CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As pointed out earlier the Khasis see man (u briew) as created by "U Blei having initially lived with "U Blei in heaven. He is viewed as endowed with a body (ka met) and a soul (ka mynsiem) (Refer Chapter III). He is the creature who possesses ka rngiew which means the rational power which adds personality and dignity to him.

"U Blei gave man some moral commandments at the time of creation of this world to be followed while living on earth. These moral commandments are:

A. Kamai ia ka Hok

Kamai ia ka Hok which means to earn Righteousness. It is believed that ka Hok has both intrinsic and extrinsic values. It is intrinsic in the sense that the word Hok can be translated as ‘right’. It has value in itself. As what is right has value, therefore, ka Hok also has value in itself. The word Hok can also be translated as Righteousness. It means that those who do the right thing will be rewarded for their act of righteous deed. In this connection, ka Hok has also an extrinsic value.

The first command, Kamai ia ka Hok, is that we must live justly, that whatever we do should be for the cause of righteousness; that we must not
be actuated by consideration of gain irrespective of right or wrong. Indeed, we must be honest and true not only in our words and actions but in our very thoughts too.\(^1\)

*Ka Hok* is regarded as the greatest of all the Khasi moral Laws and ethical Principles. It has an eternal value. The Khasis used to say *Ka Hok kaba tam ha ka Pyrthei* which means Righteousness is the most essential element. *Ka Hok* is like the Hindu *dharma*. It means that a human action will not go unrewarded. In order to get the reward of *ka Hok* man has to have right speech, right action and right thought.

**B. Tiphriew Tipblei**

*Tiphriew Tipblei* which means knowing man, knowing God. The Khasis believe that charity begins at home. If one says that he loves God whom he cannot see with his physical eyes and hates his family members and friends whom he can see with his physical eyes, then his love has no value. It is just a pretension or a false claim. Before we come to know God, we first come to know and experience our own family members and our neighbours. Man has been conditioned by God to live with other fellow-men. The Khasis regard this world as a testing place for man's goodness and moral character. For instance, the act of killing another shows that one does not know the
goodness of God or he does not have the fear of God. To the Khasis to know man in its right perspective is to know God.

*Tipriew Tipbiel* is that if we are to be God-conscious and serve Him and His will as we must: He, our Maker and Creator who sent us down to earth at our wish with love and care, we must know and realize the needs, difficulties and problems of our fellowmen and help them to the best we can. In short, to serve God is to serve man.

The Khasi word ‘*Tip*’ in this particular context may be translated into English as ‘knowledge’. Negatively, the word ‘*Tip*’ means the absence of ignorance and positively, ‘*Tip*’ means the present of knowledge. Man is a superior being who has been entrusted by God with the power of rationality and morality. Animals are lower beings compared to man, who do things by means of their natural instincts but man has a thinking mind and can make moral judgements of rightness and wrongness.

**C. Tipkur Tipkha**

*Tipkur Tipkha* which means knowing of the maternal and paternal relatives.

*Tipkur Tipkha*, is an emphasis on our duties and obligations to our relations by lineal descent. This needs a little elaboration as it is the rock on which the social structure of the people is built and in withal the fountain head of their moral
precepts. Being a matrilineal society the kinship from the womb of the first ancestress from time immemorial continues down the ages. These are the *kurs*. They must invariably come to the help and rescue of one another, especially in times of calamity, death, misfortune, trouble or abuse or oppression at the hands of others.

The Khasis regarded the three commandments, *Kamai ia ka Hok, Tipbriew Tipblei* and *Tipkur Tipkha* as the sacred rules of life which can lead man to the way of truthfulness, happiness and prosperity.

Man with his fellow creatures, including animals should live together on the lap of *ka Meiramew*. *U Blei* does not expect man to conquer or subdue mother earth but to love and have mutual relation with it. *Ka Meiramew* feeds man like a mother feeding her child. Man is not at all the master of mother earth. He should perform all his actions in accordance with the natural Laws. He should not destroy the natural environment that sustains him.

In the traditional Khasi thought, the concepts *U Blei* and *Kyntang* (sacred) match closely. Most of the Khasi villages have sacred forests called *ki khlaw kyntang*. They are regarded as special dwelling places of *U Blei* or gods (*ki blei*) who will protect and bless the villagers. These forests are also a reminder to man of *U Blei*’s sustaining and unifying power. *U Blei* expects man to fulfill His divine plans in the world.
U Blei created everything with a specific purpose. Man, trees, mountains, hills, rivers, forests, animals, etc., are all the respectable members of the cosmic community. Any violation of the sacred duties and obligations which the living beings have been assigned by God will affect their cosmic community. All species big or small exist not in a complete isolation but they are interrelated with each other.

This understanding of environment as sacred springs from the Khasi understanding that the entire natural order is sacred.

Man, animal, nature, the earth, the sun, and the moon belong to the continuum and form a natural if cosmic moral community which they must all sustain. Moral obligation springs neither from subjective compulsions nor from utility to man’s life and his well-being: nor indeed from any deontological status of the moral rights. It springs rather from the sacredness of the entire natural order. Man, animal, trees, mountains, forests, rivers are equal members of a community with inalienable because sacred obligations, duties to one another.

The Khasis regarded land as sacred not in an instrumental sense i.e., because of its utility to man’s life, but rather in the sense of ‘givenness’. In other words, they believed that their land known as ka Bri Hynniew Trep (land of seven families) was given by U Blei to their
forefathers. Till today, the non-Christian Khasis believe that their mountains, hills, rivers, etc., are the sacred dwelling places of the gods and goddesses. Another reason that led the Khasis to the consideration of the sacredness of the environment is grounded in their belief that $U$ Blei is conceived as both a transcendent and immanent being. In other words, it means that God dwells in the heaven above and also on the earth below.

... we also have the Khasis who, in accordance with their indigenous religion, have been inspired towards environmental preservation. Sacred groves, hills, lakes and rivers are conferred protection under religious sanction. Such protection has conserved bio-diversity that otherwise might have been lost.

$U$ Blei does not relate with ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramei as does a cause to an effect, because He is not an outsider or strange to ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramei. In fact, He resides in ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramei. This explains why ka Pyrthei and ka Meiramei are regarded as having close relations with the divine. We may note here that Khasi thinkers practically draw no dichotomy between sacred and secular. According to them, $U$ Blei operates in the World (Pyrthei) in different ways.

The Khasi religion laid great emphasis on respecting the harmony between man and nature, especially on minimum destruction of living and non-living resources to
satisfy their basic and human needs for survival. They are against the exploitation of nature for the sake of meeting our own ends. To them *U Blei* is the fundamental reality along with Mother Earth (*Meiramew*) and man (*n briew*). Their interlinkages have been discussed and recorded in *ka Niam Khasi* (Khasi religion) in the form of legends, songs, rituals, etc.

In chapter II, I have argued that *ka Meiramew* is not just the earth but the goddess of the earth and also the female principle as well.

According to the Khasi, man is placed at the centre between *U Blei*, the Creator and Mother earth (*Ka Meiramew*). We can safely say that *U Blei*, man and mother earth are the basis of all creation. *U Blei* produces all things, earth nourishes them and man completes them.

According to H.O. Mawrie, nature which is part of *ka Meiramew* is very much alive and can inspire man in many ways.

Nature for a Khasi is like a book. The teaching and wisdom he derives from it, he makes use of in his daily life. He examines meticulously, and with great care the objects around him. He cares for and treasures all he sees and observes so that they could be of help to him in all his needs. Nature is also like a big hospital on whose threshold all types of medicines are to be found which can heal all bodily ailments. Medicine and reason complement one another and a Khasi is not thus helpless. He lives peacefully in his own land and enjoys the embrace of nature.
Some of the mountain peaks and rivers have played a major role in the ancient Khasi life. There is a well-known legend related to the Shillong peak. It runs as follows:

On the foothill of Shillong Peak, there is a cave called Krem Marai. In this cave lived the Daughter of the god of Shillong and her name was unknown. She grew and became a beautiful young girl. Every day she used to come out of the cave to pluck some flowers. One day a young man of Nongksh named Sati Mylliem Ngap caught the Daughter of Shillong's god forcibly while plucking flowers outside the cave. Later, Sati gave her the name 'Pahsyntiew' which means wooing with flowers. Later Sati married Pahsyntiew and raised some children. One day Pahsyntiew went to Krem Marai and never returned home. Since that time the children of Sati and Pahsyntiew became the traditional rulers as Kings and Queen of Hima Shillong. In the course of time the Hima Shillong split into two himas (kingdoms) came to be known as Hima Mylliem and Hima Khyrim of Nongkrem.

It is very interesting to note that till today, in the Hima Khyrim (Khyrim Kingdom), the Lyngshkor (Minister) from the clan of Mylliem Ngap would go to fetch water from the cave (krem) Marai for the anointing ceremony of the Syiem (King) and Syiem Sad (Queen) of Hima Khyrim. Phrikshon Lyngdoh of Nongkrem narrates that the god of Shillong blessed the children and grand children of Pahsyntiew with the nine fetched water sources, namely: (i) ka Pasii, (ii) ka Umtlieng, (iii) ka Sangmein (Umdiengpun), (iv) ka Umjasai, (v) ka Um Risa, (vi) ka
Umshyrpi, (vii) ka Um Kaliar. (viii) ka Um Rynthong. (ix) ka Umdih.  

To reiterate, Khasi religion teaches that only *U Blei* has absolute sovereignty over all creatures including human beings. Man has no dominion over his own life and non-human life. In other words, man cannot act as the viceroy of God over the planet. He has no right to take his own life or the life of his fellowmen. Man can kill the animals just to meet his basic needs but should not kill them mercilessly. This means that man should not kill any of the animal species without adequate justification because humans and non-humans are valuable and have the right of existence.

I have tried to show in Chapter II that, Mother Earth is a component of the world and is closely interlinked with the world as is a part to the whole. This world is a place where man is able to display his talents, skills and to live in accordance with the direction of *ka Hukum* of *U Blei*. Man is the creature whom *U Blei* expects to be with in the next world. There is a link between this world (*kane ka pyrthei*) with the other world (*kawei pat ka pyrthei*) because *ka hneng* is regarded as man’s true home. This present *pyrthei* is only the temporal home. Death is neither a loss nor a destruction but a way to go back to the original home.

In chapter III, I have hinted that man has been placed by *U Blei* to live in this *pyrthei* to fulfill *U Blei*’s purposes.
It is for this reason that U Blei gives man *ki Hukum* as directive principles that will help man to fulfill his duties.

I have also shown the similarities between Ramanuja's conception of the world with the Khasi conception of *ka Pyrthei*. God dwells in nature which is part of *ka Pyrthei*. Ramanuja and the Khasis have a non-dualistic and non-materialistic view of *ka Pyrthei*. They see God as the inner guide or ruler (*Antaryamin*) of both *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Meiramew*.

As already pointed out earlier, most of the Khasis have been converted to Christianity and accepted it as their new religion. In this chapter, I wish to briefly examine, how the Christian conception of the sacred is similar or different from the Khasi conception of the sacred. As we know, the word 'sacred' is derived from the Latin word 'sacrum' (its plural form is 'sacra') which means 'holy' or 'divine'. Both Christianity and the Khasi Religion (*Ka Niam Khasi*) identify God (*U Blei*) as the 'sacred' or a thing related to God. At this point, I want to discuss the Christian conception of God (the sacred Being) and compare it with the Khasi conception of *U Blei*.

The Bible is the Christian Scripture. It consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible states that creation is an act of God. The Book of Genesis 1:1 says that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the
earth”. Again, Genesis 1:27 says “And God created man in His own image”. We also find in the same book, Genesis 2:7: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of Life and man became a living soul”. This shows that man’s body is part of the earth and this world where man spends his earthly life is divinely or sacredly created by God. The ultimate lordship of the earth is God. In fact, the Old Testament speaks of God as the ultimate Being, the sovereign Lord and the basis of all things visible and invisible. Everything exists by His will. Like the Khasis, the people of the Old Testament (Israelites) do not question the existence of God. To them, God is the ground of our being and the first cause of everything. They believe that God always exists and manifests Himself in the world. They do not feel the need to give proofs for the existence of God. Only a fool can say in his heart “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1).

For the people of the Old Testament, their knowledge of God is their sense of awareness of divine reality and God can be found everywhere. Not only Israel but people of other nations also know and praise God in their own way. According to them, everything proclaims God’s existence and his power. It is to be noted that for the Israelites, even sin proclaims God’s existence by contrasting it, either by revolting against God or by
deserting God in the sense that a sinner is a man who turns away from God. Both in the Old Testament and the Khasi Religion, we find that God is eternally present, that is, to say that God exists from all eternity and manifests Himself in various forms. The Israelites of the Old Testament like the Khasis do not believe in the evolution of God. According to them, God exists from eternity to eternity. He is not limited by time or space.

According to the Old Testament, God is one and He is known by different names. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one LORD”. ‘Yahweh’ is one of the names of God. He is one who gives life and the source of everything. “As Yahweh (Lord) lives who made our souls” (Jeremiah 38:16). The soul is known in the Hebrew language as ‘Nephesh’. The Israelites regard God (Yahweh) as the author and sustainer of life. To them, the goal of divine action of God is to create life. He manifests Himself in the world and controls it from within. The Israelites regard Yahweh as their national God, who will protect and save their nation.

In the New Testament times, the conception of God has been transformed into the Christian conception of God. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament speaks of God as the creator of man and the world. But the Christians see God in the person and works of Christ who after His
Resurrection ascended to heaven which is viewed as separate from the secular world. There is a sharp distinction between heaven and our world in the Christian conception of God. St. John's Gospel 1:1-9 speaks of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, that is to say, before his incarnation, he exists in heaven with God the Father and after his resurrection, he has ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

The 'Divine Trinity' is another notion appears in the New Testament. "By the divine Trinity is meant the union of the three persons, Father (God the Father), Son (God the Son and Spirit) (God the Spirit) in one Godhead".\(^{10}\) This Christian idea of three persons in one Godhead is peculiar to the religion of the New Testament. The Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) states, "Jesus Christ is the foundation of all true Christian faith. Without it, there is no true revelation of God in Jesus. Without it, the Christian doctrine of salvation is undermined".\(^{11}\) This shows that the notion of sacredness of the Old Testament is different from the notion of sacredness of the New Testament because the Yahweh, the God of the Israelites in the Old Testament time, has been replaced by Christ.

With the Christian conception of God, the national God of Israel (Yahweh) becomes the democratic God of the Christian, that is, the God of all. The God of the Christians is Jesus Christ who cannot
do the works done by the God of Israel in the Old Testament. He only loves and forgives. Consequently, the evil or the unpleasant experiences of life have been kept aside from the providence of God of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the agent of creator-God. "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made and without him nothing was made that has been made" (John's Gospel 1:1-3). In other words, it means that God willed it and the world came into existence. The Christian-Khasis relocated their notion of sacredness from *ka Pyrthei* and *ka Meiramew* as the manifestations of *U Blei* to the sacredness of the Person and works of Christ. And as I have hinted earlier, this must be the precise reason for the disinterest in the preservation of environment as shown by the modern Khasis.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. R. T. Rymbai, "The Cultural Heritage of the Khasis", p.3.


