CHAPTER II

KA PYRTHEI AND KA MEIRAMEW IN THE
KHASI WORLD VIEW

The chief objective of this chapter is to clarify and analyze the concepts of ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew. These two concepts, ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew are the key concepts which constitute almost the whole gamut of the traditional Khasi thought and world view. Other concepts revolve round these two concepts. They are like the two legs of a man which give support to his body and without which man can neither stand nor walk. Any study which is related to the traditional Khasi thought and world view without referring to the concepts of ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew will be incomplete.

Etymologically, the word ‘ka’ in the Khasi language is an article. It indicates that an object or thing denoted by it is of the feminine gender. Occasionally, the word, ‘ka’ is used both as a definite article and as an indefinite article in Khasi language. Normally, the word ‘ka’ is used to show or indicate that an object spoken of belongs to the feminine gender whether it is used in the sense of a definite or an indefinite article. We say it is a definite article when it points out a particular object, person or thing. For instance, “Nga la iohi ia ka Dr. P. Lyngdoh,” which means, I saw Dr. P. Lyngdoh, indicating some particular Doctor. At
times, the word ‘ka’ is also used as an indefinite article, when it leaves indefinite an object or thing spoken of. For instance, *ka briew*, which means any woman. Generally, the article ‘ka’ is used in Khasi language in an indicative sense because it indicates that such and such an object, person or thing belongs to such and such gender.

But in the strict sense of the term, the word ‘ka’ is an article which is categorically used for an object which belongs to the feminine gender. In this sense, the word ‘ka’ is a gender-based article. On the other hand, article ‘u’ is used for an object which belongs to the masculine gender. For example, when we say, *ka Pyrthei* or *ka Meiramew*, it indicates that *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Meiramew* are objects or realities which belong to the feminine gender as far as Khasi Grammar is concerned. However, a language is part of a world view and cultural landscape of a community. It is a living system and a dynamic activity. Hence, when the Khasi people use the word ‘*Ka Pyrthei*’ and ‘*Ka Meiramew*’, they mean that attributes applicable to womanhood is being thought of as attributes of *Ka Pyrthei* and *Ka Meiramew*. In other words, whatever is applicable to a female being is thought of, by the Khasi people, as also applicable to *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Meiramew*.

When we reflect upon the concept of *ka Pyrthei*, we find that this term ‘pyrthei’ is not a composite concept
because it is not made up of different concepts. If we take the word ‘Pyr’ separately as a prefix to the term ‘Pyrthei’, we find that this word ‘Pyr’ does not connote any intrinsic meaning because it does not have any definite meaning of its own. It does not have any intrinsic meaning in the sense that it does not connote any meaning specifically. It may possibly have some meaning only if it is added with some other words as its suffix. For example, the words, ‘Pyrthat’ (thunder), ‘Pyrthuh’ (imitate) etc. The word ‘Pyr’ does not connote anything clearly in Khasi language. If it has any meaning at all, it is just an indicative meaning to point out to something on a tentative basis. For instance, the term ‘Pyrshang’ means to try or to make an attempt.

On the other hand, if we take the word ‘thei’ separately as a suffix of the word ‘Pyrthei’ then, we can say that the word ‘thei’ is an abbreviation of the word ‘Kynthei’ which means a female being. But there is no clear etymological indication whether the word ‘thei’ is associated with the term ‘Pyrthei’. If there is something common between the word ka Kynthei (female being) and the word ka Pyrthei, it can only be assumed on the basis that both of the terms belong to the feminine gender in Khasi language.

Briefly speaking, by the concept ka Pyrthei, is meant the totality of the visible and invisible realities in the sky
above them and in the world around them. In other words, *ka Pyrthei* is a living system and reality which has within it many other systems or realities. Soso Tham personifies *ka Pyrthei* (world) as a living reality which regulates itself and other realities. He says:

*The world keeps itself awake till midnight,*

*It looks at the stars how they disappear;*

*It is through the dark and cloudy night,*

*Morning star Evening star give us consolation;*

*It is with you the cock will crow,*

*As a sign that the world will have light.*

In the above quoted lines, Tham speaks of this *ka Pyrthei* as a system which is connected to other systems within it. The fall of man by disobeying God is a failure of one system within the big system and it affects other systems. In this particular context, Soso Tham speaks of *ka Pyrthei* as the cosmos which has visible and invisible realities in it. *Ka Pyrthei* has a wide connotation. In a broad sense it has an inclusive meaning. It includes the solar system, the land masses, the oceans, the surface of the earth, the fruit bearing soil, the earth's substratum etc. By way of equation, we can safely say that the term *ka Pyrthei* is equivalent to its English translation 'world'.

It may be mentioned that the Khasis have used the terms, *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Pyrthei-mariang* (universe) interchangeably. This gives us an idea that the term *ka Pyrthei-mariang* to the ancient Khasi thinkers, seems to
mean the world and its nature.

The term *ka Pyrthei* has been used in a variety of senses in the Khasi language. But mainly it stands for the present world of here and now. It is the opposite of the metaphysical world.

Sib Charan Roy, who is one of the prominent traditional Khasi thinkers, speaks of *ka Pyrthei* as a creation of *U Blei*. According to Roy, God created this *ka Pyrthei* out of the pre-existing matter. In this connection, we can say that *ka Pyrthei* has been created out of something and not out of nothing. Again in this connection, we can say that Roy is in line with the phrase 'ex nihilo nihil fit' which means 'out of nothing, nothing comes'. Roy does not speak of *ka Pyrthei* as a process of emanation but as a process of combination of the different 'Phngit-longdoh', which means the different elements or atoms. Roy does not mean to say that this world is eternal but is a reality which has been created by *U Blei* with some definite purpose. Roy wants to say that since *U Blei* is the Creator of *ka Pyrthei*, the relation between God and *ka Pyrthei* must be of the Creator-created relationship.

The Khasi thinkers since the ancient times seem to have been struggling in conceiving a reconciliation of the mysteries of *ka Pyrthei*. *Ka Pyrthei* is seen as an object which begins and ends with *U Blei*. There is a substantive
unity that exists between *U Blei* and *ka Pyrthei* and, therefore, Khasis can worship God anywhere and at any time. Metaphorically, U Sib Charan Roy views, this *ka Pyrthei* as 'Ka ūng-shong-basa', which means a temporal house which is the contrary of 'ka ūng-shong-neh', which means a permanent or an eternal house. At the time of dissolution, *ka ūng-shong-basa* will disappear and only *ka ūng-shong-neh* will remain. Roy's idea could be interpreted in the language of Sankara's Advaita that this world is *maya* or illusion in the sense that it is a product of God's creative power. It will disappear when the true knowledge is attained and Brahman alone will remain as an eternal and immutable Reality. However, as I will show later here, the comparison if it need be drawn should be between the Khasi view and the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja. What Roy wants to emphasize is that at the time of dissolution, man-world which is created and subjected to mutability will disappear while God-world, which is uncreated and not subject to mutability or change will remain. Most probably, Roy wants to say that *ka Pyrthei* is not ultimately real because it is changeable and destructible and only something that survives all changes is real.

Khasi authors like D. T. Laloo, H. O. Mawrie, Sib Charan Roy, Rabon Singh, Hipshon Roy and others believe that *ka Pyrthei* is created by *U Blei*. According to this view, *ka Pyrthei* cannot precede God's existence. If *U Blei*
is the Creator of *ka Pyrthei* then *ka Pyrthei* must be a dependent reality because it has no independent existence apart from God. In other words, *ka Pyrthei* is limited by time and space. As pointed out earlier, the Khasis called this present *Pyrthei* as *ka Īng-shong-basa* or a temporal house because they have in mind the notion of *ka Īng-u-Blei* meaning the House of God or the heavenly abode. In other words, it means that the other world which is immutable and eternal is not possible in this physical world.

We begin our knowledge of the physical *Pyrthei* with sense-experiences. We see with our eyes the sky, stars, moon, etc., as objects in the sky above us. We also see the trees, plants, vegetables, living beings and non-living beings etc., around us. It is perhaps for this reason that the term *ka Pyrthei* can be identified with the material forms of life including land masses, oceans (*ki duriaw*) etc. To put it in other words, *ka Pyrthei* is a system of life and within it there are various forms of life which consist of animate and inanimate beings. The life of animate beings is a very important element because it consists of human beings who are bestowed with consciousness, dexterity and intelligence. II. O. Mawrie emphasizes the anthropo-centrality of man in God's creation. He says:

> Among all the members of God's creation who live in this empirical world, man is the best of
all. He has all wisdom and potentialities. He can fly by aeroplane round the world.\textsuperscript{6}

Interestingly, \textit{ka Pyrthei} is also viewed as a personal household which implies not only a form of existence but also a form of fulfillment and performances in coping with our duties, obligations and responsibilities in the span of our life time. The ancient Khasis speak very little in term of human rights but they speak more in terms of duties and obligations. For instance, the notion of "\textit{Kamai ia ka Hok}," which means to 'earn righteousness' it also means to abide by the divine law and principle of righteousness, which is similar to the Law of Karma. In this connection, the Law of \textit{Kamai ia ka Hok} is the Universal Law of Righteousness and Justice, the \textit{dharma}. The other laws, \textit{Tipbriew Tipblei} which means knowing man and knowing God, are ethical laws which are meant for social life. One who maintains the right relationship with his fellowmen may also have the right relationship with God. In other words, we cannot have the right relationship with God if we are causing harm to our fellowmen. The Khasis hold the view that righteousness cannot be earned only by means of preaching but by means of right living. Our freedom and responsibility should go together with the Law of Righteousness which is the moral law and the highest goal of life.

The Khasis also called this present world \textit{ka ũng-}
shong-basa (temporal hut or house). This resulted from their comparison of it with the world beyond which they metaphorically called as ka ūng-shong-neh (permanent house). This reveals their inner longing to attain eternal bliss in the world hereafter.

Another phrase used in this connection is 'ūng-shong-neh' which means the eternal home. It is said that the idea of ka bneng or heaven as opposed to hell came much later, more as an influence of Christianity. By the word ka bneng or heaven the Khasis meant the physical heaven or sky. They had always the desire and longing to go to ka ūng-shong-neh or the eternal house. There, in the eternal house or heaven, they hoped, not only to live peacefully and eternally with U Blei but also to meet their earthly counterparts who had preceded them.

As already pointed out earlier, the term Pyrthei has been very often used as a general term in Khasi language. It can be used in a variety of senses. It denotes different things in different contexts. Fr. Emmanuel Bars,⁷ in his Khasi-English Dictionary tries to give a conceptual meaning of ka Pyrthei by equating it with the term cosmos so as to mean the space seen in the universe as an ordered system. This simply means that ka Pyrthei of here and now is within the cosmos and not outside the cosmos. He also tries to explain the term ka Pyrthei as the globe which
means a reality which consists of the continents, countries, cities, rivers etc. Further, Bars makes an attempt to explain the term *ka Pyrthei* as the planet earth. *Ka Pyrthei* is the physical world where we are living, which is one of the planets of the solar system. Again, Bars uses the word 'earth' to explicate the term '*Pyrthei*'. By employing the word 'earth' in his attempt to explain the term '*Pyrthei*', Bars means to say that '*ka Pyrthei*' is our home planet which is having some geological connotations in it. Here, we see that term '*Pyrthei*' has a universal meaning. He tries to explicate the term '*Pyrthei*' from a social point of view when he used the word, '*paw pyrthei*' which means to 'appear in the world'. To put it simply, it means to live a public life as opposed to private life. In this sense, the term '*Pyrthei*' means a common natural habitat of humans and other living beings. Bars attempts to elucidate the term '*Pyrthei*' by using the term '*riew pyrthei*' which means a secular man. In this sense, the term '*pyrthei*' means the world where we are living and spending our earthly life. The term '*Suk Pyrthei*' which means universal peace is another clue to get the meaning of the term '*pyrthei*'. In this sense, the term '*pyrthei*' means an empirical world. He used the term '*Baroh shityllup ka Pyrthei*' which means "everything except heaven and hell." This shows that '*ka pyrthei*' in its inclusive meaning means the whole created world where all living beings have the right to live.
U Nissor Singh attempted to explicate the meaning of the term ‘Pyrthei’ from the existential point of view. He describes it as ‘ka Pyrthei ba tang shipor’ which means ka pyrthei which has a finite existence. In this sense, Singh looks at ka pyrthei from an eschatological viewpoint. In this sense, it means that ka pyrthei is the created reality which has been created by the uncreated Being who is infinite. Singh also shows that ka pyrthei stands contrary to the concepts of ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’. Singh makes the declaration that this present ‘Pyrthei’ or ‘world’ will some day cease to exist.

According to Soso Tham, it is not sufficient to explore the conceptual meaning of the term ‘ka Pyrthei’ in terms of ‘cosmos’, ‘globe’ or ‘earth’ but we should also explain the concept ‘ka Pyrthei’ as a world which consists of people from different nationalities or communities.

We search for the Light round the World
The Light of our own we know not,
Like other days we will rise up,
We will search our own old Light;
The Root, Seed of the living Light,
Its root is in those ancient days.

U Soso Tham seems to have in his mind the thought that the people of each race or country have their own wisdom and conception of knowledge. It is absolutely
necessary to seek the knowledge of other people or different communities so as to enrich our own. In this sense, to Soso Tham the term ‘Pyrthei’ includes the people of the whole world who belong to different communities and continents.

At times, the Khasis used to say “ka Pyrthei kaba pyllun” which means the world is round. This is a geographical expression which means that ka Pyrthei is round in shape. The Khasi have the ‘notion’ that ‘ka Pyrthei’ is one of the heavenly bodies which became livable in the course of time. The three senses in which ka Pyrthei has been interpreted are as follows: (i) in a broad sense, ka Pyrthei means our home planet, (ii) in a narrower sense, it refers to the geological qualities of our home planet, and (iii) in an ordinary sense, it means the mental aspects of human life. For instance, ka Pyrthei ki Myllung Khasi which means ‘the world of the Khasi poets’.

The word ‘Pyrthei’ seems to have some sort of association with other languages. For example, the word ‘Prithivi’ in Sanskrit language is similar to the Khasi term ‘Pyrthei’. They connote more or less the same reality. Both of them mean the third planet of the solar system which has geological connotations. Conceptually, both the terms ‘Pyrthei’ and ‘Prithivi’ mean the physical world where we are living in. So also the concept of ‘Prakrti’ in Sankhya
system has some bearing on the Khasi concept of ‘ka Meiramew’ because both of them play an important role in the process of causing the world of objects to come into existence. This I will take up for discussion later. At this point I wish to state that ‘ka Meiramew’ which means the Mother Earth is a very important component of ka Pyrthei.

In the Kantian sense, ka Pyrthei may be said to be the world of phenomena which is opposite of the world of noumena. As is well known, Kant made a distinction between noumena and phenomena. But in the Khasi traditional thought and world view, there is no clear-cut distinction between them. It is rather a continuation of life from this empirical world to the world beyond. In the Platonic sense, ka Pyrthei is a world of change and imperfection as opposed to the world of form. For the scientists the term ka Pyrthei designates the totality of things and facts. The term ka Pyrthei to the Physicist is a reality which is full of magnetic energy. It has weight, gravitational force etc. Ka Pyrthei to an astronomer is an object of his observation.

The term ka Meiramew is almost untranslatable because of the fact that there is no equal English word which could exactly correspond to it, so as to give its exact meaning. In this context, a word to word translation is not possible in this particular case. What we can do is to give
some clarification of the root words of the term _ka Meiramew_. This will help us at least to give the nearest meaning of what the term _ka Meiramew_ possibly means. Etymologically, the nearest English translation of the term _ka Meiramew_ is 'Mother Earth'.

The Khasis believed that _ka Meiramew_ is a co-creator who plays an important role in the process of bringing out the world of objects into existence. In this sense it resembles _Prakrti_ in the Sankhya system. _Ka Meiramew_ is next to the _UBlei_ in their relation to creation. This term _ka Meiramew_ has been used in a variety of senses in the Khasi language. The analysis of _ka Meiramew_ would help us to know of the interrelatedness between _ka Pyrthei_ and _ka Meiramew_.

The concept of _ka Meiramew_ is a composite concept because it is made up of three concepts, that is, of 'mei', 'ram' and 'ew'. Logically, the term 'mei' or mother is a relative term. For instance, the term 'mother' is related to her children or family. Generally, the term 'mother' is used in two senses, that is, in a personal sense and impersonal sense. The term _ka Meiramew_ is used in an impersonal sense in Khasi language. We should also take note that the term _ka Meiramew_ is used in a metaphorical sense and not in a literal sense of the term.

Generally, the Khasis have great reverence for _ka
Ramew because of various reasons. They regard ka Ramew as an object of loveliness, beauty and the source of their continued existence. This is one of the reasons that ka Ramew has been given the attribute of motherhood. To the Khasis, the concept of ka Meiramew is sacred because to it is attributed all the qualities of a mother.

The concept 'ram' is an ambiguous concept in the Khasi language. Different scholars explain it differently. One of the possible meanings of the term 'ram' is 'debt'. It means a debt which needs to be repaid. If we add the prefix 'khol' to the word 'ram' it will be 'kohram' which means 'not smooth'. If we attach the prefix 'rep' to the word 'ram' it will be 'regram' which means jhuming cultivation. Again, if we add the prefix 'kam' to the word 'ram' it will be 'kamram' which means 'duty'.

We should remember that the Khasis have a strong sense of 'givenness' in their relation to ka Meiramew. According to the traditional Khasi thought and world view, land, soil, water, fire, trees and vegetation are the free gifts of U Blei through the instrumentality of ka Meiramew. The Khasi people believe that man who is a rational being has many obligations and moral duties to fulfill in his life time. Man as a rational and superior being has the moral and ethical duties to preserve the sanctity of ka Meiramew who is his sacred Mother Earth. Man also has an ethical duty to
protect all the living beings who are living in it. This is a debt which man needs to pay through action.

Etymologically, the word ‘ew’ is an abbreviation of the word ‘khyndew’ which means ‘soil’. It is more accurate to call it the fruit bearing soil. The term Ka Meiramew also includes the underworld which comprises of ki Khyndat Pateng Niamra which means “the underworld of the nine layers of the substratum.” Fr. Emmanuel Bars, defined ka Meiramew as the goddess of the earth. This shows that ka Meiramew is a feminine noun made with the root ‘ram’ as a prefix and the root ‘ew’ as the suffix which signifies action. In this context, ka Meiramew stands for action and creativity. It means to ‘make’, ‘cause’, ‘create’, ‘produce’ or ‘perform’. It has a sense of forward movement and indicates a creative force; the urge to create in the sense of a biological and natural process.

The logic of this is contained in the obvious role of the female principle of ka Meiramew as the birth-giver. Till today, in the Khasi culture and traditional thought the role of ka Meiramew as a female principle has not been replaced by any male figure. This means that ka Meiramew is the goddess of the earth and Mother Earth herself. She is perhaps, the first goddess of Khasi mythologies.

Bars also explains the term ka Meiramew as the ground which means the ‘foundation’, the ‘original’,
'first', and 'prime matter'. *Ka Meiramew* is the ground of our being in the sense that our physical existence without *ka Meiramew* will be metaphysically impossible. This means that we could have our physical existence precisely because *ka Meiramew* exists. When a serious Khasi thinker thinks of *ka Pyrthei* what first comes to his mind is *ka Meiramew*.

A fairly accurate translation of world, to my mind be "mother earth", with all the usual connotations of this phrase. Mother earth is the sustainer of life, both human and non-human. It is the source of vitality, and symbol of absolute generosity and grace, the integrator of all creatures.

*Ka Meiramew* seems to take many forms in the Khasi account of creation. It gets a metaphysical meaning when it is perceived as female supreme deity and primary creatrix. At times, the scholars identify *ka Meiramew* as the generating earth itself. In this sense, *ka Meiramew* can also be seen as the fruit bearing soil. Here, we see *ka Meiramew* is not just the primordial cause of creation but is also the material principle. The scholars like G. Costa, D. T. Laloo and H. Elias viewed *ka Meiramew* as the primordial element out of which the Sun, Moon, Wind, Water, Fire, stars, etc., originated. *Ka Meiramew* is said to have had the divine marriage with *u Basa u Ryngkew* who are the sky fathers and deities of land and rivers. Out of their union,
the different world of objects have come into existence.

In a nutshell ka Meiramew is a female principle who is powerful, self-regulating, a conscious organism and a biologically controlled system. Till today, the traditional Khasis have the conception that ka Meiramew is a living entity. For this reason, they offer some grains of rice to her at the time they take their meals. Generally, they use to say a few words, like:

Oh! Mother Earth, I bow and thank to you,
You have blessed mankind with food grains;
Take this food, I offer to you.
Take it and share my food.\textsuperscript{12}

Above all, ka Meiramew or Mother Earth has been conceived by the Khasis as the female active principle, while u Basa u Ryngkew are conceived as the lesser active male principles.

The term Ramew (Earth) is at times equated with the Latin term ‘terra’ which means ‘land’. U Nissor Singh defines the term ‘ramew’ as land or soil which has certain potential forces in it. In an ordinary sense, the term ‘ramew’ means the geological earth and its lower strata. In the context of agriculture, ka ramew refers to the cultivable or usable land or soil where the agriculturists can cultivate or till it. Incidentally the Khasis also conceived ka Ramew
as the provider of our needs.

The Khasis hold two views with regard to the question of, how Ramew becomes Meiramew? The first view, presents Ramew as a character, that is, a female being. Ramew married u Basa (Divine being) and gave birth to five children, ka Sngi (Sun - daughter), u Bnai (Moon - son), ka Um (Water - daughter), ka Lyer (Air - daughter) and ka Ding (Fire - daughter). Ramew died and the dead body was given to the daughters to burn. After all other daughters failed to cremate their mother's body, the chance was given to the last daughter, ka Ding (Fire). The dead body was reduced to ashes and became the earth. As earth was the mother of Sun, Moon, Water, Air and Fire, she becomes Meiramew or Mother Earth.

Another view, states that ka Lisan (Primal Earth) married u Basa (Divine Being) and gave birth to seven children, namely, ka Sngi (Sun-daughter), u Bnai (Moon-son), u Pyrthat (Thunder-son), ka Um (Water-daughter), u Jumai (Earthquake-son), ka Lyer (Air-daughter), and ka Ding (Fire-daughter). U Basa left and never came back. Ka Ramew now single, married u Ryngkew (another male being) and gave birth to u Maw (Stone-son) and ka Khyndew (Earth-daughter). Ka Lisan died and her dead body was given to the daughters for cremation. One daughter after another failed to cremate their mother's
body. Finally, a chance was given to ka Ding (Fire-daughter) who successfully managed to cremate her mother’s dead body. The other sisters got angry at her success and wished to kill ka Ding. Ka khyndew (Earth-daughter) saved the life of ka Ding by hiding her. After this, however, there was a reconciliation between Ka Ding and her sisters and ka Khyndew was given the title of ka Meiramew. Since that time, there is a close link between ka Ramew and ka Meiramew. Ka Meiramew holds different life forms on her lap and provides their various needs. She becomes a source of growth, fertility and natural beauty.

Very often, the Khasis regard ka Meiramew as a symbol of fertility and fruitfulness. Soso Thani emphasizes the produce given by ka Meiramew when he says:

Forever cultivation is there,
Evening they come, morning they go;
They sow the seeds on the soil,
Mother Earth will give them life and growth.¹³

Spinoza has a unique conception of God and the world. He identifies God with the whole cosmos. His famous formula is *Deus sive Natura* which means God or Nature. He uses the terms ‘God’ and ‘Nature’ interchangeably. He holds the view that nothing can exist or be conceived without God. God is a being absolutely infinite. In other words, God is a substance consisting of
infinite attributes. Each of the attributes expresses the eternal and infinite essence of God.

Unlike Descartes, Spinoza is a monist. He holds the view that, there is only one substance. He speaks of God as a single and infinite substance. He defines substance as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: I mean that the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed." This means that substance has no external cause but has the cause of itself within itself. In this connection, Spinoza conceived God as a self-caused infinite substance. He defines attribute as "that which an intellect perceives as consisting the essence of substance."

Spinoza does not contrast God and the world as if they were as different and distinct as cause and effect. In other words, he does not regard God as the immaterial cause and the world as the material effect. For Spinoza, God is interchangeable with Nature. He holds the view that there is only one substance.

Let me examine here briefly the similarities and differences between Spinoza's and the Khasis' view of God and creation. God is the ground of the world for Spinoza. According to him, there are two aspects of Nature. He uses the two expressions, namely, (i) *Natura naturans*, and (ii) *Natura naturata*. By the expression, *natura naturans*, he
means substance and its attributes. It means God insofar as He is considered to act by the requirement of His own nature. On the other hand, by *natura naturata*, Spinoza means that everything that follows from the necessity of the nature of God or of any one of God's attributes.

As quoted in *Spinoza*, edited by Marjorie Grene:

By *Natura naturans* we must understand that which is, in itself and is conceived through itself, or those attributes of substance which express eternal and infinite essence, that is, God in so far as he is considered as a free cause. By *Natura naturata* I understand all that follows from the necessity of God's nature, or of any one of God's attributes, that is, all the modes of the attributes of God in so far as they are considered as things which are in God, and which without God can neither be nor be conceived... *Natura naturans* as *actus* i.e., the exhaustively determinate actuality. of this potency it is *Natura naturata*. Genetically God is prior to the world; ontologically they are identical as interminately infinite and infinitely determinate. 

According to Spinoza, the world consists of the modes of God's attributes. Everything in this world is determined by God. He equates substance with God and identifies God with Nature. For Spinoza, God is the primary or principal substance which is infinite, indivisible and eternal. It is an all inclusive Reality. All things belong to this all pervasive substance. This means that God or Substance is an all pervading principle of the universe
including nature.

One can equate the Khasi \textit{U Blei} with Spinoza's conception of God. If I am to use Spinoza's terminology, \textit{U Blei} as the \textit{Natura naturans}, is the ultimate reality and the immanent ground of the world and mother earth. This world and mother earth cannot exist without \textit{U Blei}.

In this sense, God is the only substance which is infinite and eternal. The Khasis believe that it is \textit{U Blei} who created this world and \textit{ka Meiramew}. They cannot exist independently of God. It is so, because both this world and mother earth are just the manifestations or attributes of the Divine. In other words, they are the expressions of \textit{U Blei}. Their existence follow from the necessity of the nature of God. In this connection, this world and \textit{ka Meiramew} belong to the realm of \textit{natura naturata} in Spinoza's terminology. The discussion on the two concepts namely \textit{U Blei} and \textit{ka Meiramew} will be enriched if I can take a cue from Miri's remarks on the relation between the two. She recalls Spinoza's distinction between \textit{Natura naturans} and \textit{Natura naturata}, and writes:

This resembles Spinoza's distinction between \textit{natura naturata} and \textit{natura naturans}. \textit{Ka Meiramew} is \textit{natura naturans}.\textsuperscript{17}

If I were to equate Spinoza's conception of Nature with \textit{ka Meiramew} I could describe it as the Khasis' belief
that *ka Meiramew* is not just the earth (soil) but also the goddess of the earth which has a close association with God. They regard this World and Mother Earth as the dwelling places of the deities. God is not completely outside this World. In a broad sense, we can say, *ka Meiramew* is *Natura naturata* which has a close link with the *Natura naturans*. This World and mother earth will be dissolved into God who is the only ultimate Reality and eternal substance. In this case, *Natura naturata* is not completely distinct and alienable from the *natura naturans*. The Khasi thinkers conceived *U Blei* as the only infinite system which can be looked at from different points of view.

The Khasis differ from Spinoza in the sense that they never identify God with Nature. For them, *U Blei* is the Divine Creator of the World. This world is God's manifestation which He created as an act of His free will. On the other hand, the Khasis hold a similar view with Spinoza. For them this world has no independent existence apart from God. In a strict sense, it is well fitted to say that is the Khasi world view, *U Blei*’s attribute is *Natura naturans* while *ka Meiramew* is the *Natura naturata*.

In this chapter, I have made a modest attempt to understand the reality of *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Meiramew* not only as they are conceived in themselves but also in
In conclusion, let me reiterate that Ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew are seen as the abodes and dwelling places of the various deities. As pointed out earlier, they are regarded as the manifestations of the Supreme Being. A few words about the concept of U Blei and the different deities will be of relevance here. H. O. Mawrie says:

The term 'gods' is another way of addressing God and it does not mean to say that there is one or many gods. It means that God has various names but it does not mean that we are worshipping many gods. They are just the different names given to God in relation to our life and our relationship to Him.

Ka Pyrthei is the manifestation of the Divine. Ka Pyrthei is not the body of U Blei but is a means where He reveals Himself through the various phenomena which happen from time to time. So also ka Meiramew which is part of ka Pyrthei is an instrument by which God reveals Himself.

Mawrie holds the view that U Blei is at work in ka Pyrthei where he reveals Himself in various forms because He himself is formless. Those deities who have the attributes of U Blei are generally called ki blei (gods).

According to Khasi tradition the highest reality is one supreme being called U Blei, God the Creator. He also is the provider (Nongbuh) and
the maintainer (Nongsei). However this God has no form. Sometimes he is addressed as a female deity but very often as a U Blei ka Blei (He-God, She-God).¹⁹

Not only does U Blei reveal Himself in a variety of forms in the world, but also reveals the deities that dwell within the various phenomena of ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew. The gods and goddesses constitute the very essence of ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew. This suggests that U Blei is both active and operative in the world. He has unlimited manifestations and operations in the world. This is one of the reasons that makes the Khasi thinkers to regard ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew as the abodes of the Divine. According to this understanding, ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew are the means and the sources of the divine revelation of God to man.

We should bear in mind that the Khasis believe that the plans or purposes of God are hidden from man's knowledge. It is for this reason that man is in need of the revelation of God from time to time. It is very interesting to note that the Khasis believe that God can reveal Himself in and through ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew. On the other hand, ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew are the manifestations of God's mind or inner reality. In other words, it means that they are the expressions of the Divine. Soso Tham also strongly believes that U Blei and other deities dwell and
operate actively on 'U Lum Shyllong' (Shillong Peak). According to Thanu, *U Lum Shyllong* is a symbol of God’s greatness and artistic creativity. He says:

What more do I want,
Of the whole world;
But to have just a glance.
How do the gods live.\(^29\)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. As per one of the creation myths of the Khasis, man separated from God as a result of his failure to keep his covenant with God.


12. Information provided by (Late) Mr. Hipshon Roy Kharshiing at Shillong on 3rd April 2002.


17. Sujata Miri, *Khasi World View*, p. 55

18. H.O. Mawrie, *Ka Theology*, p.80

19. Sujata Miri, *Khasi World View*, p.21