CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF KA PYRTHEI

_Ka Niam Khasi_ (Khasi Religion) gives us a substantive background of the elders, thoughts and speculations regarding the concept of _ka Pyrthei_.

When the poets and myth-tellers refer to _ka Meiramew, ka Bneng_ (heaven) and _ka Hawhaw_ as the atmospheric region between them, they actually speak of the various phenomena occurring in these above mentioned regions. They talk about certain powers that are abiding and operating in these different regions generally known as _ki blei_ (gods).

It is very difficult to trace the historical development of the Khasi conception of _ka Pyrthei_. But one assumes that the Khasi speculation about _ka Pyrthei_ started very early and together with the totality of the speculations regarding existence itself. They may have asked themselves these questions: (i) Was there any creator of this _ka Pyrthei_? (ii) How did he create it? (iii) What is the nature of this _ka Pyrthei_? (iv) How it is related to us? (v) How can we know or study it?

Before attempting to answer these questions, let one point be made clear right at the beginning, and that is — Khasis see _ka Pyrthei_ as an orderly system consisting of _ka_
Mciramew as below ka Bneng which is the physical heaven or sky or the space above ka Meiramew. And Ka Meiramew on which we live is separated from ka Bneng by a vast expanse of the atmospheric region (hawhaw). While ka Meiramew is the Mother goddess and Divine Creatrix, ka Bneng is regarded as the original home of man. Ka Meiramew and ka Bneng are actually a complementary pair of realities. It is unthinkable for the Khasis to think of a divine marriage between ka Bneng and ka Meiramew because in Khasi language both of them are of the feminine gender. It is therefore believed that ka Bneng sent its agents u Basa and u Ryngkew who are the male deities to be the sky fathers to have the divine marriage with ka Meiramew to cause the world of objects to come into existence. In any case of the two, that is, the male versus the female deity, it is the female which occupies the centre stage in Khasi tradition. The union of U Basa and Ka Meiramew may be compared with the vision of the Vedic thought where Earth is given more importance in comparison to the sky, that is, Dyava. The name of the male is mostly in combination with the female.

The Vedic people loved the Earth much more than the Sky or the Heaven, and the word for the Sky or Heaven, Dayus, occurs more often in combination with the name of the Earth as a dual compound than alone. There are such dual-compounds of the word Dyaus with a few names of the Earth, Dydva-Prithivi, Dyava-Ksama and
Dyava-Bhumī. And this pair appears far more times in the Rgveda than any pair of god.¹

It is interesting to note that the Khasi thinkers thought of ka Pyrthei as having two halves, namely, ka Bneng which is shajrong (above) and ka Meiramew which is sha thian (below) and the two halves are joined together by a gigantic tree which is regarded as the symbol of goodness and righteousness. H.O. Mawrie writes:

On the top of U Sohpetbneng Peak there grew a Tree which served as a ladder of communication between God and Man. That was then the Golden Age after Creation. But this happy state of things had its end for in the course of time Man i.e., U Hynniew Trep U Hynniew Skum, the ancestors of the Khasi Race, drifted away from God to choose his own way and thus the Golden Bridge had to collapse. This parable speaks of one thing and that is Man’s Transgression and Man’s Fall.²

After the Fall there grew on the top of U Diengiei Peak another Tree which was a big as it was tall and its ever spreading branches and leaves became so thick as to overcast the Earth with darkness.³

In both Khasi creation myths of U Sohpetbneng (Mount navel of heaven) and U Diengiei (Divine Tree), there is a talk of a world tree which is the unifier and separator of the two halves, ka Bneng and ka Meiramew of ka Pyrthei.
*Ka Bneng* is the physical heaven because human beings could come and go from *ka Bneng* to *ka Meiramew* and vice versa through the Golden Ladder (*Jingkieng Ksiar*) which bridged the gap between *ka Meiramew* and *ka Bneng*. Soso Tham, in his poem, *Ka Aiom Ksiar* which means the Golden Age writes:

Out of the sixteen huts on high,  
People of seven huts came to live here;  
To show the Righteousness of God...⁴

R. S. Lyngdoh while referring to the people of the Golden Age as seen in the Khasi mythologies describes it as follows:

... The people of the Seven Huts in heaven were sent to come and live on the empirical world with a view to be its rulers and to continue to come and go to heaven through the Golden Bridge which was located on the hill of Sohpetbneng.⁵

Here, we see that the number *Khathynriew* (sixteen families) which Soso Tham refers to, means sixteen tribes or families. Prior to *ka Dorbar Blei ba nyngkong*⁶ (First General Divine Council) the people of the sixteen huts remained with *U Blei* in heaven. They came down to live on Earth with a specific purpose: to till the land, to
cultivate it and to be the steward-rulers of *ka Meiramew* and all the living beings. Creation at that particular age was in perfect harmony with *U Blei* and with each other. This appears in sharp contrast to other theories of primeval origin. For instance, in China, Lao-Tzu describes this state as: "There was something formless yet complete, that existed before heaven and earth; without sound, without substance, dependent on nothing, unchanging, all pervading, unfailing. It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang."^7

The hymn then continues: "Darkness was in the beginning hidden by darkness; indistinguishable, this all was water. That which, coming into being, was covered with the void, that One arose through the power of heat." In the Tao Te Ching we find: "We can but call it the Mystery or rather the 'Darker than any Mystery'; the Doorway whence issued all Secret Essences"; and in *Genesis* (1:2). "And darkness was on the face of the deep and the spirit of God was moving on the face of the waters."^8

However, the Khasis insist that during that time the human beings and the animals could understand and speak the same language. Soso Tham speaks about this common language as follows:

*All they speak of one language:*
That is before devil could appear.
All of them worship the Supreme God.\(^9\)

Donbok T. Laloo referred to the prevalent scenario of the living beings of the Golden Age as follows:

The people of the Seven Huts managed the administration verbally and orally. They maintained healthy relationship with the members of the Nine Huts above and God. They could communicate with every one with the universal language. The administration functioned smoothly and every one lived in peace and harmony during the time of the Golden Age. All species increased in number. The ruling Seven Huts got the title Seven Crowns who ruled the seven Kingdoms with clean and efficient administration under the leadership of King Lakriah.\(^10\)

The Khasis in the ancient past spoke of the presence of the realities in the space above us. Both, the realities above and the earth below, were seen as the abodes of the gods (ki hlei).

To recapitulate, \textit{ka Pyrthei} may be seen as consisting of three main regions, namely, \textit{ka Bneng} which is above, \textit{ka Meiramew} which is below and \textit{ka hawhaw} (an atmospheric region or space) between \textit{ka Bneng} and \textit{ka Meiramew}. Their conception of \textit{ka Pyrthei} as of three-fold division, regards each region as inter-related with the other regions. Of course there is no mention
anywhere of the actual distance from *ka Meiramew* below to *ka Bueng shajrong* (heaven above).

Incidentally when the Khasis speak of *Bam Hynroh ka Sngi. u Bnai* (Solar Eclipse, Lunar Eclipse and the Sun’s refusal to shine) they also hint at other concealed places which are not visible and are a mystery to humans.

We could understand that the people who lived in this golden era lived an active life on earth. They worshipped a number of gods and *Ka Hok* seen as the Universal Principle of Righteousness operated everywhere in the world.

*Ka Pyrthei* is composed of many elements, namely, Earth (*Khyndeiw*), Water (*Um*), Wind (*Lyer*), Fire (*Ding*) and others. U Sib Charan Roy holds the view that the living material objects and living organisms like plants and animals are composed of various kinds of elements and their combinations. The celestial regions are associated with light while the earth is related to smell and darkness. The month of July is called *Naitung* which means ‘smell-month’.

Interestingly the Khasis found most of the phenomena on the earth as having originated from the higher regions. They appeared to have perceived other regions which are behind and beyond what we normally see around us. This can be seen in their discussion of the three-fold division of
ka Pyrthei consisting of ka Ramew, ka Haw-haw (atmospheric region) and ka Bneng. First is their conception of the visible ka Pyrthei as seen with their eyes but at the same time they have an insight into something deeper than what ordinary men can see and hear. They speak of the nature of ka Pyrthei as not merely limited to what is seen with the physical eyes.

Only few men can see the finer aspects of ka Pyrthei which consists in ki blei (gods) and ka Hōk as the source of cosmic order and moral law. It is noteworthy to mention in this connection that the ancient Khasis have the perception of the connective relation between the visible Pyrthei and the concealed Pyrthei. The visible part of ka Pyrthei in this connection refers to the physical world in which we live. As mentioned earlier ka Ramew is the visible part of the sum total of ka Pyrthei and it is commonly spoken of, as ka Pyrthei sha Thian or the world below. The other regions are commonly expressed by the Khasis as ka Pyrthei sha Jrong or the world above. Till today, the traditional Khasis, especially the diviner (Nongknia) used to pray to U Blei (God) as U Blei Najrong Na Thian which means “Oh! God who dwells in the heaven above and the Earth below”. H. Lyngdoh makes some observations on the Khasi prayer at the goat’s sacrifice (Pomblang) held at Nongkrem as follows:
Oh God, Lord Master, one thousand thanks.
You are Supreme, Lord command-giver.
You put human beings in this World.
Under the heaven above, on the Earth below.\textsuperscript{11}

Let me say a word about Khasi cosmology. The Khasi cosmology is not of one connected narrative. The Khasi people have many creation narratives. Recent Khasi Cosmologists have made an attempt to construct a cosmology by reproducing their traditional cosmological thought. Sib Charan Roy holds the view that \textit{ka Pyrthei} came into being as a result of the combination of several atoms called \textit{‘ki Phngit-longdoh’}. G. Costa, H. Elias and D. T. Laloo are of the opinion that \textit{ka Ramew} is a creation of \textit{U Blei} with its implicit order. Human beings are not a creation out of the dust of Earth but products of the heavenly creation sent to Earth. The rest of creation is the product of the divine union of \textit{ka Meiramew} and the sky fathers and deities called \textit{u Basa u Ryngkew}.

Practically speaking, all the Khasi cosmologists recognize the presence of the transcending and operative power of an all-powerful Intelligent Being (\textit{U Blei U Balah U Baiai}). The cosmologists have given various names to this Being. For example, (a) \textit{U Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw} which means God, the Creator and Planner, (b) \textit{U Blei Nongsei Nongpynlong} which means God the Giver and Dispenser of Life, (c) \textit{U Blei Nongthaw Bynriew U
Nongbuh Bynriew which means God the Creator of mankind and Planner of mankind. (d) U Blei Trai Kynrad which means the Lord-God and Master of everything.

All the above mentioned names of God, suggest a theistic account of the role of U Blei as Creator of the world. They see U Blei as an Intelligent Being (U Balah U Baiai) who produced the Earth (Ramew) and disclosed the sky (bneng) by his own wisdom and might. Being the one who produced the heaven (bneng) and Ramew He is the most skillful artisan of all beings. He had the ‘desire’ to create ka Pyrthei exercising His freewill and creativity. Thus He is the bond between the Non-entity and the ‘entity’. He was there in the beginning and established the bneng and the ramew. He created ka Meiramew, U Basa U Ryngkew (sky fathers and deities) and placed them in this ka Pyrthei.

Thinkers like Sib Charan Roy, G. Costa, H. Elias and D. T. Laloo agree in ascribing the causation of ka Pyrthei to an omnipotent intelligent Being though they differ on the mode of description of such causation.

We must note the fact that the Khasi thinkers hold the view that the world is created out of something and not out of nothing. Let me here refer to a Vedic poem on creation from a primordial principle which is non-existent. It begins as follows:
There was not the non-existent nor the existent then:
There was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond.
What did it contain? Where? In whose protection?
Was there water, unfathomable, profound?
There was not death nor immortality then.
There was not the beacon of night, nor of day.
That one breathed, windless, by its own power.
Other than that there was not anything beyond.¹²

This perception of the origin of the world as the evolution of the existent from the non-existent is unacceptable to Sib Charan Roy. Of course there was neither non-entity nor entity that could precede God's existence. There was no atmosphere nor sky above; there were no living beings on the earth (ramew) or below because the desire to create had not yet arisen in the Creator's mind. But this does not mean that creation comes out of nothing. Sib Charan Roy writes:

From nothing comes nothing; from something which truly exists, has a body, shape, colour, comes out of what has body, shape, colour.¹³

G. Costa, H. Elias, D. T. Laloo and Soso Tham hold the view that creation can be produced directly by U Blei or indirectly through the instrumentality of ka Hukum (Command-Giver) or through ka Meiramew, that is through her union with u Basa u Ryngkew who are the sky fathers and deities of this world. This shows that the Khasi cosmologists agree with the principle that creation is a
product of something. On the other hand, they are against the idea of Creatio-Ex nihilo and advocating the notion of the 'Ex nihilo nihil fit'. According to them, before making a table, the idea of tableness is already in the mind of the carpenter. U Blei is regarded as the starting point of all phenomenal existence and the root and the source of ka Pyrthei.

The Khasis do not consider U Blei as a 'cause' and this world (Pyrthei) as an 'effect'. To them, ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramew, though they have been created by U Blei, yet they are not related to God as a cause and effect because according to them, ka Pyrthei (World) and ka Meiramew (Mother Earth) are co-existing with God.

In the Upanisads, Brahman is described in two ways, one is nirguna Brahman which is formless, transcendental, unconditioned and beyond our reach. The other is saguna Brahman which has a form, is immanent, conditioned and accessible. Saguna Brahman as God is not a different existence from nirguna Brahman as the cause and ruler or governor of the world and accessible to man as the object of worship. Nirguna Brahman, on the other hand, being beyond all attributes, cannot respond to the needs and prayers of man. The Upanisads make the distinction between eternity and temporality, nirguna Brahman and saguna Brahman and the transcendental God and the
immanent God. These distinctions are some of the ways in which the Upanisads try to explain God's relation to the world and human beings.

In the Upanisads 'to create' means to become and becoming is non-different from being. In this connection, becoming is not illusory but the manifestation of being which lies hidden from us. In other words, the manifested form the reality in its phenomenality and the hidden form is its noumenality. In this case, phenomenality and noumenality are not two diametrically opposite concepts but two sides of the same thing. The Upanisads deny the independent status of the world because it cannot exist apart from Brahman. In other words, Brahman stands for the whole reality including the world.\(^\text{15}\)

As it has been repeatedly asserted, the Upanisadic assertion of the oneness of the ultimate Reality does not necessarily mean denying manyness. It only means 'the one in the many'. In other words, to assert infinity of the ultimate Reality does not necessarily mean to assert finiteness. It means that manyness and finiteness may not be final with regard to their existence because they are a borrowed form of the one ultimate reality.

Radhakrishnan describes this universality of Brahman as the first principle of the universe which is known through \textit{atman}, the inner-self of man. The whole world is
Brahman, the soul of mine which is within the heart is also Brahman. The absoluteness of God is qualified in the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja so as to admit of God's existence within the scope of His universal free activity.\textsuperscript{16}

Ramanuja used an *Upaṇisadic* type of analogy. He says, our clothes are warm because the body is warm. There is no heat in the clothes but the heat comes from the body within. According to Ramanuja, the life of all the creatures is derived from one source of life behind them. Their life comes from the Giver of Life. Ultimately, God (Brahman) and the world are one. Substantively, this does not mean that God is identical with the world but it means that God is present, active and is within the world. God is related to the world not as an outsider or spectator but as an insider. In fact, God is related to the world as the human soul is related to the body. God is the inner and immortal controller of the world from inside. God is never identified with the world; rather He is distinctly felt and recognized as different from the world which He animates. Ramanuja goes to the extent of saying that since God is formless, He created the world in order that through it His nature may be revealed. In this sense, the world of physical objects is an instrument by which God can make known and reveal His wisdom and greatness. So far Ramanuja's conception of God would be similar to the Khasi conception of *U Blei*. However, while
for Ramanuja, individual souls and the world are real as parts and manifestations of the same Brahman, it is not so for the Khasis. Ramanuja believes in the causal theory of Parinama-vada, that is to say, the effect is an actual transformation of the cause as curd is nothing else but the transformed milk. It is the doctrine of the modifiability of the cause.

It is interesting to note that Ramanuja holds the view that God within His all-inclusive and pervasive position transcends both the unconscious matter (acit) which is without intelligence and the finite souls or spirits (cit) which have certain intelligence in them. According to Ramanuja, acit is the source of the material objects called Prakrti. It is seen as the root and origin of material things. Here he seems to have been influenced by the Upanisads. He believes that the unconscious matter (acit) is the body of God and God is the controller from within just as a human body is controlled from within by the soul.

As pointed out earlier, Ramanuja admits three entities, viz., Isvara, who is the supreme Reality, cit which are the individual souls (jivas) and acit, the matter. And Isvara is the basis (adhyasa) of the entire universe. For Ramanuja, the world of multiplicity is the manifestation of Brahman. The evolution of the world from Prakrti is real
transformation of God. He criticizes Samkara because he interprets God's manifestation as nothing or unreality.\textsuperscript{17}

Ramanuja states that the world is not infinite as the ultimate Reality (Brahman). It means that the world is real from an empirical standpoint, that is to say, for those who rely on sense experience. But the world appears unreal for those who have trans-empirical consciousness. To Ramanuja, Brahman and Atman are one, the universal self and the individual self are one, because according to him, Atmanjñana is Brahmanjñana.

As is well-known, Ramanuja denies the unreality of the world and lays emphasis on Bhakti as a means of salvation (Moksa). At times, the Visistadvaita is termed as the religious cult of the Vaisnavaits. For Ramanuja, Brahman is the highest reality in spirit but with attributes. Brahman also is self-consciousness with knowledge of Himself. Ramanuja's philosophy is called qualified or modified non-dualism (Visistadvaita). Ramanuja identifies one and the same reality of God and creation by identifying God with Brahman. To Ramanuja, Brahman is God with whom souls can enter into personal relationship by love and devotion.

Though the Upanisads have many theories of creation, it is commonly asserted that in respect of
substance the world is not radically different from its ultimate source which means God.

Ramanuja takes a positive attitude towards the notion of creation. He regards the created matter as something real and good rather than as an illusory one. He is of the opinion that God (Brahman) creates the diverse objects and human beings in the world for experience and self-realization. So also the Khasi myths of creation emphasize God’s plan for mankind to dwell on this earth with diverse manifestation of nature in mutual respect.

Ramanuja’s view is vishistadvaita or non-dualism qualified by difference. The Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is qualified by diversity. It is a concrete whole (vishista) which consists of the inter-related and inter-dependent subordinate elements which are called ‘vishesanas’ and the immanent and controlling spirit which is called ‘vishesya’. Unity means realization of being a vital member of this organic whole. God or the Absolute is this whole. He is the immanent inner controller, the Supreme Reality who holds together in unity the dependent matter and individual souls as His body. Ramanuja recognizes three things as ultimate and real (tattva-traya). These are matter (achit), souls (chit) and God (Ishvara). Though all are equally real, the first two are absolutely dependent on God. Though they are substances in
themselves, yet in relation to God, they become His attributes. They are the body of God who is their soul. God is the soul of nature. God is also the soul of souls. Our souls are souls in relation to our bodies, but in relation to God, they become His body and He is their soul. The relation between the soul and the body is that of inner inseparability (aprthaksiddhi). This is also the relation between substance and attribute. Aprthak-siddhi is the relation between the body and the soul, between a substance and its attributes, between parts and whole and may be between one substance and another. It is an inner, inseparable, vital and organic relation. God is qualified by matter and souls.¹⁸

They form His body and are inseparable from and utterly dependent on Him. Ramanuja defines a body as that which is controlled, supported and utilized for its purposes by a soul. Matter and souls are called attributes (prakara) of God; they are the controlled (niyamya), the supported (dharya), the parts (amsha) and the accessory means (shesa), while God is their substance (prakari), controller (niyanta), support (adhara), the whole (amshi) and the principal end (shesi). They are eternal with God, but are not external to him. God is free from all external differences — homogeneous (saja-tiya) as well as heterogeneous (vijatiya), since there is nothing either similar or dissimilar which is external to or other than
Him. But He possesses internal differences (svagata bheda) as His organic body is made of real and diverse elements like matter and souls. His relation with them is natural (svabhavika) and eternal (sanatana). God is both the material and the instrumental cause of the world. He is the immanent as well as the transcendent ground of the world. He is immanent in the whole world as its inner controller (antaryami) and yet in His essence He transcends the world. His is a perfect personality. He is full of all good qualities - Existence, Knowledge and Bliss; Truth, Goodness and Beauty; Lustre, Love and Power.

Ramanuja finds justification for his doctrine of the Absolute as a Triune Unity in the following Upanisadic passages. The Shvetashvatara says: There are three ultimate existences - the eternal and all-knowing and all-powerful God, the eternal powerless soul and the eternal matter, and these three constitute the Absolute. The same Upasad further tells us:

This alone need be known and there is nothing else to be known that there are three entities, the enjoyer (bhokta), the enjoyed (bhogya) and the mover (prerita), which constitute the Absolute. If a man knows these three he knows Brahman. The same Upasad goes on. The One God who runs through all beings, who is all-pervasive and who is the immanent inner controller of all beings is the
Supreme Reality. There is nothing greater than He, there is nothing external to Him. He fills the whole universe. The *Taittiriya* Upanisad tells us that all beings arise from, live in and return to this Brahman. God is the soul of Nature and also the soul of souls. He is immanent and yet He is transcendent. The *Brhadaranyaka* Upanisad describes Him as the running thread (*sutra*) which binds together all the worlds and all the souls. He is the immanent inner controller (*antaryami*) of all. He is present in matter and yet He is different from matter; matter does not know Him; matter forms His body; He controls matter from within; He is the Supreme Soul, the *Antaryami*, the Immortal. Just as the spokes are bound together within the wheel, so also all the elements and all the souls are bound together within this Atman. He is like fire; they are like sparks. They are real; He is their reality. They are true; He is their truth. Hence He is called the Truest of the true.  

In Ramanuja’s account of God, we may notice three points of importance. First, God is identified with the Absolute. He is Brahman and Brahman must be a *savishesa* or a qualified unity. God stands for the whole universe and matter and souls form His body, He being their soul. As the Absolute, the ultimate unity-in-and-through-trinity, the concrete Whole, God may be viewed through two stages — as cause and as effect. During the state of dissolution (*pralaya*), God remains as the cause with subtle matter and
unembodied souls form His body. The whole universe lies latent in Him. During the state of creation (srsti), the subtle matter becomes gross and the unembodied souls (except the nitya and mukta souls) become embodied according to their karmas. In this effect-state the universe becomes manifest. The former state is called the causal state (karanavastha) of Brahman, while the latter state is the effect-state (karyavastha) of Brahman. Secondly, God is considered as the immanent inner controller (antaryami), the qualified substance (vishesya or prakari) who is in Himself changeless and is the unmoved Mover of this world-process. In His essence He does not suffer change which is said to fall to the lot of His attributes or modes only. Ramanuja makes no distinction between an attribute and a mode.  

Matter and souls may be called either attributes or modes (prakara). They are absolutely dependent on God and are inseparable from Him. They are His body and He is their soul. Just as in the case of an ordinary individual, only the body undergoes change while the soul is changeless. Similarly it is only the body of God, that is, matter and the individual souls, that undergo changes and not God himself who is their soul. Hence God is the unchanging controller of all changes and the limitations of matter as well as the miseries and the imperfections of the finite souls do not affect the essence of God. Thirdly, God
is also transcendent. He is the perfect personality. He has a Divine body (*aprakrtadahavishista*). Embodiment is not the cause of bondage. It is karma which is the cause of bondage. Hence God, though embodied, is not bound, for He is the Lord of Karma. The first two points about God are derived from the interpretation of the *Upanisads*, while this point which is theistic in character is the result of the *Bhagavata* influence on Ramanuja. According to scholars, Ramanuja tries to fuse the immanent *Upanisadic* Absolute with the transcendent God of the *Pancharatra* or *Bhagavata* theism. God, as the perfect personality, is devoid of all demerits and possesses all merits. He has infinite knowledge and bliss. He has a Divine body and is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. He has His consort *Lakshmi*, the symbol of power and mercy. He is called *Narayana* or *Vasudeva*. He lives in His citadel Vaikuntha which is made of Pure *Sattva* (*shuddha sattva*) or *Nityavibhuti*. His qualities like knowledge, power and mercy etc. are eternal, infinite, numberless, unlimited, undefiled and matchless. He is knowledge to the ignorant, power to the powerless, mercy to the guilty, grace to the afflicted, parental affection to the impure, perennial attachment to those who fear separation, nearness to those who pine to see Him, and kindness to all. Though One in Himself, He manifests Himself in five forms in order to help His devotees. As the immanent soul of the universe,
He is *Antaryami* (first form). As the transcendent personal Lord, *Narayana* or *Vasudeva*, He is *Para* or Supreme (second form). As the creator, preserver and destroyer.\(^{22}\)

God reveals Himself through four-fold *Vyuha* (third form). His manifestation as the Lord is called *Vasudeva* (this should be distinguished from the *Para Vasudeva* of whom this is the first manifestation). His manifestation as the ruler of the cognitive aspect of the souls (*buddhitattva* or *jivatattva*) and as the creator of this universe is called *Pradyumna*. His manifestation as the ruler of the volitional aspect of the souls (*ahankaratattva*) and as the preserver of this universe is called *Aniruddha*. All these four manifestations are called *Vyuha* and they are the partial and incomplete manifestations of the Supreme Lord (*Para*). When God descends down on this earth in the human or the animal form, He is called *Vibhava* or *Avatara* (incarnation) (fourth form). He does so in order to protect the good, punish the wicked and restore the *dharma*, the Law. *Vibhava* is of two kinds — primary (*mukhya*) when the Lord Himself descends, like in *Krsna*, and secondary (*gauna*) when the souls are inspired by the Lord, like Shiva, Buddha etc. Of these only the former is to be worshipped by the seekers for liberation. The fifth and the last form of God is when out of His extreme mercy He takes the form of the holy idols (*archavatara*) enshrined in
the recognized temples like *Shrirangam* so that His devotees might get opportunities to serve Him physically.  

Creation, according to Ramanuja, is absolutely real. The world and souls are as real as God Himself. They are neither created nor are they destroyed. Ramanuja believes in *Parinama-Vada*, the theory that the effect necessarily pre-exists in its material cause. Creation, therefore, like that in *Sankhya*, means only explicit manifestation of the effect which was already implicitly contained in its material cause and destruction means only the return of the effect in the bosom of its material cause. Ramanuja believes in the *parinamavada* form of *satkaryavada* which means that the material cause really changes itself in the form of its effect. The effect is a real transformation of its material cause, just as curd is a real transformation of milk or a gold ornament is of gold or an earthen pot is of earth. Change is not apparent but real. His view is known as *Brahmaparinamavada* because according to it the entire universe including the material world and the individual souls is a real modification of Brahman. Though Ramanuja, like *Sankhya*, believes in *Prakrti*, unlike it, he makes *Prakrti* absolutely dependent on God and controlled by God from within just as the body is controlled from within by the soul. The world of matter and the souls, as stated above, are as real as God. Independence, according to Ramanuja, does not constitute the essence of reality.
thing in order to be real need not be independent. The material world and the souls are absolutely real though they are absolutely dependent on God. Though substances in themselves, in relation to God they are merely His attributes or modes. They always qualify God and form His body and He is their soul. They are organically related to Him and are not external to Him.²⁴

God is All-inclusive and includes matter and souls within Himself as His body controls them both from within. Matter and souls are different from each other and are also different from God, the controller, though they are not external to Him. They are co-eternal with Him. God neither creates them nor destroys them. Creation means that the subtle matter called Prakrti evolves into gross elements and the immaterialized souls become housed in gross bodies according to their karmas. The process of creation starts in order to enable the souls to reap the fruits of their past deeds and this process is said to be beginningless so that there ever remains the possibility of past deeds. The law of Karma, therefore, necessitates creation. And yet Ramanuja says that creation and dissolution of the world are due to the sweet will of God; they are His lila or sport. The contradiction has to be reconciled by supposing that the Law of Karma represents the will of God. God is self-determined and Karma is the
expression of His self-determined will. The charges of tyranny, cruelty and partiality are thus ruled out.

The similarities between Ramanuja conception of God and creation and the Khasi conception of God (*U Blei*) and creation may be briefly shown as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ramanuja's Views of God and Creation</th>
<th>Khasi View of God and Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Non-dualistic</td>
<td>Non-dualistic in substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a substantive unity of God and creation.</td>
<td>There is a substantive oneness between <em>U Blei</em> and <em>ka Pyrthei</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This world is the manifestation of God.</td>
<td>This world is created by God for His manifestation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is non-God is the mode or attribute of God.</td>
<td>Whatever is non-God is the work of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This world is finite and God is infinite.</td>
<td>This world is finite and God is infinite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of creation leads to the knowledge of God.</td>
<td>To know a man or a tree in its correct perspective is to know God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• God is the creator and inner controller of this world (antaryami).

• God is different from the world in form and function and not in substance.

• God (Brahman) is both transcendent and immanent.

• Creation is absolutely real.

• The world is the body of God.

• Brahman is the cause and God is the creator and preserver of this world. He controls it from within.

God is the creator of this world and this world is His creation. Ultimately, the world goes back to God at the time of dissolution.

God exists everywhere. He is both transcendent and immanent.

Creation is real. This world is not an illusion. It has a distinct existence.

The world is the body of the goddess called ka Meiramew who co-exists with God.

U Blei created ka Pyrthei
the world is an effect. and makes it His dwelling place.

The Khasis like Ramanuja see the relation between God and the world as the relation between the Creator and the Created. This shows that ka Pyrthei is a dependent reality. This means that the World gets its existence from U Blei. In the other words, it means that ka Pyrthei has no independent existence apart from U Blei.

However, both U Blei and ka Pyrthei are two distinct realities. The two realities are not identical or one and the same because they have their own identities. For Ramanuja, Brahma and the world are two expressions of the same reality. For the Khasis, U Blei and ka Pyrthei are two distinct realities but inseparable.

For Ramanuja the world is real. Similarly for the Khasis ka Pyrthei which means world is also real. It is not an illusion but a reality which has its own identity. In this sense, like Ramanuja the Khasis hold the view that the world is not an illusion. For the Khasis, the word ‘maian’ which is similar with the term ‘maya’ does not mean illusion. It means that the all-pervasive and creative power of U Blei which is very difficult to comprehend for the human mind, too great for us to grasp.
When the Khasis regard God as formless, they once again come very close to the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja. He created the world with the purpose of making it an instrument where He can manifest His nature and character. As said earlier, for Ramanuja, the world is related to God (Brahman) like the relation of the human body to the soul. For the Khasis the presence of *U Blei* could be felt everywhere in the world.

According to Soso Tham, *ka Pyrthei* is divinely created by *U Blei* and therefore, it is sacred. He emphasizes this notion of sacredness as follows:

East, West, South, North
Is the land the gods live.\(^{25}\)

When all over the world
Is surrounded by God \(^{26}\)

It is for this reason that the Khasis do not construct temples or churches to worship *U Blei*. They hold the view that God can be worshipped anywhere and at any time. Hence, we may safely conclude that the Khasi world view has a lot of affinity to Ramanuja’s Visistadvaita in their conception of the relation between the world and God.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Soso Tham, Ki Sugi Barim U Hyunniew Trep, p.45.


6. Ibid., p. 3.


8. Ibid.


12. Cf. RV. X. 129 and X. 5.3.1.


