. 1*

Strictly speaking, this paper may not be able to bring in a comparison or a similarity between Khasi Renaissance and the Great Renaissance of Europe, but broadly speaking, it may be able to examine some of the broad and important developments in Khasi History which can take us to the period of the Khasi Renaissance.

The year 1841 is memorable in the history of the Khasi people when the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists Foreign Mission Society arrived in Khasi Hills. As Hugh Morris Writes :

*....For several reasons a strong desire had arisen for a Missionary Society of our own. On the 31st Januray 1840, at the Rose Chapel, Liverpool, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists Foreign Missionary Society was formed. Before the end of the year, the Society's first Missionary, Thomas Jones of Barriew, Montogomeryshire sailed for India, arriving on the Khasi Hills June 22,1841 .2*

The advent of the presbyterian Mission at Sohra coincided with the Political Agency (1835-1853).

It was Thomas Jones, an able literary genius who was responsible in reducing the Khasi language to writing and after fitting the English alphabet to it, wrote books and opened schools. The work of the Presbyterian Mission was later expanded by other Missionaries in due course. In fact, it prepared the growth of the Church through Evangelisation and Education. Though Missions like the Roman Catholics and others established themselves in Khasi Hills, yet we can say that the Presbyterian Mission did the pioneering works which, to a large extent also made it responsible for a variety of changes given to the people.

The Renaissance spirit among the Khasis lay dormant for quite some time but the embers simmered slowly beneath till it finally erupted. If we are to examine the factors responsible for the Khasi Renaissance, perhaps we may fail in our duty if we forget to mention the political subjugation and ascendancy of the British in Khasi Hills as one of the roots which fomented the spirit. The struggle of the Khasis against the English was the result of a regard of the Khasis of the value of freedom and the value of their land. Freedom, democracy and local autonomy have been the life blood of the people, they are a living symbol of the people till to day. The people always refer to "Ka ri Umsnam" (Land Where blood has been shed). A Khasi is sensitive, he loves his land dearly because he has bought it or has been able to retain it through hard struggle and shedding of blood by his forefathers.<sup>3</sup> When the people found that freedom was at stake, when they found that democracy was squeezed in, they understood that they should gird up their loins to face the perils of the time.

The "Jayantia Rebellion", as the English called it, embodied the consciousness of the people against the venality and the injustice of the English Courts and English officials, and the insulting behaviour of the English over the traditional religion. Leaving aside the political grievances, the Pnars had become sensitive at the destruction of the sacred grooves and the desecration of the sacred pools. Besides, the progress of Christian enlightenment had the effect of frightening the Khasis professing Khasi religion. They felt that the native Christians no longer had any veneration for these sacred places.<sup>4</sup> They could foresee the penetration not only of foreign rule but foreign belief which could be a threat to the survival of their culture. However, the interference of the Police with

the religious ceremony at Jalong added fuel to the flame of religious sentiment. When religion and culture have been attacked, the people reacted sharply even at the cost of their lives. Though it was ruthlessly suppressed, yet, the spirit of "Consciousness" and "Enquiry" of the people took its own course.

Against the political subjugation which kept the people within the unwanted enclosure, reference may be made of the political development of Shillong ever since the transfer of the administrative Centre from Sohra which fanned the Khasi Renaissance. Shillong became the political centre and the backbone of the Khasi society, it became the centre of Khasi consciousness for the upliftment of the people, in Education, Culture, Economy, Political insight and understanding. The progress of Education brought in changes of great dimensions which quickened the pace of the Khasi Renaissance. There was the emergence of "*Khasi middle class*", which, we can say, was responsible in shaping and moulding the Khasi Thought. Added to this, British administration set up an incentive to 'migration', either to Shillong or other urban centres for White Collar jobs. It led to the flow of population from the rural areas to the urban areas, in particular to Shillong, it also led to the flow of business people like the Marwaris who were able to capture the extensive network of commercial services. It created new types of *works like those of the cobblers, scavengers and others, not liked by the local Khasi people.* Colonel Bihar observed :

*With the Khasias, Government employment is not popular, the people are independent in spirit and prefer agricultural and trading pursuits to desk work, and under circumstances, situations in the various offices, are filled by the natives of Bengal.*<sup>5</sup>

Migration in the long run created a number of problems which went a long way in making the people conscious of their identity and culture. Migration brought in residential segregation. Local people were inclined to stay in places like Mawkhar, Malki and others, but evidently enough, there was great interaction with the other people from outside. This resulted in the change of life style, food habits, knowledge of hygiene and sanitation and the like. The growth of population also brought in urban problems in Shillong like housing and accomodation and thereby brought in competition between the local Khasi people and other people. There was probably a tendency to bring in an ethnic conflict.

Education broadened the horizon of knowledge of the Khasi people. Westernisation has influenced the social life and yet there is

Christianity which has permeated almost the entire life of the Khasi society. With Christianity came Christian influence, Christian Ethics, the existence of a Christian Khasi Community within the Khasi Society. With Christianity again came the division of the Khasi locality into two sections - "U Skul" (literally meaning the School) and "U Shnong" (literally meaning the locality) which when further explained "U Skul" signifies the Khasi Christians and "U Shnong", the Heathens, as the English called them or the 'Khasis who still profess the Khasi traditional religion'. The enclosure of the Mission Compound as a "safe area" for the Christians only must have created a superiority complex of the Christians over the non-Christians which in the long run, affected the feelings of the Khasi Christian and non-Christians alike, that is, those who had a love for their Culture and a love for their race.

It was amidst such crisis, that the Literacy Movement was started by Babu Jeebon Roy. He opened the Entrance School in Shillong, he constantly encouraged his Khasi friends to tour outside his land for better knowledge and understanding. It was Jeebon Roy who, for the first time, realised the need of a Printing Press in Shillong as we understand from his letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam :

*The want of a Press in these Hills was a great drawback in the way of developing our vernacular language. Indeed there are few religious books and pamphlets that have been published by our kind and philanthropic Missionaries for Primary Schools etc. But there are no publications which may serve as general reading for the majority of our people'.<sup>6</sup>*

In continuation to the above letter, he added :

*In order to give work to those Khasi girls who have received some education and are willing to earn their livelihood and would not at the same time feel disposed to accept any kind of menial service, I propose to open a training class where they will be taught in the art of printing gratis but will also receive a small allowance for their maintenance".*

Babu Jeebon Roy was the first Khasi to encourage Khasi women to come out of their shell by taking his own daughter to Ri Khasi Press to work. J. J. M. Nichols Roy who was then a young student remarked :

*When I was a student at Mawkhar I saw Babu Jeebon Roy made his daughter work at Ri Khasi Press. That was the time when the honourable Khasi ladies felt embarrassed to do such a work . . . . . This he has done to encourage other women . . . . He has the vision and the foresightedness to lead the Khasis".<sup>7</sup>*

In a word, the birth of a script among the Khasis, made the people literate, it led to a wider contact in the realm of ideas and opinion. But the Ri Khasi Press established in March 1896 accelerated the increase in the number of books for a wider circulation. It thus gave a boost to the expression of Khasi thought, Khasi philosophy with the printing Press at their disposal.

Added to this, it was Jeebon Roy who for the first time realised the need and the importance to read and understand Bengali language which would be useful not only for trading purposes but to be able to understand Indian Classics as well. Babu Jeebon Roy was hurt with the remark that "The Khasis have no brain to pass the Entrance Exams". That is why he dedicated to the cause of spreading literacy far and wide by establishing schools, writing books and teaching the people to develop their inborn talent and capacity. His first son Sibcharan Roy was the first Khasi to pass the Entrance Exam in 1881. Through hard work, and a big heart, Jeebon Roy was able to establish the Entrance School in Shillong. We can understand this from the letter from Hormu Roy Diengdoh to the Editor of the "*Bengalee*".<sup>8</sup>

*It appears that our influential Welsh Missionaries in Khasi Hills had no intention or were too slow to give a higher education to the Khasis. But in the face of all discouragement and hindrances our Babu Jeebon Roy, retired Assistant Commissioner, a self educated Khasi fought courageously and persistently for opening the Government High School at Shillong for educating the Khasi boys...."*<sup>9</sup>.

When the Mission High School was established, Rev. T. Jones, a Welsh Missionary stationed at Mawkhar was able to persuade Babu Jeebon Roy to send his sons and some other Khasi boys to the Mission School. The first boy to pass the Entrance Exam from the Mission School was *Hari Charan Roy*, the second son of Babu Jeebon Roy himself. The Mawkhar Bangla School was also started by Babu Jeebon Roy. In his attempt for propagating literacy Jeebon Roy was very much helped by *Babu Bonrai*.

Babu Jeebon Roy also wanted to see that Khasi books, should be published. He realised the need of putting in writing all the teachings of Khasi religion. After retirement, Jeebon Roy published "*Ka Niam jong ki Khasi*" in 1897 after which, other publications flowed from his pen. Besides, the Ri Khasi Press had helped in spotting some of the language errors brought in by the missionaries and correcting the same errors through proper training of the written language. Sir Charles Elliot, Chief Com-

missioner of Assam in his Proceedings in June 1884 remarked :

*The Welsh Missionaries in Khasi Hills are an old established body, and they have unfortunately proceeded in the wrong track. Not only are the Khasi religious and educational books printed in the Roman Character, but the translation is so barbarous and uncouth that it requires the reader to learn Welsh in order to know how the words are meant to be pronounced.*

Jeebon Roy had set up a tradition well composed for his followers to continue. The love for one's own culture, religion, customs and traditions was sown deep and after two years of the great earthquake, it led to the birth of the Seng Khasi, a Socio-Cultural Organisation, on the 23rd November 1899. The Seng Khasi was formed with various aims and objects :

(1) "to foster a sense of brotherhood among the Khasis who still retain their Socio-Cultural and religious heritage.

(2) "to create consciousness of God, the Sovereign Lord, the Almighty Creator, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient.

(3) "to earn righteousness through service and to respect one's own fellowmen with the sense of humanity and dignity.

(4) "to work for the mental and physical development of the fellow members and to regulate the way of living and moral conduct.

(5) "to work for the advancement of education.

(6) "to encourage national sports like archery, cultural dances and other social festivals.

(7) "to undertake welfare and development activities, such as maintenance of Cremation ground for those who dispose their dead bodies according to tradition and religion".

In a word, the Seng Khasi tried to bring all Khasis to the same platform, to awaken Khasi thought from the deep slumber of myriad changes and to love what belongs to a Khasi.

The great awakening or the literary Renaissance of the Khasis was stimulated by the great intellectuals of the time whose writings, most of which have shaped and moulded Khasi literature till date. Their writings bear the image and heritage of the Khasis, they bear testimony to the social upheavals within the Society and thus, they also paved the way how the thwarting dangers be averted. It was in 1890 that Khasi thought entered the world of the printed page in the real sense of the term. Babu Jeebon Roy, Rabon Singh Kharsuka and Radhon Singh Berry Kharwanlang are considered till to day as the "fountain" and the "stepping stone" of Khasi literature. These three writers have given splendid motion to the ideals of everything Khasi and have taught a Khasi to turn

away from every blind belief which may harm the Khasi Society. When Khasi thought was receding backward under alien influence, it was Rabon Singh who was the first Khasi writer to initiate a new line of thinking. It was Jeebon Roy who initiated the Literary Movement and it was Radhon Singh Berry who brought back "ka akor Khasi" (Khasi manners) to its feet again. This was also the time when William Williams, inspite of being a Christian Missionary, came out with his paper "U Nongkit Khubor" in 1889. Besides, Christian writings, this paper included other writings like those by Morkha Joseph, Rabon Singh and others, which reflected the spirit of the age. More Khasi newspapers were born, books, dramas, poems and other writings were published.

U Rabon Singh Lyngdoh became a Christian convert, an Elder of Mawkhar Presbyterian Church, who dedicated himself much for the cause of the Christian Mission work. Yet, it was this same man, the convert and the Elder of the Church who tried to find out the truth of Khasi religion. We are told that he felt insulted when insulting remarks were made by some of the missionaries on Khasi religion. Again we are told that some Missionaries encouraged Rabon Singh in his search for the truth, the search for what was correct, and yet there were other Missionaries who were very much against the attempt of Rabon Singh. But he persisted. In 1893 he published "Ka Niam Khasi" in "U Nongkit Khubor". Other aspects of Khasi religion were also published - Ka Phur ka Siang (Religious ceremonies), Ka Nguh Meikha (Festival of Father's Mother) and others. After some years, "Ka kitab Niam Khain ki Khasi" and "Ka kitab Jingphawar" were published. Jeebon Roy was stimulated by the writings of Rabon Singh. He wrote "Ka Niam Khasi" (Khasi Religion) and "Ka Kitab Shaphang U Wei U Blei" (The book about One God). Other Khasi writers like Sib Charan Roy, Dr. H. Lyngdoh, Soso Tham felt inspired through such writings. Thus Sib Charan Roy published 'Ka Niam Ki Khasi' (Ka Niam Tip Briew Tip Blei) in 1919, 'Ka Jing ia kyrsiew ia ki Khasi', 'Ka Jingrwai Niam ki Khasi' and others. He was closely associated with the Brahma Samaj. Sib Charan Roy was also a lover of the Hindu Classics. Dr. H. Lyngdoh published 'Ka Pomblang Nongkrem bad ka Thang Syiem Sohra' (1928) and 'Ka Niam ki Khasi' (1937). Even Colonel Gurdon found a base to write about the Khasis and their religion in his book "The Khasis" first published in 1914 through the writings of Rabon Singh and the other writers of the time.<sup>9</sup>

Radhon Singh Berry was a christian convert, whose first two children's names Hopingwell and Overlin are found in the register of the Presbyterian Church, Mawkher (1882).<sup>10</sup> Along with other Khasis, Radhon Singh felt perturbed at the burial of Khasi Christians which might lead to the extinction of religious Cremation of the Khasis. The people, according to Radhon Singh Berry, might forget it in course of time, they might even forget the social and cultural norms of every day life, as a result of which their whole being might become disrupted. He thus published "Ka Jingsneng Tymmon Part I" (1902) and 'Ka Jingsneng Tymmon Part II' (1903). He advised and exhorted through the couplets in the above two books how to eat, how to live, how to behave, and so on. In a word, they form till to day the moral code of conduct for the Khasis. He also had the talent of a composer. He composed as many as 35 songs in "Ka Kot Jingrwai Ka Senglang Mane Wei Blei" of the Unitarian Church first established by Hajom Kissor Singh on the 18th September 1887.<sup>11</sup> He also composed many songs for the Brahma Samaj.<sup>12</sup> According to Radhon Singh Berry, manners could give dignity to the giver and the receiver as well,. In a word, his writings have been a "mirror" to look at oneself, his society, his land and how through truth and righteousness one could reach God.

Khasi Renaissance created an awareness to know and understand History and its value, Geography and why one should know the Geography of one's land, and also to know the history of the Khasi people in the context of India at large. For wider circulation and understanding, better interaction and exposure "*the History of India*" in Khasi by Jeebon Roy was published in 1900. Besides, '*Ka Laitkynsew*' by Rabon Singh was published in 1903, '*Ka History Jong Ka Ri Khasi*' by B. K. Sarma was published in 1914, '*The Short Account of Cherrapunjee*' by Dr. H. Lyngdoh was published in 1933, '*Ka History Ka Ri Assam*' by Theodore Cajee was published in 1936 and '*Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng*' by Dr. H. Lyngdoh was published in 1937. Ondromony Kharngap Kynta published '*ka Geography Khasi Part I*' in 1925 where he wrote not only general Geography but the Geography of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, '*Ka Geography Mathematical and Physical*' which was published in 1932.

There was undoubtedly an intellectual response which further accelerated the spirit of the Khasi Renaissance and almost every contribution made, speaks of the Cultural heritage of the Khasis and that this traditional Culture should be well preserved. Though

space will not permit to mention all the Khasi intellectuals and their contributions, reference may be made to 'Ka Kitab' and 'U Kausik' by Hari Chandra Roy Dkhar, 'Ka Kitab iathuh khana shaphang Ka Damayanti bad U Nol', 'U Khasi Hyndai', 'Jingrwai Ki Khyannah Skul Seng Khasi' by Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum, 'Ka Rynkap' (Khasi Poems) by Morkha Joseph Chyne, 'Ka Myntoi' or 'Ka Kot Boit' (Poetry) and others by Amjad Ali, 'Ki Sur Khasi' and others by Nihon Singh Wahlang, Dinonath Roy Dkhar's dramas 'U Arbnai', and 'U Tipsngi', and 'Ka Sromotimai lane Ka Hok', 'Ki khatatang jong U Barim' and others by H. Elias Sohlia, 'U Mawpun Jingtjip', 'Ka Drama U Mihsngi' and others by Mondon Bareh, 'Ka Bor' (In fluence)jong ki Kynthei' and others by Mrs. Lariammon Khongwir (Vol I No. 2. Rymphang 1937), 'Sawdong ka Lyngwiar Dpei', 'Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang' and others by Primrose Gatphoh, 'Ka Syrwet U Khasi bad ka Christian Era' by Mrs. Sidney Tham and many more others. From all the writings contributed by different Khasi writers we may deduce that there has always been a leaning towards Khasi way of thinking, inspite of the influence of outside forces. Yet, in creative writings, dramas in particular, some scholars opine that

*there is no indication of any particular faith and belief in God in the plays.....traditionalists' plays portray the traditional faith and belief of their Gods. Whereas evolutionists..... bend towards the Christian way of faith and belief in God and the two brothers Dinonath, Hari Chara or perhaps Peace Roy Pariat, though belonged to the traditional Khasi families bend towards the Hindu way of faith and belief.*<sup>13</sup>

Whatever might be the bend of thought, Creative Writings portray the society, the problems of the changing society, the value of one's own Culture and identity and its upkeep. This had, however, contributed much in fomenting the spirit of the Khasi Renaissance.

From among the writers and thinkers, the name of Soso Tham stands unparalleled. He conveys in his works a powerful vision of a Khasi. In him we find not only the contribution of creative genius, not only the stimulation of man's interest in something divine in nature, but in his writings we find a challenging task in diving deep into the hard facts of life and in presenting to his countrymen a new thought typical of its own. It goes beyond doubt, that the age of Soso Tham has been an age of crisis for the Khasi people, literary, socio-cultural, or political. There have been attacks all around, yet there has also been an intellectual response. Soso Tham was able to depict his thought in the most lucid and forceful

language. “*Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep*”, published in 1936, ... is an exposition of the cultural, religious, political and social heritage of the Khasis. It exposes in full measure the true belief based on legendary, mythological and historical background. The theme of this great work is derived from the epic genesis of the Khasi race, right from the house of God down to the Golden age, then on to the period of the Fall of Man., when God made a sacred promise to man, right down to the present generation. The thought and imagination of the poet are so excellent that the work can be considered as one of the works of mankind. Had the poet lived a little longer, perhaps, he might have developed this theme into a mighty epic poetry and he might have visualised the emergence of a puissant and nascent Khasi race in the mainstream of Indian national and cultural life<sup>14</sup>.

In a word, “*Ki Sngi Barim U Hynniew Trep*” which contains ten chapters covering the history of the people from the beginning till the end, portrays the social and political culture of the people, the economy, the belief and the hope of the people. Soso Tham gave to the people a “*Philosophy*”, so wide and varied in its concept that it covers the whole being of “a Khasi”. His *Religious Philosophy* tells of ‘Kawei Ka Niam’ (One Religion), his *Social Philosophy* speaks of the Clan, the womb, the sweet music in ceremonies and festivals, his *Economic Philosophy* speaks of the man to defend, to feed, to earn and the woman to be the Custodian, his *Ethical Philosophy* speaks of Khasi Ethical Code, how a Khasi should be brought in his family, his clan, his social festivities, in war or peace, and, his *Political Philosophy* speaks of Democracy, the Syiem, Equality, and due punishment for the bad and the wicked. The Philosophy given by Soso Tham tickles the curiosity of the people and opened their eyes wide enough to unvail the truth and the reality, to find and to investigate, to question and to weigh, to ponder and to think. It throws a challenge to his contemporaries. It permeates every strata of Khasi thought, be it Christian or non-Christian. The whole Khasi race was in danger then. Perhaps, this fear had penetrated the Christian Church. They realised that steps should be taken to ensure that the society should live, that the customs and traditions should be preserved and well maintained. Khasi Renaissance created such an impact on the Khasi Christians that some of them took the lead in making the Christian Church indigeneous in character. J. J. M. Nichols Roy and W. Mohan

Roy laid the foundation of the Church of God, Rajani Kharkongor and Sati Raja Syiem of Myllem laid the foundation of the Church of Christ. It was also during such a time that the Presbyterian Church established 'Ka Khein Seng Komiti' in 1931 called 'Ka Komiti Sang' (a Committee for looking into the Social taboos) till 1934. In this Committee the members were chosen by the Assembly. From 1935 the above Committee has been called 'Ka Komiti Khein Sang'. Each Presbytery would send or depute three members to the Committee. The Assembly would also send its own representatives that is, from 1935 till 1944. From 1945 till 1948 the members of the Khein Sang Komiti were the Marriage Registrars and members chosen by the Assembly. From 1949-1970, special members were selected by the Synod. The work of the Khien Sang Committee at present is disposed of by an Ad Hoc Committee convened from time to time, according to the need. 15

Speaking of the Political side of the Khasi Renaissance, the Colonial period inspired Khasi rulers to be one and united. The Syiems, the Sirdars, the Lyngdohs or the Dolois became aware of the need of a unified political platform, from which there could be a united understanding and guidance of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The seed of this political awareness was sown, though it took some time to attain maturity. The Khasis were conscious of their rights and privileges, they were conscious of the preservation of their social and cultural background and they were conscious of preserving their identity. Political activity of the Khasis began in real earnest during the Reformed Constitution. The Constitutional changes in India during the period made serious Khasi thinkers to come forward with their views and opinions. This caught the attention of the English who had to recognise the Khasis as an indigenous asset.

The Khasi Renaissance created a deep impact on the political and constitutional development during the period. As early as 1900, the *Jaintia Union* was born, the founders of which were Hamilton Gatphoh, Rev. Siang Blah, Rev. Samuel Shallam, Rev. Shai Raboh Manners, Jones Passah, Kiang Gatphoh, Kiri Dkhar and Siang Kdung Laloo. The Jaintia Union was then called Jaintia Dorbar even since 1931.<sup>16</sup> Rash Mohan Roy was one of the founders of "*Ka Synjuk Khasi - Synteng* established in 1907, the aim of which was to unite all the Khasis. 17 Side by side, the Khasi states under the Syiems, the Sirdars, and the Lyngdohs felt it necessary to know their position and to preserve their identity. On the 27th July 1923 a notice was circulated to all the Khasi

rulers for the meeting of the *Khasi National Durbar* to be held from the 4th to the 6th September 1923. The Durbar set and agreed unanimously that the Khasi National Durbar would try to create social and political consciousness.<sup>18</sup> The second session of the Durbar decided to complete the Codification of the "*Laws of Citizenship in Khasi states*",<sup>19</sup> "*The Land Law in the Khasi states*" and "*The Law of Inheritance*"<sup>20</sup> In spite of criticisms even Sir John Kerr, the Governor remarked :

*"I have recently read with much interest the proceedings of the Khasi National Durbar ..... and if I understand that movement right, its founders and supporters are in favour of developing the national genius of the Khasi race on independent lines".*<sup>21</sup>

U "Lurshai" again observes,

*"....Let us remember, oh land, that we are thirty syiems but we are just a hanaful in the vast ocean of India....."*

The idea of unity simmered deep and for the first time the concept of "*The Federation of Khasi States*" emerged on the 2nd May 1929<sup>22</sup> The members explained the feasibility of the Federation which would be for the welfare of keeping one's identity intact. It took four years for the Federation to take its proper shape. The aims and objectives of the Federation would be to take action on matters of common interest, to control common affairs and the federating units should make a closer union to improve the welfare and the administration of each unit. With innumerable problems and non-cohesion at times, the Khasi National Durbar was born out of the social and political consciousness of the rulers to preserve the customs and traditions of the people which, to them, they have inherited from their forefathers from time immemorial. This, they felt, could be achieved only if there was unity. In one of the Khasi papers, a "Hillman" writes :

*"We need unity and we call for it now, for we know that in it there is strength, we need unity because the unpleasant fact that human development is at such a state only that there is no justice,..... and in this, numerical strength counts..... We need unity because we want to preserve our hills for our own future generation ..... we need unity to preserve our culture.....we need unity to defend and preserve the*

This was also the time when Khasi ladies took an active interest in the political development. They expressed their views and strongly stood up for the preservation of the matrilineal Society. They said that political changes have swept the land, have come and gone, yet the customs and traditions of the people have been kept intact. They felt that the status of the woman, which has been given due recognition since time immemorial, should be preserved. They added that Jaintia Hills should be given back the political status they once enjoyed<sup>23</sup>. From the Khasi papers of the time we learn of the political changes which took place during the period, the chief of which was the emergence of the United Khasi Jaintia Federated National Conference with Nichols Roy, the Khasi Jaintia Political Organisation with Dr. H. Lyngdoh, the Hills Union with Macdonald Kongor, the Khasi States People's Union with Prof. G. G. Swell, the Khasi States Constitution Making Durbar and a number of other political developments which shaped the Khasis during the Colonial period.

If we take the year 1890 as an important year for the Khasi Renaissance and if we take a century to cover the Renaissance period, perhaps we may have to come to the present year. However Khasi Renaissance reached the climax of the intellectual revival in the 1930's, yet we may say, that after India's Independence we do find an impact of the great awakening period on the subsequent history of the Khasis, their thinking, their writings, and their way of life. Great writers and thinkers of contemporary Khasi History still produce various writings to glorify the past and are proud of their rich heritage. Till to day the people are conscious of their identity, they are conscious of their freedom, they take pride in their Culture, their mode of life, their customs and traditions, their political insight and vision. In conclusion, Khasi Renaissance still keeps alive the spirit of the people, there is still the emotional attachment to one's own Culture and identity. However great the changes are, the indigenous tradition survives.

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17. K. W. Nongrum, op. cit.
18. *Proceedings of the Khasi National Durbar*, 4th September 1923.
19. Ibid, 30th September, 2nd October, 1925.
20. Ibid, 13th-15th October, 1926.
21. As quoted from *U Lurshai*, Shillong, March 1925.
22. *Khasi National Durbar Proceedings*, 1st-3rd May, 1929.
23. *Ka Synjuk Lang Ki Hima Khasi, Ka Bynta II*; July 1947.