Chapter VI

GENERALIZATIONS AND STRAINS
6.1.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter which dealt with the analysis of data has opened up new vistas. The statements made by the interviewees contained several hidden agenda. There are also hidden facts which are only referred to or implied, or certain forces, tendencies latent in these facts. An attempt is made in this chapter to pinpoint and to enunciate them as Generalizations and Strains.

6.2.0 GENERALIZATIONS

1. As the lady in couple no.S-La17 said, "It is very much easier to let go (of responsibilities) than to accept them." Such responsibilities come and go with certain advantages attached to them. For example, couple no.S-Mar3 is a case that has already been commented upon in another part of this paper. The man was a Government servant stationed in the state of Uttar Pradesh where he met and married a girl Uttar Pradesh. The man died a few years ago and is survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters who live presently at Nainital. They have their father's title, Lyngdoh. Their closest relatives are in Shillong and want to come to Shillong to stay with their relatives who are not keen on having them as members of their clan for considerations of their responsibilities towards them.

Why is it that the mother of the man in couple no.S-Mar2 objected so vehemently to his giving his children his own title so that he had to
withdraw his title and give his father's name as the children's title? There are many others like her. There is hardly any mother who seriously and effectively protests against losing members through their daughters' abdicating their right to their own title in favour of their husbands'.

It is precisely because it is easier to let go than to accept. After all, letting go is a loss for the clan, but accepting becomes a personal responsibility. There is a "fear psychosis", as the lady in couple no.5-Lai7 said, on the part of the general public in respect of the Khasi families switching over to the patrilineal practice.

2. Descent is an identifying mechanism which creates a sense of mutual belonging in those who are identified. Biologically, the children belong equally to both father and mother. When one parent says to the other, "they are your children", as in couple no.5-Lai7, he or she does not refer to the biological fact, but to the social fact, that children belong to one or the other descent group. In fact, the lady above added, "they have your title".

It is usual for the Khasi man to think of the children as belonging to the wife and her clan because of the matrilineal norms of reckoning descent. It needs tremendous courage and clarity of mind for a Khasi woman to say to her husband, "they are your children", and that too not for a change, but to mean it.

3. A Khasi belongs to his clan not only during his lifetime, but
also after his death so that his kur, clan members, under certain circum-
stances, stake claims on his property. In couple no. S-Ma16, the man is
married to a Nepali woman. He is the younger of two brothers, and received
a share of the property of his parents. Much of what he has today is
the result of his own industry. He has already apportioned all his property
to all his children equitably, and yet he labours under some lingering appre-
hension that after his death his kur will claim his property. What he fears
is that his kur may apply the matrilineal principles, and not accept his
children as belonging to the clan, and, therefore, having no right to the
property. In short, they may prefer the property to potential members
of the clan.

4. From the cases that came under study it became abundantly
clear that there is a close relation between:

a) Residence and family pattern: If a marriage is homogamous,
the rules of the family do not pose a problem, and the type of family,
in all likelihood, will be in favour of the prescriptions of the cultural
practice of the partners. But when a marriage is heterogamous, that
is, when the two parties come from two differing cultural contexts, one
will supersede the other. However, supersedence is not haphazard, but
conditioned by certain unenunciated rules or forces. Residence is one
powerful force. In general, the pattern seems to be as follows:
In the table below,

Column 1 = The Khasi partner, male (K♂) or female (KO), coming from a matrilineal (m) context;

Column 2 = The non-Khasi partner, male (nK♂) or female (nKO), coming from either patrilineal (p) or matrilineal (m) culture;

Column 3 = Permanent residence of family, in setting that is either patrilineal (p) or matrilineal (m). Names of places are put for the sake of example.

Column 4 = The family type that is likely to emerge.

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i) KO(m) = nK♂(p) - Shillong (m) - matrilineal, and -

ii) KO(m) = nK♂(m) - Guwahati (p) - patrilineal.


iii) KO(m) = nK♀(m) - Shillong (m) - matrilineal, Shillong abounds in examples of these.
iv) \( KO(m) = nK4(m) - Shillong (m) - pa-/matrilineal. \)

E.g. couple no.G-T:10 in Tura follows the matrilineal way, while couple no.G-T:14 in Tura is patrilineal.

v) \( K4(m) = nKO (p) - Shillong (m) - patrilineal/new. \)

E.g., couples no.S-La:1 in Shillong and no.P-J:1 in Jowai are patrilineal. But couples no.S-Mar2, no.S-La:3 adopted new titles; in other things, they are very much matrilineal.

The investigator is inclined to disagree with what was pointed out in the pre-submission seminar that the man in this type of family may be under compulsion by necessity to go patrilineal, because, in such a situation, the man knows fully well that the children can never belong to the clan of the wife. The investigator disagrees with this opinion for the following reasons:

1. The man is under no absolute compulsion to go patrilineal. There are several instances even today that such a family can go for a new title, like couple no.S-La:3 or couple no.S-Mar2 did.

2. Statistical evidence shows that there is no compulsion, but there is intention. 100% of the \( K4=KO \) type and 77.27% of the \( K4=nKO \) type of family are intentionally patrilineal; in other words, the men entered into these matrimonial alliances for specific reasons. Intention implies foresight and fore-warning. Hence, the men did not need to adopt extreme measures to accommodate themselves to the inevitable.

It may be pointed out that patriliny is not made up of descent alone, but of all the constituent elements: descent, inheritance and succession.
vi) $K^d(m) = nK^o(p) - Guwahati (p) - patrilineal.$
   E.g., couple no.N-D:3 in Dimapur.

vii) $K^d(M) = nK^o(m) - Shillong (m) - pa-/matrilineal.$
   E.g., couple no.S-P:13 in Shillong is matrilineal, while couple
   no.G-T:15 in Tura is patrilineal.

viii) $K^d(m) = nK^o(m) - Tura (m) - matrilineal.$
   E.g., couple G-T:11 in Tura is matrilineal.

ix) $K^d(m) = K^o(m) - Shillong (m) - matrilineal, but there are some
    who are deliberately patrilineal.
   E.g., couple no.S-La:7, couple no.S-B:19, are deliberately patri­
    lineal. The cultural setting in matrilineal, but the residence
    and everything else is patrilineal.

x) $K^d(m) = K^o(m) - Guwahati (p) - patrilineal.$
   E.g., there is a family in England; both the man and his wife
   are Khasi from Shillong. While in Shillong the family was
   matrilineal. When they went over to England and settled there,
   the family switched over to patri­

There seems to be an intimate connection between residence and
the family type (see pie-diagram no.7). A very clear example of this
truth is the case of couple no.S-Mk:18 where the man is a Khasi and his
wife is a Nepali. From 1971 to 1987 the family was both matrilocal and
matrilineal. In 1987, the house of the parents of the girl was razed to
the ground by a fire. Family no.S-Mk:18 then changed to virilocal resi­
dence, and became immediately patrilineal thenceforward.

Thus it is not clear, at least, for the time being, how Fr. Sngl expects
women who are married to non-Khasis and are living with their husbands
Pie diagram no. 7a
Two concentric circles showing relation between residence and family type.
\( K_A = nK_0 \): Outer circle shows distribution of residence.
Inner circle shows distribution of family type.

Pie diagram no. 7b
Two concentric circles showing relation between residence and family type.
\( K_A = K_0 \) (pat.): Outer circle shows distribution of residence.
Inner circle shows distribution of family type.
in England, Germany, USA, etc. to pass on their matrilineal titles to one of their sons. It seems to be a grand wishful thinking.

b) Residence is inherently connected with descent, inheritance, authority, and status. Ownership is a tremendous source of power and authority. One who owns commands; in other words, he who owns calls for the tune.

5. The family type has a great deal to do with adoption. People from patrilineal cultures generally adopt girls, and those from matrilineal cultures adopt boys. The boys and the girls we are talking about should have no relationship whatsoever with the adopting parents who in turn, should have no obligation of any sort to adopt these boys or girls. Their adoption is entirely a matter of philanthropy or human beneficence. The reason why this is so is because patrilineal families have an obligation to provide for boys only. At the most, what they are required to do for girls is to bring them up and marry them off. In matrilineal cultures it is the other way around: girls are provided for, and boys are brought up and married off.

There was a family in Shillong in which the woman was married to a Khasi and they had at least a boy and a girl. The man either died or left the wife; the fact is that the woman met and married a German with whom she is now living in Germany. The daughter went with her; the son is left behind to tell a tale of woe and to languish in abundant
At Marbisu, 15 km. west of Shillong, there was a family of brothers and sisters. The eldest brother who was living at Umsning once found a baby-boy abandoned by its non-Khasi parents. The man picked up the baby and brought it home to one of his sisters at Marbisu who took care of it and brought it up along with her son. The boys grew up like two blood-brothers. They are today both married. It was, no doubt, a praiseworthy act of mercy and kindness. But right now we are interested in the idea behind: "It will do us no harm; it is a boy." No interpretation whatsoever can be imputed to the act of mercy of the adopting parents, Bah Siris Kharpan and his wife Kong Enrica Nongrum Kapew. The only fact that is certain is that the abandoned and adopted infant was a baby-boy.

6. There is a close relation between the family pattern and the type of cross-cultural marriages that take place. Usually it is the men from other cultures who are attracted to marry into matrilineal families, for two apparently obvious reasons: (a) the psychological and material back-up that matrilineal women have; (b) the material advantages and security that men from other cultures expect to get by marrying women from matrilineal cultures.

A close observation seems to lead the observer to the following corollary: matriliney brings men from outside in cross-cultural marriages, patriliney seems to bring in women.
7. There is no denying the fact that the nuclear family is emerging out of its shell. Both young men and young women are leaving the protective wings of their parents to forge their own destiny and be their own masters.

6.3.0 STRAINS

It is generally believed that matriliney was the original system prevailing the world over in the beginning. The discovery, for example of Fabian Lyngdoh, Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh, H.O. Mawrie, B. Nikhla, that matriliney is entirely in consonance with nature is really nothing new. The basic process of generation was not entirely unknown even to the primitive man. It has always been known that the process of generation, that the creation of man, requires from the mother a far greater and personal investment than it has ever been possible to require from man.

(a) Conception: In the conception of a child, the mother carries it in the sanctuary of her own boy and nourishes the child with her own body for nine long months. During all that time she bears all the inconveniences which men never know.

(b) Birth: At the birth of the child the woman goes through the ordeal of birthpangs. In that act of bringing life out into the world, her own may go out of it. In spite of the practice of couvade in some cultures, no man has ever died of childbirth.
(c) **Infancy and childhood**: The long period of total dependence of the infant is primarily on the mother who suckles it close to her own heart. The mother is the first person the infant recognizes. The interaction between the mother and her infant is very deep, very personal and very vital to the emotional growth and well-being of the infant.

Humankind at large is far more sympathetic towards the mother than towards the father, just as it is towards woman than towards man, the saying goes: "It is a wise child that knows its own father; but it is a happy child that knows its mother" (Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape*). The impact of the influence of the mother on the growth and socialisation of the child is incalculable. The father’s contribution is only secondary.

(d) **A Woman's Stake**: The fourth consideration is the fact that man produces practically at any time millions of living sperms, while the woman produces only one viable egg in a cycle of about a month and that too only between the age span of about 15 to 50. All she can do is capitalize on that one-egg-a-month. She has to be choosy about the man with whom she would share her life and about his contribution, the man who should be biologically fit and economically dependable.

The facts above are, in principle, true of generation of all creatures at all levels, and that is how many have come to the conclusion that matriliney is much closer to nature than patriliney, and, therefore, that matriliney
must have been the original and universal way of life.

Granted the proposition of matriline as the original and universal way of life, one has to admit the reality that today there are more patrilineal cultures than matrilineal. Some time in the past, somewhere in their development, changes took place, which changes made patrilineal preferable to matriline. "It is received wisdom that matrilineal systems are more liable to change than patrilineal ones...". One of the arguments put forward is the change in the mode of production, from subsistence to exchange. Another reason is the weaknesses that are inherent in the system itself. Ladislav Holy says that matriline is "a system (that is) ridden with structural contradictions which it perpetually tries to resolve and overcome, such as the contradictions between the individual family and the matrilineal descent group, or that between marriage and sibling cohesion, the contradiction in the allocation of authority resulting in the 'matrilineal puzzle', which rests on the division of a man's loyalties between his children and the members of the descent group, or, more generally, that between productive individualism and distributive communalism. The contradictions, ..., is ultimately seen as the cause of its demise in the modern world."

Chie Nakane speaks of another deficiency of matriline: The "complexity of the matrilineal system is a decided handicap when it comes to resisting radical economic changes ... This may be one of the reasons for the rapid disintegration or instability of social organization of matrilineal peoples in the world."
In the subsequent section a few inherent strains on the Khasi matriliney, are enumerated which strains contribute substantially to the weakness and possible disintegration of the Khasi family system.

1. The centripetal tendency of man which is noticed also by outside observers. Chie Nakane wrote in 1967, "Though it does not always end in divorce, considerable number of husbands have a strong tendency to spend most of their time at their sister's house", so that some wives moaned, "I don't know why he does not come to my place." Further, should a Khasi man even succeed in spending his life with his wife's kinsmen, as soon as the wife dies, he will usually return to his kling, that is, to his sister's house, where he is received warmly and where he often acts as the de facto authority, ... Thus the strong matrilineal structural principle tends to orient a man towards his own descent group, the kling.

This phenomenon leads Nakane to conclude, "This kind of ambiguity in the marriage relation seems to have an important correlation with the Khasi social structure" so that the man who seemed to be both here and there may, in reality, be neither here nor there.

It must be understood that this ambiguity, this ambivalence, is true not only of the man, but also of the woman. A wife who is overly attached to her kins, causes avoidable tension in her relationship with her husband, and endanger the stability of the marriage.

2. Another ambiguity is the exercise of authority in the family.
Mrs. P.R. Lyngdoh pointed to this ambiguity when she wrote that the
"household responsibilities are entrusted to menfolk, which are being
shared between the maternal uncle and the father. In matters relating
to the clan and family such as the arrangement of marriages, management
of ancestral property and the performance of religious duties, it is the
maternal uncle who makes the decision in consultation with the other
members of the family."₁⁴

The double role and responsibility of the man as uncle of his nephews
and nieces in his sister's family, and as father of his children in his wife's
family is further heightened by the fact that he is supposed to exercise
authority over both families. This results in two situations: (a) the man
becomes a split personality; (b) the personality clashes between two
commanding males, like two cocks in a roost, between the father and
the uncle. So, again, the both-and situation may succumb to a neither-nor
reality. Traditionally, the man might have been more willing to abdicate
in favour of the uncle; the present state of development, with the emer­
genence of the nuclear family, the status of the father in the family seems
to be looming large in the advancing future. The Colossus falls.

The double role of the man creates also the double role of the woman,
as sister to her brother who is the uncle of her children, and as wife to
her husband who is the father of her children. The difference between
the double role of the man and the double role of the woman, is, it seems,
that the double status of the man is societal, and that of the woman is
domestic. This is because the man's loyalties are divided between two families, two clans; the woman's loyalties are torn between two men in her family: her brother and her husband. Thus the "matrilineal puzzle" which rests on the division of one's loyalties, is true both of the man and of the woman in the matrilineal setting.

When a woman's loyalties tend to tilt towards her brother, her mother, her kins, the in-laws have ample opportunities for meddling in and interfering with the affairs of the family, and then the husband and father is pushed to the shadow. The study revealed six couples where men married outside the tribe primarily to avoid any possible interferences from the in-laws.

3. In all probability, the Khasi society is caught up in the throes of a transition. The Khasi society is basically no less "liable to change", nor less susceptible to change than any other matrilineal society. This is a time when many a young man prefers the adventure of the unknown and the uncertainty of an uncharted future. The desire to be the master of his own house, may wean him away the matrilineal pattern of family into the patrilineal type. The resultant anomaly is worth noting: the man's nephews and nieces and his children belong to the clan because they share the same title, the nephews and nieces from their mother, that is, the man's sister, according to the matrilineal principles and the children, from the man who is their father, according to the patrilineal principles. How does one reconcile the two apparently incompatible affiliations?
4. It may be said that matriliney has been initiated into change. The total change is so massive and radical that the system cannot possibly muster the required amount of strength to change evenly; it can only change in instalments. While it is ready to change in some sectors, it meets with persistent and stiff resistance in others. The cultural lags make the passage slow and painful. They are the growing pains of a culture. For example, couple no. P-Js1 felt that rural people are far less ready for a change than are the more enlightened towns-people. Secondly, people seem to be more ready to change residence and succession; the question of descent and inheritance are still raw nerves. Cultural sub-systems do not all change at the same rate.

5. Matriliney is a system where men marry into clans other than their own without surrendering their identity. Even in the family of procreation with his wife and children, he retains his title, his identity and his affiliation to his own clan. Whereas in patriliney, it is the woman who is married off into the clans of their husbands. When a woman moves into the family of her husband, she sheds her original identity, and adopts that of her husband; she forfeits her membership of her clan of origin and becomes a member of her husband's clan and family. In matriliney, it is the men who move out, and in patriliney, women move out of the clan. For example, the woman, a Nepali, in couple no.S-Mk5 said, "I am now Lyngdoh", and the Boro wife in couple no.S-Ma2 considers herself.
a Duia, her husband's title.

It thus follows that in patriliny, clans scatter their women who, once they are out, are no longer their members. Instead, in matriliny, clans scatter their men who, even though they are out, still belong to them. This is a paradox of matriliny: men live among people who are not their own. It is one of the causes of the centripetal tendencies of men, and of the instability of marriages.

6. One of the greatest contradictions in matriliny is the inherent conflict between ownership and authority. The most natural thing for a man to do is to exercise absolute and exclusive authority over the things he owns. Matriliny creates a dichotomy between ownership and authority, whereas patriliny unites them in one person. Rightly did the man in couple no.5-Mar4 bewail the fact that he has no real authority over his own children. This blatant dichotomy exists specifically in three areas.

(a) Land: The ownership of land belongs to females who do not, or are not supposed to, exercise authority over it in respect of sale, transfer, alienation, division or administration of it. Ownership, therefore, means only occupation and use of land. In reality, land belongs to the clan or to the family, and is administered by the uncle(s). This is very confusing, to say the least. In the first place there are the following logical questions: (i) Why can't the woman exercise authority over the land she owns? (ii) What authority does a man have over the land he does not own? (iii) Is the ownership pseudo-ownership, or the authority pseudo-
authority?

The apparent unnatural dichotomy has been a typical source of tension and of conflicting ideologies. There have been instances both of women disposing of their land, and men claiming both authority and ownership.

(b) Chieftainship or Political Authority: This is another dichotomy in matriliney. Chieftainship is hereditary, not from father to son, but in the clan. Ownership of chieftainship belongs to the clan, and resides in ka Syiemsad or the Queen-mother or Queen-grandmother. The actual political authority is exercised by the son or the grandson; whereas the ownership right passes on from mother to daughter, the right of exercise of authority passes on from uncle to nephew. The sanction, the approval and the mandate in the appointment of the king comes from ka Syiemsad, but the king or chieftain (u Syiem) is the one who actually exercises political power. Chieftainship is hereditary along her line; the political authority resides in her family, but the right to exercise it (kingship) belongs to her brother, or son, or grandson.

(c) Religion: The third dichotomy in matriliney is found in religion. The ownership of religion also belongs to females, but the priesthood and the priestly functions belong exclusively to males; only men can be priests and perform the religious rites. Again, ownership passes down from mother to daughter, but the priesthood and the priestly office, from uncle to nephew.
Such dichotomies appear to be unnatural, illogical and incongruous. Yet, every cultural practice has a rationale behind it. In the first place one notices that matriliny makes that subtle distinction, which is not at all clear in patriliny, even if it is made, merely because of the fact that both are in one person. What, then, is the rationale of this distinction and dichotomy?

Human wisdom and prudence have never trusted womankind with authority. Hipshon Roy Kharshiing puts it very pleasantly: women have never been "burdened ... with politics, and in the traditional political institutions she has hardly any function or place." Mrs. P.R. Lyngdoh says the same thing in different words, "...yet women have no rights in the political and administrative spheres..." Why this is so is not clear, but Hipshon Roy gain seems to answer it by saying that the woman "has more vital functions to perform in her careers, ... her all important vocation as a Mother". He strengthens his argument by quoting from Anges E. Mayer, "... just being a woman is her central task and her greatest honour."

1) It was C. Lyngdoh in 1938 who made the two following clarifications: (i) "... the khatduh is the custodian... She succeeds not to the property but to the office as custodian or keeper of it." (ii) "Being in charge of the properties, she has to look after the religion of the family. To be more correct she holds the properties because she holds the religion of the family. To be more correct she holds the properties because she
holds the religion of the family. But, having the least experience, she usually takes the advice of the elderly male members who are the uncles (kni).\(^{20}\)

I beg to differ from Mr. C. Lyngdoh on three counts:

i) It is not only 'usually' that the khatduh has to take the advice of the uncle, but at all times and in all matters of any consequence concerning the family property.

ii) The injunction of the uncle is not only 'advice', which ka khatduh can accept or reject at will, but an order, a command to which she has to bow.

iii) It would seem contrary to reason to entrust matters of such weighty consequence as religion and property to anyone who has "the least experience". It would be more logical that such matters be entrusted to the most experienced person, the eldest daughter. The true reason is because the khatduh is only the "custodian", and not the sole owners, who must place herself and her custodianship under the supervision and direction of the uncle, because she is "quite inexperienced and unfit to do actual management." In fact, "in documents of sale or mortgage," -(the) "name of ka khatduh may not even appear in the documents but the transaction is understood to be on behalf of the nominal female owners."\(^{21}\)

C. Lyngdoh pointed to the intrinsic relationship between religion
and property, nay, more than that, property because of religion. That
again is because "a Khasi is a Khasi because of his religion (Niam) more
than anything else... It is religion... which regulates all his thoughts and
activities. Forget his religion and you will never understand a Kasi."22

Under the auspices of religion, hence, we should add to property the con­
cept and practice of chieftainship or political authority of the Khasis.
The khatduh is thus and, therefore, the custodian of the family religion,
we should, therefore, add to property the concept and practice of chieft­
tainship or sylimship (syiem = king, chieftain).

2) The second possible reason for this distinction and dichotomy
in matriliny is the satisfaction of both male and female on the one hand,
and the mutual check and restraint that are exercised upon each other,
on the other. Such a division becomes a mechanism for interdependence
and cooperation, as well as acts as a method of restraining each other
from abuses, so that neither good nor evil can be done by either party
without the consent and cooperation of the other.

3) Unlike patriliny which scatters its women, matriliny scatters
its men, and keeps the women. At marriage, the men leave their original
family and go to live uxorilocally, or even matrilocally. It would not
be prudent to entrust him with ownership of :

a) land, for possible misuses that are very likely to arise;
b) religion, because, in practice, it is a clan religion; each clan
having its own, with its uncles as the priest(s);

c) political authority, because, again, succession is from uncle to nephew, and not from father to son.

For the reasons above, matriline distinguished and separates ownership from authority.

6.4.0 IMPACT ON THE KHASI FAMILY

At the conclusion of this study, it may be in order to go back to the original statement of the enquiry, namely, the impact that the cross-cultural marriages have on the Khasi family. It goes without saying, of course, that such social innovations do leave reverberating tell-tales around. The impact of cross-cultural marriages on the Khasi family is summarised as follows:

(a) The cross-cultural marriages revealed the various sides and elements of the Khasi matrilineal family, all of which are exposed to the influence of the changes of family patterns and practices as a result of the increasing number of cross-cultural marriages. One of the things that these marriage have done is to show the flexibility and resistance of the different components. For example, as it has been said earlier, residence and succession are more flexible than descent and inheritance; in other words, the constituent elements of the Khasi matriliney are not equally flexible.
b) The $K_A=nKO$ type of cross-cultural marriages have been responsible to an extent for the emergence of the nuclear family, where the man lives with his wife and their children as one family unit. This may happen either by design or by necessity. New families are getting farther and farther away from the traditional family. The nuclear family brings along with it a positive effect on the "matrilineal puzzle": to heal the divided loyalties of man and the woman. The man becomes more and more the husband of the wife, and the father of the children in his family, and less and less the uncle of his nephews and nieces; the woman becomes less and less the sister of her brother, and more and more a wife to her husband. Thus the family is forging its own identity as a unit quite independent of the clan and the kins.

c) Cross-cultural marriages have resulted in a new kind of consciousness in society as well as in individuals. The $KO=nK_A$ type of marriages have always been known, and there is no dearth of them; they are either matrilineal or patrilineal depending very much on the type of permanent residence of the couple. The $K_A=nKO$ type is not new, and in most of the cases they turned out to be non-patrilineal, either matrilineal or neolineal. What is new is that we are getting more and more patrilineal families out of $K_A=nKO$ or even $K_A=KO$ marriages, something we could not think of till recently. So what is happening is that the society is awakening to a new consciousness of a dynamism that had been lying hidden. Individuals too are awakening to their potentials. Young men find
themselves doing what they were thought to be incapable of doing. The Khasi male is asserting himself more and more articulately in the most urgent search for his identity and individuality.

d) The KΔ=nKO type of marriages have resulted in a kind of reorganization of the Khasi family. The innovations point in the direction of overcoming the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the matrilineal system. This is particularly true of curing the dichotomy between ownership and authority in respect of property. A man in his own place is the master of his house and his property.

A prophet in many ways, Rev. Fr. Sngi Lyngdoh, cries in the wilderness; taking stock of the situation, and reading the signs of the time, he announces the imminent arrival of the patrilineal age for Khasis, when everything will be made new. Fr. Sngi says through his mouthpiece, Ka Sur Shipara, that the time is not far away when sons will remain in the house, and daughters will go with their husbands.23

The Khasis society may, indeed be at the threshold of a new era. In a world of breath-taking changes, it is a wise people who can "keep the best of the old, and take advantage of the new."24

Notes and References

1. Ka Sur Shipara, XXVII(36), 29 October, 1990, pp. 1,4 ("Ka apil sha ki khun kynthei u Hynniewtrep kiba la her sha shiliang duriaw").
2. A similar case was reported in *Dongmusa*, VII(45), 8 November, 1990, p. 1 ("Bret khun ha Marten"). No interpretation whatsoever can be imputed to the act of mercy of the adopting parents, Bah Siris Kharpan and his wife Kong Enrica Nongrum Kapew. The only fact that is certain is that the abandoned and adopted infant was a baby boy.


8. Ibid., p. 3.


11. Ibid., p. 127.

12. Ibid., p. 126.


20. Ibid., p. 10.


24. The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at the Nongkrem Festival, 1976.