CHAPTER - v
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

I shall deal here with the problem concerning the inheritance system among the War Khasis of East Khasi Hills District. The discussion in the first chapter includes the operationalisation of the concepts of property and inheritance and survey of literature. The second chapter profiles the War Khasis, their economy, education, etc. The third chapter deals with their kinship organisation. The fourth chapter discusses the system of inheritance as obtained in the two war villages. The fifth chapter is conclusion.

With regard to the system of inheritance in these two War villages, the findings show that one of the two villages, i.e., Umsyiem has a unilineal descent as well as inheritance. Thus in this village property is inherited equally by the female children, with the exception that the ka khadduh or the youngest daughter inherits the ka iing seng or parental house. It is there that the members of the family assemble to witness her performance of the family ceremonies. She inherits the largest share because it is she whose duty it is to perform the family ceremonies and propitiate the family ancestors. On the other hand, the other village, i.e., Laittyra, has a unilineal system of descent but collateral system of inheritance. The rule here is that both male and female children inherit the parental property. But in this village too, the youngest daughter inherits the parental house for she has to perform the role as the family priestess.

As in the former village, the females inherit the pro-
property while the males manage and control the same. But in the latter village, both males and females inherit parental property and at the same time the males manage the same. The youngest daughter or the Ka khadduh, gats the largest share in both the villages but she is actually only the custodian of the family property. She is not the real owner of inheritor because she has no right to dispose of the family property by herself. She is the custodian while her maternal Uncle is the manager.

On account of the above, their system of inheritance or the succession of property is based directly or indirectly on their kinship system. Their precepts teach them that Ka khein kur khein kha or the kinship system is "the foundation and the basis on and around which the religion, the family, the society and the economic and political structure of the race is build". (cited in chattopadyay, 1985:122). Thus this fundamental precept has greatly influenced their customary law on the use, application, transfer and alienation of property among them.

As in the case of other tribal groups, the War Khasis too are changing. With the advent of christianity, many changes have taken place as their culture and heritage, tradition and culture revolved round their traditional religion. Yet, it is not correct to say that christianity has discouraged the continuation of the matrilineal system. The majority of the War Khasi population are christian today but traditional saytem of inheritance of property still continues except that the traditional ceremonies which of descent and inheritance. The youngest daughter is expected to perform have disappeared at least among the christian War Khasis.
The general rule in War Khasi society being collateral, two possible explanations may be provided for giving rise and sustenance to this system. One, which is likely but difficult to demonstrate is their age-old interaction with the plains people of Bangladesh with whom not only trade but also cultural interactions have taken place since ages. The latter people being patrilineal they may been responsible for effecting collateral system of inheritance among the War Khasis. The other explanation, which is less likely though frequently put forward by people, is the system of visiting husbandship. This system creates opportunities for the males to retain close, day to day linkages with their parents and makes it possible for them to inherit and own their parents' property. But the snag here is that even the pnars are reported to have close interaction with the plains people as well as the system of visiting husbandship. Yet they have no collateral system of inheritance. This problem requires further exploration and research without which this apparent anomaly cannot be resolved.

In the past, the heiress could get the share after her parents' death, but today this often results in quarrels and conflicts within the family. A decision or agreement within the family has now been a general practice in connection with the distribution of property among the children. This shows that there is no legal will system formulated as yet.

With the passage of time, their population have increased and changes can be noticed in many aspects of their social life. Migration from rural to urban areas, education, new ideologies and institutions coupled with mixed population have acce-
lerated the changes.

Some Khasis are now reviewing the matrilineal lineage and questioning the future of matriliny in the Khasi society. There are two shades of thinking in this connection. According to one group there is an apprehension that matriliny in this society is doomed whereas another section of people is canvassing for the abolition of matriliny. Such arguments and wishes apart, the real life experience is that matriliny in the War Khasi society is not only continuing unwavered, but contrary to the wishes of some, matriliny among them is getting somewhat reinforced. With regard to the abolition of matriliny, it is worthwhile to remember what Kynpham Singh points out "Lada duh noh ka khein kur khein kha pura puri sha ka liang ka kynthei ka long na ka bynta ki jingsniew ba ki la khein kor noh ia ka spah ban ia ka doh ka snam bad ki khein kor noh ia ka bor ban ia ka hok. (cited from Chattopadhyay, 1985:128). Which literally means that if the Khasi custom, especially the matrilineal kinship system ceases, there would be a great confusion which might lead to controversies and misunderstandings of the Khasi customary laws.

Thus the War Khasi law on inheritance of property is intrinsically bound up with the kinship system which is the basic feature of the Wars. Their law on property has been fortified by a combination of checks and balances to ensure peace and harmony in the society.

To conclude, the War Khasi collateral system of inheritance proves to be compatible to their system and is not difficult to follow because if property is fairly distributed be-
tween the children, both males and females, there can be no conflict, jealousy and discontent among the sibling. Yet matri-lineal trait can exist. It seems wise to give male members their dues but at the cost of the very identity of the Khasi society.
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