CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCING INDIGENOUS MUSIC INTO CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN
THE KHASI-JAINTIA PRESBYTERIAN AND CATHOLIC CHURCH
DENOMINATIONS

In this chapter an attempt has been made to have an in-depth study of Indigenous music in general, and Khasi indigenous music in particular. It analyses the role of indigenous tunes in church worship, and the extent to which these tunes have been accepted, recognized, introduced and used in the worship services of the different church denominations, with special reference to the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian and Catholic churches.

The chapter therefore dwells on the aspect of inculturation as an indispensable factor in the evangelization process, the role of indigenous tunes, and the attitude of the Presbyterian and Catholic Churches as well as other church communities towards indigenous music.

The acceptance of indigenous tunes into the church music proper of any church or Christian denomination is not a sudden occurrence but a slow process. It requires that a particular Christian denomination should pass through a certain period of experimentation to be able to respect, adapt, and accept the way of life, the culture and musical traditions of the people in its evangelization work. In this regard, it is
therefore felt that the first important step that leads to the indigenization of any church and in particular, the introduction of indigenous music of any culture into the worship services of any denomination is the aspect of Inculturation.

A number of writings and views have been put forward by eminent writers in explaining the term inculturation, and what it is about. According to Julian Saldanha the term “inculturation” refers to the process by which a particular church expresses its faith and life in and through the local culture.¹

Anthony Kollencherry MSFS (Missionaries of St. Francis de sales) in his article “Towards Spirituality” explains that the word inculturation is derived from acculturation, a term used in Anthropology to indicate the process by which one social group acquires the customs and habits of another. The prefix ‘in’ has a theological connotation and indicates that a seed is sown, takes root and grows in a new soil.² The writer continues to clarify the term Enculturation, in order to differentiate it from the term Inculturation. In his view, the term enculturation was introduced in order to differentiate it from the concept of socialization.

Socialization according to him denotes the process by which an individual is integrated into his society. Hence, socialization is only a part of enculturation and is more universal than the concept of society. It is therefore opined that enculturation is a technical term in social science while inculturation is used as an ecclesiastical term.

which has a theological connotation. Enculturation is a sociological concept while inculturation is a theological idea.³

Based on the above distinction given on these terms, he therefore defines the term inculturation in these words,

"Inculturation is a method of transmitting God’s redemptive message, taking cognizance of the signs of times adequately and effectively".⁴

In line with the above, the term inculturation therefore means localization of the church in a particular culture or land. It is basically a search into the concrete and particular, in order to realize the universal. The church is not bound to any particular culture, but at the same it cannot realize itself without concrete expression of the culture. Inculturation is an insertion of the faith into the life stream of people and the expressions of the faith life in terms of concrete historical existence, as well as the insertion of peoples’ life into the faith at a level deeper than any of its expressions.⁵

Yet from another approach, Justin S. Upkong in a monthly journal of Theological Reflection on “Inculturation and Evangelization” considers inculturation as a model (that is as an objective reality, with the focus on what it looks like) or as a method (that is, as a process, with the focus on how the reality comes to be). However, though most definitions of inculturation view it as a model, Justin S.

³ Ibid., p.59
⁴ Ibid., p.57
⁵ Ibid., p.58
Upkong views it as a method since it has to do with the approach on Evangelization. Thus, looking at inculturation as a method, he explains it as, the process of interpreting and living Christianity (that is, the Christian faith and practice) from within the perspective of a particular culture and of its peoples' social and historical life-experience in such a way that Christian values is made to animate the peoples' way of life.\(^6\)

Referring to the usage of the term Inculturation, it is mentioned that it was used for the first time in 1953 by a French missiologist Pierre Charles. He translated the American expression enculturation which is almost equivalent to the German word Socialization and the French word Inculturation.\(^7\) It has further been noted that the term inculturation appeared for the first time in the official Catholic Church document in the "Message to the people of God" delivered by the Synod of Bishops in 1977. In the course of time the notion of evangelization and inculturation were combined and they found expression in official documents of the Catholic Church, for example, in *Catechesi Tradendae*\(^8\) of Pope John Paul II in 1985. It was in this document that the pope emphasizes the message of the term inculturation which reads,

"Evangelization has to bring the power of the Gospel into the very core of culture, in order to bring forth

---


\(^{7}\) Antony Kollencherry, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

\(^{8}\) Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II in 1985. A term derived from the Greek *Katechein* which means "re-sound" or "re-echo". It refers to an oral teaching and instruction about Catholic Christian beliefs, values, and practices.
original expressions of Christian life. Inculturation enables one to live the faith more consciously and meaningfully and establish itself more authentically as a local church".  

Considering the above explanations, it is perhaps considered important to bring out the implications of the aspect in the evangelization process of various Christian denominations. In this regard, inculturation implies that the Christian message is communicated and lived in the given culture. Having evangelization for its goal, inculturation therefore demands the proclamation of the Gospel in the indigenous garb i.e. in the local language, using local symbols, rites, culture and idiom. It therefore implies that Liturgy, rituals and other customs will be adapted to the local culture. Inculturating the Christian message would make it local and at the same time Christian. Hence, the inculturation process implies an encounter between human and divine natures, between God's Word in the concrete life situation and the Gospel values cherished by a particular tradition.  

In giving more enlightenment on the aspect Barnes Mawrie, a Catholic priest and writer is of the opinion that inculturation is the result of a change of attitude on the part of the church. Therefore, one can say that an attitude is the most important factor in order to realize this process. Inculturation, he says begins properly in the

8 *Ibid.*,  
mind of the church and in the mind of the particular persons involved in the process.\textsuperscript{10} Referring to this attitude, he writes,

"Inculturizing attitude is a desirable manner of thinking and acting in relation to another culture, which results from an openness of the mind and of the heart to the cultural reality of another person. It is a disposition of a person which implies the will to enter constructively into a cultural world different from one's own."\textsuperscript{11}

Before analyzing the aspect of inculturation in the missionary work of the Presbyterians and Catholics in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, it may be relevant to recall that the year 1841 is memorable in the history of the Khasi people when the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists foreign Mission Society arrived in Khasi Hills. The advent of the Presbyterian Mission at Sohra (Cherrapunjee) coincided with the Political Agency (1835-1853).\textsuperscript{12} It is a political interlude and a trying period for British paramountcy after the Anglo-Khasi war and the creation of Jaintia Hills with the annexation of Jayantia Parganas to Sylhet District. This affected the work of the Mission.

However, it was Thomas Jones, an able literary genius who was responsible in reducing the Khasi language to writing and after fitting the English alphabet to it,

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.
wrote books and opened schools. It may therefore be pointed out that the work of the Presbyterian Mission which was later on expanded by other missionaries, prepared the growth of the Church through Evangelization and Education. Along with education, Christianity may be said to have permeated almost the entire life of the Khasi society. With Christianity came Christian influence, Christian Ethics, and the existence of a Christian Khasi Community within the Khasi Society. Again, with Christianity came the division of the Khasi locality into two sections - U Skul (literally meaning the School) and U Shnong (meaning the locality). The term U Skul therefore signifies the Khasi Christians and U Shnong means the Heathens, or the Khasis who still profess the Khasi traditional religion. The division as such must have created a superiority complex of the Christians over the non-Christians which in the long run affected the feelings of the Khasi Christian and non-Christians alike who had a love and attachment to their culture and race.\footnote{Ibid., p. 206.}

The above division is again noted to have a negative impact on the evangelization work of Christianity among the Khasi people as Christians are ready to cling to their faith and to follow the teachings and practices being taught to them by these missionaries. The non-christians on the other hand continue to stick to the traditional and cultural practices as followers of the Khasi traditional religion. This mentality is seen to have become a trend in the evangelization work of Christian missionaries particularly the Presbyterian missionaries who tend to disregard and reject the rich cultural elements and music traditions of the Khasi people.
Therefore in the light of these opinions and to be able to grasp the fundamental importance of an inculturizing attitude of the missionary work in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, we may compare and contrast the general attitude of the Protestant and the Catholic missionaries towards the cultures of the people. Thus, referring to the Attitude of the Protestant missionaries, it is observed that, the Methodist Church from Wales came more than fifty years before the Catholic Church, but their growth has been comparatively less than that of the Catholic Church. The reason for this, is not far to seek. It was essentially the question of attitude towards the culture. Their attitude towards Khasi culture and religion was more negative than positive. Some of the points therefore which have contributed towards this negative attitude of the Protestant missionaries towards Khasi culture and religion may be pin-pointed.

1. The Methodist missionaries from abroad tended to consider tribal religion as superstitious. They presumed that these religions had many evil elements in them which must be destroyed or purified.

2. There was a general attitude on their part to consider tribal religion (Khasi traditional religion) as pure animism. They did not realize that the Khasis are basically monotheistic in their belief. This was the result of a lack of understanding about the religion of the people.

---

14 Barnes L. Mawrie, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
3. These missionaries who came from the developed countries, thought that tribal culture was not civilized and that it had many aspects which did not go in harmony with Christian faith. For this reason they sought to disassociate cultural elements from Christian faith.\(^\text{17}\)

4. There was a certain degree of European pride in them which made them look upon the tribals as an inferior people in comparison with themselves. Western culture was "mistakenly" seen as a far superior and perfect culture.\(^\text{18}\)

Another peculiar phenomenon noted in the Protestant Churches is the fact that most churches regardless of their size and denomination, assert that they are "evangelical", by which claim they want to display not simply their conservative theological stance but also continuity with their tradition. They observe the century-old tradition of annual and semiannual revival meetings that place a heavy emphasis on the Bible, Conversion, and Evangelism.\(^\text{19}\) This outlook however, may be termed as a native character of Protestantism which has been developed and which continues to narrow down its attitude preventing it from having an open mind towards the good elements of the culture with which it works.

It is perhaps this attitude and in keeping with the native character of the nineteenth century missionaries that the books, catechisms and hymns they were translating, reflected only the so called enlightened western culture at the rejection of

\(^{17}\) Ibid.,

\(^{18}\) Ibid.,

\(^{19}\) http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FCHH%2FCHH77_02%2FS0009640708000589a.pdf&code=fa86f24663849d6400562d1042e9273c.
what they call inferior Khasi influence.\textsuperscript{20} It is further observed that this attitude has in turn led to many constraints on the part of the converts and also on the part of the missionaries’ relationship with the people. This point may be highlighted by the fact that a Khasi who wanted to become a Christian had to renounce his religion and culture entirely and accept a western culture and religion altogether. He had to detach himself completely from the cultural practices of his tribe like festivals, dances etc.\textsuperscript{21} It is again recorded that contrary to patterns of conversion elsewhere, the Khasis were not converted en masse, with minimal Christian instruction. The missionaries demanded a high ethical lifestyle, strict Sunday observance and forsaking of all heathen practices before accepting converts into church membership. The converts were also expected to be familiar with certain Christian teachings, for which hymns and catechisms were important modes of instruction.\textsuperscript{22}

This imposition of Western culture on the people, and their not being ready to accept Khasi culture has therefore, led to what Barnes Mawrie calls “Indigenous Reaction”. Referring to this, the writer notes that, although conversions to the Protestant church took place, the negative attitude of the missionaries created a strong reaction by a section of educated Khasis like Babu Jeebon Roy and others. It was his deep love for culture, religion, customs and traditions that has inspired this intellectual to work for the development of Khasi culture and traditions through different socio-cultural organizations. With this objective Jeebon Roy founded the

\textsuperscript{21} Barnes L. Mawrie, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{22} Radiancy Rnga, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 27-28.
Seng Khasi Movement* in 1897 as an opposition to this mentality of the Protestant church towards Khasi Religion and Culture. The Seng Khasi, he says was founded to preserve the purity of the Khasi culture and religion against the threat of westernization,23 as has already been referred to in the First Chapter. The writer relates another instance in which a prominent personality, Babu Radhon Sing Berry Dkhar, who had embraced Methodism, abandoned that religion in disillusionment and came back to the Khasi religion.24 These examples pointed out to the existence of a strong opposition towards the mentality and discouraging attitude of the Protestant missionaries.

Therefore, analyzing the concept of Inculturation in the context of the Presbyterian Church, it may not be wrong to say that, inculturation with all its implications, has had a very marginal or no impact at all on the evangelization work of the Presbyterians. The negative attitude and wrong mentality developed throughout the long missionary years have had negative impact on the Khasi culture and religion as a whole, and in particular, on the Khasi indigenous music, and its role in the church music of the Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian Church, which will be discussed in the later stage of this chapter.

As regards the aspect of Inculturizing attitude in the Catholic Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, it is found be quite different from that elaborated above. The Catholic missionaries, from the very commencement of their missionary work, have

* A Movement founded to revive Khasi religion and culture.
23 Barnes L. Mawrie, op. cit., p. 17.
24 Ibid., p. 19.
had a positive inculturizing attitude towards the Khasis, their culture, religion, and the rich Khasi music traditions. This may be highlighted in the undermentioned aspects:

1. The Catholic Church because of the positive outlook and attitude of its missionaries, right from the Salvatorians (1890) down to the Salesions (1922) had always an open mind to accept the culture of the people with all its values.\textsuperscript{25}

2. The Church never condemned the indigenous religion of the Khasis, but saw in it a preparation for the arrival of Christianity. The missionaries successfully projected the Catholic faith as the fulfillment of the longing of the Khasis, a completion of their religious belief.\textsuperscript{26}

3. The Catholic missionaries took great interest in learning the language of the people. They also learned about the culture and religion of the Khasis. They did not suppress the cultural practices of the Khasis. Instead, the Church has all through shown its concern, interest and above all encouraged the people to take part in cultural festivals (dances, songs etc.) and in traditional martial art like archery.\textsuperscript{27}

4. They also contributed to the development of Khasi literature and some of the Khasi books they wrote are highly treasured to day. For example, J.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., \textsuperscript{27} Ibid.,
Bacchiarello’s *Ki Dienjat jong ki Longshowa*, G. Costa’s *Ka Riti jong ka Ri Ki Laiphew Syiem*, Mgr.* E. Bar’s Khasi – English Dictionary, H. Elias’ *Mihngi Sepngi, Ka Hamsaia Ki Por* etc.28

5. The Catholic missionaries visited villages and mixed freely with people. They spent days and weeks in the peoples’ villages, ate and drank whatever was provided to them by the people without any fuss.29

These aspects therefore, clearly indicate the respectful attitude that the church had towards the religion and culture of the people and its willingness to accept them wholeheartedly. This very attitude itself has left a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of the people, which perhaps has greatly facilitated in the evangelization work of the church. Placing this on record, Barnes Mawrie writes,

"The Catholic Church has been successful to a great extent in this, due to her openness to cultures and her inculturizing attitude".30

Another aspect that has come to be considered important under the concept of inculturation and its implications, is the phenomenon known as *Vernacularization of worship* introduced by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of *Vatican Council II* of the Catholic Church in 1963. This aspect although introduced by the Catholic Church is found to bear equal relevance when analyzed in the context of the

---

* Monsignor is a term which essentially means “My Lord”. It is an honorary title given to a priest for distinguished pastoral service.

28 *Ibid*.,
indigenization of any Christian church. According to Thomas A. Krosnicki, SVD (Society of Divine Word) who authors the article “The Constitution on the Liturgy and Mission”, the word Vernacularization comes from the word vernacular, which is of Latin origin vernaculus — meaning nature, and in defining the term, the author is of the view that to vernacularize means, “to make a word or phrase, a part of ordinary life”.

Therefore, in defining the term, he writes,

“Vernacularization means that each local church has the potential to speak its own language in terms of ministries, texts, art, architecture, ritual and music. What is important to recall is that in all attempts at the vernacularization of the liturgy the content of faith must be maintained and the unity of belief must be affirmed”.

He continues to assert that, Vernacularization of worship implies that there should be:

1. Vernacularization of language,
2. Vernacularization of the community,
3. Vernacularization of Eucharistic Texts,
4. Vernacularization of Eucharistic Ritual,
5. Vernacularization of Art and Architecture, and

---

32 Ibid., p. 128.
6. Vernacularization of Music.\textsuperscript{33}

With the introduction of this concept, it may be stated that the way has been kept open for the implementation of vernacularization of worship in the liturgy. Considering this aspect, it is therefore the desire of every Christian church that, in every aspect from language to music, the liturgy had to be rendered in the vernacular. Only then would the liturgy become, as it was, a household word and an integral part of the life of a people gathered to worship in spirit and truth.\textsuperscript{34} However, of the various elements of vernacularization stated, special emphasis may be made on two elements – vernacularization of language and vernacularization of music, which are considered relevant for the purpose of the study.

Vernacularization of language therefore implies that every part of the liturgy be translated, and rendered in the local language of the region or place. Vernacularization of music in the church and liturgy on its part implies two important things – that all the hymns used in worship services be translated into the vernacular language, and that the church should have an open mind to accept and recognize the music traditions of the local people.

In the light of what is said, and on examining the impact of the above aspects on the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, it may be pointed out that, the Presbyterian Church has so far achieved the language aspect of the vernacularization of worship. The Prebyterian Church unlike the Catholic Church has no readymade prayer book as such, as all the prayers are said in a spontaneous manner and are

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 120-127.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 119.
recited in the vernacular. But as regards vernacularization of music, no doubt all the hymns have been translated into Khasi for regular use by the congregation, meaning that the language aspect of its music and hymns has been achieved. However, at the same time the music aspect pertaining to hymns and their music forms it may be said to be only partially realized. This is so, because as per analysis of the hymn book, only the western translated hymns appear to be in use as the Presbyterian Church is not ready to accept the true music traditions, with all its forms, style, and texts etc., of Khasi culture. On the other hand, the Catholic Church, owing to reasons as stated, is encouraging the integration of more and more Khasi cultural elements into its liturgy with due recognition given to the music forms, and the role played by Khasi indigenous music in its worship.

In the context of the Roman Catholic Church, Latin is said to have been introduced in the fourth century. Since then, it has become the official language used in all worship and liturgical celebrations for many years. Latin as a language has its own specific characteristics. It has a certain stability which daily spoken languages, where words change often in shades of meaning, cannot have. Latin has the characteristic of words and expressions retaining their meaning generation after generation. Again, Latin language can be the medium of communication for learned people from different backgrounds when they meet. It becomes more acceptable when people from various nations and languages come for liturgical celebrations. However, in compliance with the introduction of vernacularization of worship in 1963, the Catholic Church in its *Vatican Council II* document instructs,

---

"If, as the constitution on the sacred liturgy taught, worship pertains to the people of faith and every liturgical act should be comprehensible to all who take part in it, then the Latin language which "was to be preserved in the Latin rites," had already, on December 4th, 1963 lost the day. The Latin was to be vernacularized".36

Thus, in the light of the above, it is noted that the Catholic Church has given way to hundreds of vernacular translations and articulations around the globe where religious faith is necessarily expressed in the vernacular language. Therefore, in the spirit of this instruction, and in emphasizing the need to implement the aspect in the Catholic Church, the above Council further instructs,

"The church, indeed, approves all forms of true art which have the requisite qualities, and admits them into divine worship. In certain countries, especially in mission lands, there are people, who have their own musical tradition, and this plays a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason their music should be held in proper esteem and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only in forming their religious

---

36 Thomas A. Kronicki, *op. cit.,* p. 120.
sense, but also in adapting worship to their native genius". 37

It may therefore be pointed out that in compliance with the above guidelines the Catholic Church has been successful in indigenizing its liturgy, by incorporating Khasi cultural elements and music traditions, which may be said to have gone a long way in enriching its worship services and liturgical celebrations.

To understand the manner of implementation and implication of these aspects in the liturgy of the Presbyterian and Catholic Churches in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, it may be in the fitness of things to mention that in the context of the Presbyterian Church there is no written document as such that lays down guidelines and instructions on the liturgy and church music. The Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) for instance, as the highest general body has entrusted the sole responsibility of looking after the liturgy and church music to the respective Synods and executive committees operating in different areas. In the absence of such standing written document, it is therefore left to the local church authorities to issue instructions from time to time on matters relating to the liturgy and church music. 38 The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, unlike the Presbyterian Church, has an official Church document known as the Vatican Council II-The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (1962-1965) which clearly specifies all the guidelines and necessary instructions regarding its liturgy and church music at all times. It is perhaps this difference that has made the Presbyterian Church to remain content with its

37 Ibid., p. 127
38 Interview had with Pastor J. Fortis Jyrwa, Shillong on 15/07/2008.
traditional and conservative outlook and to retain the same throughout its missionary work. This may clearly be seen in its incultrizing attitude towards Khasi culture and its rigidity in the manner of recognizing and accepting Khasi religious and cultural elements in its worship services.

Taking the above aspects into consideration, we may now examine up to what extent the Presbyterian and Catholic Churches have been able to indigenize their respective churches and their evangelization work by taking cognizance of the Khasi cultural elements, practices and music traditions and to adapt them to the local situation. Before delving into this, we may perhaps recall the attitude of the early western missionaries who were not keen on enculturation but imposed their own culture as they misunderstood the tribal culture and traditions to be evil. With this mentality the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists missionaries in particular, restricted the believers from taking part in indigenous dances and other cultural performances. In other words, the then Presbyterian believers may be said to have remained secluded in their traditional religious practices and were not permitted to be exposed to other cultural and indigenous practices.

However, after the departure of the Welsh missionaries and perhaps with the gradual change of attitude and the open mindedness of the people towards their own culture, it is noted that particularly after 1990s the Presbyterian Church started taking the first step of introducing Khasi indigenous tunes into its church music. With this experiment, it is observed that these hymns began to be widely used in all services and celebrations held outside, though at the same time, they are not incorporated into the hymn book as they are still restricted for regular use inside the Church. In this
regard, it may be pointed out that though the Presbyterian Church still prefers to remain rigid with regard to the introduction of other local elements like indigenous dance forms and others, yet the introduction of Khasi indigenous music forms into its liturgy may be attributed as a step forward in its progress towards indigenization.

Contrary to what is mentioned above, the Catholic Church on its part considers that religion and culture cannot remain in isolation and that is the reason why religion often adapts itself to the local situation. With this attitude in view, and as part of its indigenization process, the Catholic Church over the years has gone out of its way to adapt and incorporate the various cultural and religious elements such as dance forms and Khasi indigenous music forms into its liturgy. For instance, the dance of joy performed in Nongkrem and Weiking ground has been incorporated in the rituals of many Catholic Churches. In places like Marbisu, Pynursla and Mairang of the West Khasi Hills, these dances are performed every year after the Easter celebrations. They call it Shad Paskha (Easter Dance) as it is the dance commemorating the joy of Easter. The dance as such, is an adaptation of Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem (dance of the joyful hearts). Just as Shad Suk Mynsiem celebrates the new life, the Shad Paskha heralds the resurrection of Jesus Christ— a new life for all. The dance starts with a thanksgiving prayer following which all the devotees irrespective of their age and gender participate in the dance to rejoice in the rising of Jesus Christ from the dead. Such adaptations may be said to have added some local

40 Ibid.,
colours to the celebrations which at the same time goes in the way of substantiating the fact that the Gospel does not destroy culture but purifies and beautifies it.  

The Catholic Church therefore, from the 1980s and the subsequent years considers cultural dance forms and music as an important part of its solemn and big celebrations being held outside. Important celebrations like annual Eucharistic processions, Centenaries, Priestly Ordinations and other solemn feasts seem to be incomplete in the absence of Khasi traditional dancers, dancing to the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments. At the Entrance of the Mass for instance, the dancers in their colourful costumes, ornaments and dancing arena, dance to accompany the celebrants to the sanctuary or altar in the form of a procession. Likewise, at the Offertory the dancers and musicians perform in a procession to accompany the offering of gifts to the priest or minister at the altar.

In shedding more light on this, Fr. Sylvester Nongsiej, a Catholic priest and musician, is of the view that, the Catholic Church has for the last three decades or so, accepted and recognized the richness and values of Khasi cultural forms, dances and songs. However, with regard to other forms like dances and Khasi traditional musical instruments, they are already in use in all open air and outside services and celebrations but are restricted for regular use inside the church.

Therefore, from these exemplifications made, we may say that the progress towards indigenization in the Catholic Church has been well translated into practice. The Khasi cultural forms, dances and indigenous music have been integrated and

---

41 Ibid.,
find expression in the Catholic liturgical prayers and hymns as is evident in the Catholic hymn book.

The above discussion on indigenization with its constituent elements of inculturation and vernacularization of worship may be said to have prepared the way for the introduction of indigenous music into the liturgy of the two respective denominations. The term ‘Indigenous’ is derived from the Latin word indigena, meaning ‘a native’, hence the word indigenous as referred to earlier, therefore means something that belongs naturally to a place and has not been brought in from outside.43

According to Jeremy Yudkin, indigenous music is that which originates or is born out of the culture of a particular race. He explains this by saying that each culture possesses its own musical language, which reflects its own traditions, concerns, and activities; and to begin to understand the music of another culture, we need to understand something of the nature of its cultural systems, and the role that music plays in them.44

In line with this observation and in emphasizing the important link that exists between culture and music Lapynshai Syiem asserts,

“No culture can be comprehended unless the music it produces is taken into account. Similarly no music can

be understood without the help of the insights offered by the Parent Culture\textsuperscript{45}.

In the light of the above, it may also be mentioned that Khasi culture like other cultures, possesses its own music known as Khasi indigenous music which explains the rich tradition of Khasi music- folk and traditional music which has developed a long time ago and grows along with the race itself.\textsuperscript{46} Khasi indigenous music again, is said to possess its own typical music forms which is very different from other music forms found in different cultural groups. Khasi indigenous music is observed to be vastly different from the music of other cultures, and for that matter, from the music of hymns. It has complex beats, staccato rhythms, regular chanting, a distinctive lilting and occasional slurs.\textsuperscript{47} It consists primarily of melody.

Owing to the importance attached by different cultures to their respective indigenous music, it is noted that many Christian denominations today, have felt the need to introduce indigenous music into the church music proper. As a matter of fact many eminent writers and scholars, have given their views in support to the use of the indigenous music in the church, with the emphasis that indigenous tunes be given due respect and reverence in worshipping God. Among these, T.W. Hunt in a chapter on 'indigenization' has referred to William Smalley, who as an advocate of the use of indigenous music in missions, firmly asserts,

\textsuperscript{47} Radiancy Rnga, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.
“Western music has become a form so closely identified with the church that the development of an indigenous hymnody has become difficult not on musical grounds but on ‘theological’. Western culture (i.e. hymn tunes) is so closely identified with Christianity that anything else is non-christian. This, of course, is theological heresy, and is culturally stultifying. I feel we have a responsibility to lead or stimulate local people in the development of their cultural heritage in the church, not to the exclusion of western music, but to the enrichment of the whole musical life and an appeal to a wider range of people”.

Another exponent who has made due emphasis on the subject, according to the above writer is James Riccitelli, who views that,

“The introduction of indigenous hymns and hymn tunes is not only feasible, but needful in most mission situations, and the wider experience of heritage is valuable”.

--

49 Ibid., p. 135.
Again, according to B.C. Lyngdoh, a theologian and Khasi writer, in responding to the questionnaire on the use of indigenous music in church worship writes,

"The Christian principles of faith are to be deep-rooted within the cultures and traditions of each and every ethnic group. All people belong to Christ's dominion of love and grace. Cultural elements are not to be slighted and disregarded but they are to be respected, revered and conformed so that the Christian Gospel can grow up significantly, meaningfully and predominantly within the context of particular cultures. Specifically, it is imperative and obligatory that the indigenous tunes with traditional musical instruments should be implemented on a regular basis in all forms of Christian services, worships and mission activities so that the praise and worship of God the creator and the Almighty be firmly sounded in the Khasi text with the typical Khasi system of the purely Khasi Christian spirit".  

In the light of the foregoing views and opinions on the subject, and on careful analysis of the same in the Presbyterian and Catholic context, it is revealed that though the urge for introducing Khasi indigenous tunes in church music is always there, yet its implementation may be said to have taken its own course. The

---

50 B.C. Lyngdoh, Response to Questionnaire No. 2, 2004, p. 3.
Presbyterian Church missionaries as mentioned in the early part of this chapter took care to see that the faith and the religious practices they have introduced should be strictly adhered to. They further ensured that any other outside elements and cultural practices are not to be mingled with their established tradition. With this conservative outlook and native character they made every effort and took keen interest in popularizing Welsh hymns and western tunes at all levels at the cost of rejecting the use of local tunes or indigenous music. This may be substantiated by the fact that on carefully analyzing the type of hymns and their music forms as appeared in the Presbyterian hymn book, it is the Welsh influence that is dominant; and again the translated hymns and the manner of congregational singing clearly indicates that the Welsh missionaries rejected the Khasi’s rich tradition of folk music and dance. 51

Commenting on this attitude, Radiancy Rnga expresses her views and regretting observations, in which she writes,

“Although the Khasi possess a rich tradition of folk music, unfortunately, this has been ignored for use in congregational worship; leave alone for inclusion in the Khasi hymn book. More than ninety per cent of hymns were written by the missionaries, and most of the hymns found in the hymn book (including those written by Khasi themselves) are merely translations of Welsh, British and American hymns. The few compositions

51 Radiancy Rnga, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
where the lyrics are original also have been set to the
music of western hymn tunes”.

The above observations as such point out to the fact that there is very little
indigenization in the Khasi Presbyterian worship. There is in fact, what may be called
a “missionary hangover” among the Khasis that prevents indigenization. This
rejection began with the missionaries who considered indigenous forms as unfit for
sacred hymnody. This policy however, does not end with the departure of foreign
missionaries, but continues to remain till the present day. It was therefore in reacting
to this policy that the above writer asserts,

“There is no reason why an independent twenty first
century church should continue in this same mindset
and limit itself to just one form of music. Even as the
Welsh Presbyterian church has now accepted
alternative forms of worship, the Khasi Jaintia
Presbyterian Church continues to discourage
indigenous music and culture”.

Among other writers who have expressed their regrets on the mentality and
negative attitude of the missionaries towards Khasi music and its usage in the church,
mention may be made of E. W. Kharsohnoh, a Khasi songwriter and composer who
comments,

52 Ibid., p. 42.
53 Ibid., p. 43.
"Untill recently, traditional music was taken as an entertainment and not devotional. It is strictly banned from the four corners of the church as it was made to believe that it stifles the growth of the church. The attitude of the church towards it is strongly a Red Card Sign".  

It may therefore be pointed out that the narrow mindedness and the policy of disrespecting and disregarding the richness of Khasi traditional music by the missionaries have led them to evangelize the Khasis by imposing their own music forms as the only vehicle of Christian hymnody. However, from what could be observed it may be admitted that the fault lies not only with the early foreign missionaries but also with the present day Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Church, which has stagnated in the mid-twentieth Century western hymnody and only reluctantly allows indigenous Khasi tunes and beats.

To elaborate more on this, it has been pointed out that the Presbyterian Church right from its inception has had a tendency of underestimating the richness and value of Khasi music forms. At the same time it cannot be denied that in those years there were perhaps still very few Khasi music composers and songwriters who could produce church hymns and devotional songs, but that does not mean that there was dearth of Khasi songs and hymns which could be used for congregational worship. As an example to this, we may refer to a Khasi hymn tune Ko Jisu, Ko Jisu

---

(O Jesus, O Jesus)\(^{55}\) with its music produced below, composed by Rev. Sorkin Singh between 1946 and 1948 which sounds quite indigenous in its tune.

Key 

\begin{align*}
\text{Ko Jisu, Ko Jisu} & \quad S. Singh. \\
\end{align*}

\begin{verbatim}
Ko ji- su Ko Jisu Ko ji- su ba nga
Ko ji- su Ko Jisu Ko ji- su ba nga ieit, ba nga ieit myn- siem jong nga,
Ko ji- su Ko Jisu Ko ji- su ba nga ieit, ba nga ieit myn siem jong nga
To ʻa lam to ʻa- lam to ʻa- lam beit ʻa nga beit ʻa nga sha ri ba- bha,
To ʻa- lam beit ʻa nga beit ʻa nga sha ri ba- bha,
To ʻa lam to ʻa lam to ʻa lam beit ʻa
\end{verbatim}

The piece as such, which talks of Jesus and his loving guidance may be said to have gained popularity and wide usage at that period of time by the Presbyterian believers, but the attempt did not seem to be recognized as it has not been

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 4.
incorporated in the hymn book. This song gradually turned out to be forgotten and has now become out of use. Likewise, in the following years, there have been quite a number of other songs set to Khasi indigenous tunes composed by pioneers like S.S. Syiemlieh, B.C. Lyngdoh, E.W. Kharsohnoh, E. Sohlang and others. But again, these songs are used by different church choirs and singing groups as special numbers outside the church and have not been given entry to the hymn book for regular use by the congregation.

Of the several editions of the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian hymn book that have been published, the present 2000 (two thousand) edition as referred to earlier, contains a total of 639 (six hundred thirty nine) hymns and 38 (thirty eight) choruses. This edition has also included some new hymns that are original compositions of Khasi songwriters. As appeared in the hymn book, it is found that out of the above number of hymns, only hymn No. 567 (five hundred sixty seven) Hangno Ka Lawei Jong Phi? (Where is your future?) composed by S.M. Syiem, has been set to a truly indigenous Khasi tune. This hymn, with its music produced below, is said to have been composed in the year 1979.

\[ Key D \]

\[ Hangno Ka Lawei Jong Phi \]

\[ S.M. Syiem \]

\[ 5.6.79 \]

\[ /d: - : r /m: s: - /d: - : r /m: - : r/m: - : f / \]

Lok, la jing im phi la ju pyrkhat ci

ci kum no ban im

\[ 56 \] Radiancy Rnga, op. cit., p. 43.
\[ 57 \] Ibid.,
jing im hok tip briew tip Blei
La-da jing im shu kut noh tang
ha pyr thei jing im
s : m / m : - f / m : - d / r : - r / d :-
(cho) ...
Hang- no ka la wei jong phi ko lok
to pyr khat myn- ta hi wan sha
r : r / r : - r / r : r / s : - f / m :-
Ji-su un ym kyn tait ei ia phi
: m / m : . f / s : :- / s : - s / l : l : -
Te Ji-su u ong "Nga u ba long
Ka lyn ti bad ka jing- shi sha bad ka
s / : - m / s : - - / s : - m / r : r : - /
jing- im de, ym don u ba
r : r / r : m : f / m : - - r / d : - - /
wan ha u kpa hyn rei tang da nga ...
The composer of the hymn has successfully combined the music with the lyrics to bring out a very meaningful theme. It is a reminder to the believers that life on earth is not the end, but that it should lead them to the next life by following Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In the opinion of some songwriters like E.W.Kharsohnoh and W.D.Jyrwa, another hymn which sounds indigenous is hymn bearing No.595 - Burom īa U Jisu (Honour Jesus) in the hymn book which has been set to a Khasi indigenous tune by Rev. W.M. Jenkins. Its tune may be identified in the music illustrated below:

Key D

Burom īa U Jisu (W.M. Jenkins)

```
Burom īa u Jisu Na-mar bu' la
Shah, u la siew ka ku-na
Ha-lor dieng- phy-na.
```

This short hymn though it is said to bear Khasi indigenous elements, yet on proper analysis of its music it is found to have a strong western influence. However, on account of its catchy and easily learned tune it is widely used by the Presbyterian community and has in fact become a favourite tune for children.

---

In addition to the above hymns, mention may also be made of a Song Book entitled *Ki Sur Kynud Na Mihngi* (Oriental Melodies) composed by E.W. Kharsohnoh, in which a rich variety of 80 (eighty) songs and hymns was published in 1999. These songs have been set to indigenous Khasi tunes, which focus on varied themes like Praise, Evangelization, Death of Jesus, Resurrection, Christmas, Word of God, the Church, Wedding hymns and others. The hymns and songs as such, are found to be rich, enlivening and highly fitting for use as church hymn tunes in worship services. But again, so far, these hymns and songs have been used as special numbers sung by the choir for outside celebrations only, as they are not as yet accepted and recognized as church and worship hymn tunes in the true sense of the term.

Thus, from these instances, it has been noted that attempts made by local composers to bring out indigenous tunes for use in church services, failed to obtain due recognition, as the Editorial Policy of the Presbyterian Church always preferred to retain the tradition that had been imposed. Thus, the scope of introducing and using the truly indigenous Khasi music and hymn tunes in worship services and congregational singing in the church is very little in the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Church. But regarding their usage in all other services and celebrations outside the church they are already very prominent.

Analyzing the subject of indigenous music in the context of the Roman Catholic Church in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, it is noted that the Catholic Church,

---

because of its positive inculturizing attitude and in adherence to the instructions already specified, it has created an easy introduction and use of indigenous Khasi music in its church worship and liturgical services. As a point of reference as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Catholic Church takes great care to abide by the norms promulgated by the *Vatican Council II* with regard to the language and music to be used in the church. Therefore, with the same spirit and enthusiasm shown by the Welsh Missionaries of the Presbyterian Church, the first Salvatorian missionaries of the Catholic Church took up the task of gradually translating every part of the liturgy and the Latin hymns into the local Khasi language.

For the Catholic Church, the aspect of Vernacularization of language does not end merely in having every part of the liturgy or service translated into Khasi language, but proceeds a step further. A careful look at the Catholic hymn book *Ka Lynti Bneng* indicates that a large section of the hymn book contains prayers which have been specially prepared for use at different occasions throughout the liturgical calendar. With the initiative and efforts made by Fr. Francis Kharwanlang and a team of experts in the Khasi language like D.T. Laloo and others, all the prayers, liturgical texts and religious writings in the hymn book have been revised and prepared to create a genuine Christian Khasi terminology. The initiative in this direction which started from 1990 is seen to bear its fruits in the thirteenth edition of the Catholic hymn book which got revised and published in 1998.

---

To cite an example to this, the liturgy of the Eucharist for all seasons and feast days for instance, starts with an introductory prayer. These prayers have been prepared by employing a language that contains a number of akin or imitative words, to convey the true Khasi sound, terminology and meaning. This is how the prayer reads in Khasi,

"Shihajar nguh Blei Trai Kynrad najrong natbian, ko Nongthaw Nongbuh, Nongsam bynta Nongbuh bynta, ko Nongsei ia ka longrynient longryta, ko Balah Bai'ai shikhrum ka bneng shityllup ka pyrthei. Ngi ainguh aidem ia me man ka por bad man ka jaka, da U Trai jong ngi U Jisu Khrist".  

Free translation

A thousand thanks Lord God from above and below the heavens, the maker and creator, the dispenser and giver, the carver of life, the generous one below the heavens and all the earth. We offer you our thanksgiving, at all times and places, through Christ Our Lord.

This prayer form is also found in other liturgical prayers of the church like those used at the weekly Prayer Meetings in Christian families on Sundays, prayers

---

at the Sacrament of Baptism, Sacrament of Confirmation, and others. These prayers may be said to have been prepared to suit with the indigenous form, texts, and the style of language of the Khasi culture which have perhaps drawn the taste, liking and better participation of the praying congregation as well the listeners, and above all, to make people feel that the faith they have embraced is theirs and no longer a foreign one.

The achievement made by the Catholic Church in translating the aspect of vernacularization of language in its prayers and liturgical texts, has undoubtedly facilitated a smooth sailing on the realization of the aspect of vernacularization of music in its church music. With regard to church music, the Catholic Church may be said to have been quite flexible in recognizing any type of music be it western or Khasi indigenous, as long as it is found fitting and appropriate to serve the purpose of worship. This attitude finds due expression in the instruction of the Vatican Council II again which says,

“"No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individuals parts, and does not hinder the active participation of the people”.

---

62 Ibid., pp. 83, 286, 293.
Again, in giving specific instructions on the use of traditional music and indigenous tunes and their place in the church, it further instructs that other musical settings, written for one or more voices, be they taken from traditional heritage or from new works, should be held in honour, encouraged and used as the occasion demands. 64

In the light of these instructions and guidelines, it may be pointed out, that right from the time of its establishment, there has not been any instance in which the Catholic Church in its evangelization work has shown any disregard towards the cultural practices of the Khasi people. Instead, it has realized the rare and rich elements that Khasi indigenous music possesses and has had always a place for it in its church music. At the same time, the Catholic Church in giving recognition to the use of these tunes takes care to ensure that these melodies need to undergo a period of experimentation in order that they may attain a sufficient maturity and perfection and to make people get acquainted to them. However, anything done in churches, even if only for experimental purposes, which is unbecoming the holiness of the place, the dignity of the liturgy and the devotion of the faithful, must be avoided. 65

With this openness of mind, the Catholic Church has all through the years, encouraged composers and musicians to produce works that bear these rich elements found in the Khasi indigenous music.

The production of Khasi indigenous tunes was initially not an easy task, due to lack of composers and songwriters who could produce them in the truly

64 Ibid., p. 99 [n. 50 (c)].
65 Ibid., p. 101. (n. 60).
indigenous nature. However, it did not take a very long time to realize the fruits of such initiatives and efforts made in this venture.

The traditional and Khasi indigenous tunes in church services were first introduced in the Catholic Church in the 1970s. It was Christ King College, Shillong, which took up the first initiative of translating a volume of 54 (fifty four) hymns and songs from English, combined with a number of original compositions in Khasi tunes as appeared in a song book *Rwai Ko Paid U Blei* (Sing people of God) in 1978. According to P. Malngiang, who is one of the contributors to this volume, in his article “Ka Choir bad Ka Juk Mynta” (Choir in the present day) records that the indigenous hymns which were published in the above volume had their first public performance in the church and outside celebrations of the Catholic Church in 1978.66

For instance, from the many hymns that appear in the song book some of the hymns like - *Nga wan ban nguh* (I come to bow), *Jingieid I Mei* (Mother’s Love) composed by Vincent Kympat; *Ko Kpa Jong ngi* (Our Father), *Lam ia nga sha ka jingshai* (Lead me to the light), *Khasi Jaintia iaroh I’u Trai* (Khasi Jaintia praise the Lord) by P. Malngiang; *To shim une u Kpu* (Take this Bread), *Ban Kynmaw ia nga* (To remember me), *Ka Phawar Krismas* (Christmas rhyming couplets) by F. Kharwanlang and others were performed for the first time in places like Pynursla,

---

Marbisu and Mawkhar churches to the accompaniment of Khasi traditional musical instruments.\textsuperscript{67}

This experimentation made in introducing these tunes into the Catholic Liturgy has drawn the attention and appreciation of the listeners, who thronged with eagerness to listen to more numbers. The congregation indeed became very enthusiastic in listening to them, and later on, in singing them, as their tunes and beats suit their taste and feelings, the experience of which may be better heard than explained.

In 1980, the next publication of songs and hymns appeared in a song book entitled \textit{Jam sur Ka Ri} (Sing aloud o country) edited and published by Vincent Kympat. This song book was published in three volumes containing hymns and songs translated from English, with the inclusion of more Khasi indigenous tunes. Some of the prominent indigenous hymns that appear in \textit{Volume one} of this song book include- \textit{Ko Trai to isnei} (Lord Have mercy), \textit{Burom h' u Blei Sha jrong} (Glory to God in the highest), \textit{To rwai t\.i Trai Kynrad} (Let us sing to the Lord), \textit{Ko Khun Langbrot batlem U Blei} (Lamb of God), \textit{Mynhyndai hynthai kulong kumah} (Long long ago) composed by F. Kharwanlang; \textit{Ko Lum Khasi Baitynnad} (O lovely Khasi land) by Igina Kharjana, \textit{Pa Map, Map \i'a nga} (Father, forgive me)\textsuperscript{68} by P. Malngiang, and many more. \textit{Volume two} of the same song book was published in the following year in 1981. This volume comprised fifty nine hymns in all, with the

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Rwai Ko Paid U Blei} (Sing People of God), P. Malngiang (ed.), compiled by Christ King College, Ri Khasi Press, Shillong, 1978, pp. 2, 6, 11, 23, 24, 32, 43, 47.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Jam Sur Ka Ri} (Sing Aloud O Nation), Vol. 1, Vincent Kympat (ed.), published by Lum Jingshai Training Centre, Marbisu, (East Khasi Hills), Shillong, 1980, pp. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 26, 68.
inclusion of many more indigenous Khasi tunes in it. A few hymns that were set to indigenous tunes are – *U la wan jngoh* (He visited me), *Ko phi Ri Lum* (O you hills) composed by P. Malngiang, *Kynhoi kynhoi Ko Jaitbynriew* (Shout O people) by Norbet N. Nongrum, *Nga kwah ban ieid ta Me* (I want to love you)\(^69\) by R. Majaw, *Ka Shonghok bad ka dei* (It is right to give Him thanks and praise) by F. Kharwanlang, besides others. The *Third volume* of this song book had its publication done in 1982. In this volume, other new indigenous compositions have been included, such as – *To Kmen Ma phi Bynriew Baroh* (Rejoice all people of God) composed by Gerald Khongngain, *Pynbna Kylleng* (Tell everyone), *Wat leit sha Bethlehem* (Don’t go to Bethlehem) by P. Malngiang; *Dei Ma U, U Khun U Blei* (He is the Son of God)\(^70\) by C.D. Lyngdoh, and others.

With the publication of these two song books the number of hymns set to Khasi indigenous tunes has increased. Undoubtedly, with the positive response gained from the experimentation made on these hymn tunes, Khasi indigenous music started gaining its popularity among the Catholic community, which began to spread to the different mission areas and Parishes all over. The Catholic Church on its part, realizing the beauty and richness of these tunes, and in the spirit of the instruction of the *Vatican Council II*, took a bold step of incorporating these hymn tunes for the first time into the Eleventh Edition of the Catholic hymn book *Ka Lynti Bneng* in 1980. This was followed by the incorporation of more and more Khasi indigenous hymn tunes in the twelfth and thirteenth revised editions published in 1990 and 1998 respectively. It was from this period therefore, that the hymns which have found


\(^{70}\) *Ibid.*, vol. iii, pp. 16, 42, 47, 49.
place in the Catholic hymn book have their way opened for regular use by the
congregation in the liturgical services of the Catholic Church.

In this regard, it may therefore, be noted that the 1980 edition of the Catholic
hymn book Ka Lynti Bneng, serves as a very important landmark in the history of the
development of the Catholic church music. As pointed out earlier, of the huge
volume of 665 (Six hundred sixty five) hymns and psalms contained in this edition, a
section of 27 (twenty seven) hymns have been composed and set in the indigenous
music forms. These include hymn No. 241- Nga wan ban nguhs (I come to bow),
hymn No. 242- Ko Trai, To isnei (Lord Have mercy), hymn No. 243- Nga ngeit H'u
Blei H'u Kpa Donbor (I believe in God the Father Almighty), hymn No. 244- To
Rwai i'u Trai Kynrad (Sing to the Lord), hymn No. 245- Ko Kpa Jong ngi Uba Ha
Bneng (Our Father in Heaven), hymn No. 246 - Ko Khun Langbrot U Blei (Lamb of
God), hymn No. 248- Jinguieid I Mei (Mother'Love), hymn No. 249 - Ko Trai Jisu Ko
Blei (My Lord and my God) all composed by Vincent Kympat; hymn No. 253 -
Kmen bynriew (Rejoice O People) by Gerald Khongngain, hymn No. 276- Kyrie
(Lord Have mercy), hymn No. 277 -To Shim Une U Kpu (Take this Bread), hymn
No. 279- Sanctus (Holy), hymn No. 281- Angus Dei (Lamb of God), hymn No. 283-
Ka Phawar Krismas (Christmas rhyming couplets) by F. Kharwanlang; hymn No.
290- Ko Kpa Jong Ngi (Our Father), hymn No. 292- Pa, Map, Map ia nga (Father
forgive me), hymn No. 294- Khasi-Jaintia, iaroh i'u Trai (Khasi Jaintia Praise the
Lord), hymn No. 296- Wat leit sha Bethlehem (Don't go to Bethlehem), hymn No.
298- Pynbna Kylleng (Tell Everyone), hymn No. 301- Mynsiem Bakhuid (Holy
Spirit), hymn No. 305- Ko Blei Shihajar Nguhs (A Thousand thanks O God)
composed by P. Malngiang; hymn No. 343- Ka Phawar Jingthaw (Rhyming Couplets) by J. Lyngkhoi; hymn No. 352- Nga Kwan ban ieid ta Me (I want to love Him) by R. Majaw; hymn No. 367- Ka Sngi Bishar (The Judgement Day) by C.D. Lyngdoh; hymn No. 410- Kyrie (Lord Have mercy), and hymn No. 413- Gloria (Glory to God)\textsuperscript{71} by H. Fantin.

The Catholic Church, in keeping up the above trend, and in continuing with its indigenization process through Khasi indigenous music, invites composers and musicians to produce more works and compositions of indigenous nature. The progress made in this venture, is seen to forge ahead with the publication of the Thirteenth Edition of Ka Lynti Bneng that took place in 1998.

This edition of the hymn book contains a total of 569 (five hundred sixty nine) hymns and psalms, as against 665 (six hundred sixty five) hymns of the eleventh edition. The reason for this reduction in the number of hymns is perhaps, after it has been properly revised, the previous edition is found to contain some hymns which are rarely used, while a few other hymns fall short of the requisite qualities of church music. Therefore, they have been omitted in the thirteenth edition.

A remarkable development worth mentioning in this edition, is the fact that the number of hymns bearing Khasi indigenous tunes have increased to a figure of 40 (forty) hymns in all. In addition to the twenty seven indigenous hymn tunes that appeared in Ka Lynti Bneng of the Eleventh Edition, as stated earlier, the new hymns

which have been incorporated in the thirteenth edition include – hymn No. 7 Wangkloi Emmanuel (Come quickly Emmanuel), hymn No. 310 Ka Jingduai Jong u Francis Assisi Bakhuid (Prayer of St. Francis Assisi) composed by P. Malngiang; hymn No. 25 - U Trai Jisu U Khun U Blei (Lord Jesus the Son of God) by G. Khongngain, hymn No. 30 - Pyrthei Mariang Ka thiah lyngngai (The sleeping nature), hymn No. 315- Jingai u Mynsiem to theh ha kine (Gifts of the Holy Spirit pour on them) by T. Resto, hymn No. 293- Ko Kpa jong ngi (Our Father) by T. Resto and P. Malngiang; hymn No.126 - Ka Jingsngewbha (How pleasing) has the original western tune translated by C. Bohnheim, but, recently it has also been set to a Khasi indigenous tune by the scholar himself; hymn No. 152- Paidbah byllien Ki bud i’u Trai (Multitude follow Jesus), hymn No. 326 – Mih Na La Ri (Away from home) by H. Fantin; hymn No.201- Ko Paulus Apostol (Paul the Apostle), hymn No. 388 Shihaajar Nguh ia Me (A thousand thanks) by V. Kympat; hymn No.223 -Ko Blei Nongseng Nongbuh (God the Creator and Maker), hymn No. 239 - Ko Khun U Blei (O Son of God), hymn No. 261- Ngi Ainguh ia Me (We thank Him), hymn No. 280 - Ka Shong Hok Bad Ka Dei (It is right to give Him thanks and praise), hymn No. 312 – Ia ka Ktien u Blei (The Word of God) by F. Kharwanlang; hymn No. 302A - Wan Ko Trai (Come, O Lord) by A. Malngiang; hymn No. 376 - Lano Phin Wan Pynshngaiñ? (When Thou wilt console?) by T. Resto and C.D. Lyngdoh, and hymn No. 392 -U Blei U long ka jinged 72 (God is Love) by R. Majaw.

It has further been noted that on carefully analyzing these hymns, they are found to have been composed and set to the truly Khasi indigenous tunes considering

---

their beats and music forms which convey the real Khasi style of singing in the true sense of the term. For instance, the hymn *Nga wan ban Nguh* (I come to bow) which bears No.241 in the eleventh edition and No. 232 of the present edition,\(^{73}\) is being notated below in the tonic sol-fa notation system which produces this beautiful Khasi indigenous tune.

**Key D**

**Nga Wan ban Nguh**  (by Vincent Kympat)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\{d \mid d : d \mid m.r : d . d \mid \_d : d \mid d : - .\} \\
&\text{Nga wan ban nguh bad ban ma-ne,} \\
&\{d \mid m.r : d . d \mid m.s : - . s \mid s : - \mid s : - \mid - .\} \\
&\text{r'u Trai U Blei jong nga,} \\
&\{s \mid m . s \mid l \mid l : l . l \mid l : s \mid l : - .\} \\
&\text{To ai kan long kat kum ka mon jong me,} \\
&\{l \mid d.l : - \mid s . s \mid l . s : m . r \mid m : - \mid - .\} \\
&\text{A Trai ha lor jong nga} \\
&\{s \mid l : s \mid m : s \mid d . d \mid d . d \mid r : - .\} \\
&\text{Ka mon jong me ka mon jong nga kan long,} \\
&\{r \mid m : s \mid m.r : d . d \mid r . d : d \mid k . d : - .\} \\
&\text{La- da Me Mon to ai kan long.}
\end{align*}
\]

This is used as an entrance hymn tune sung with the purpose of welcoming the congregation to participate in the service or liturgical celebration that is due to take place. The hymn as such may very well be sung to the accompaniment of Khasi

traditional musical instruments such as Ka Bom (big drum), Ka Ksing Shynrang bad Ksing Kynthei (male and female drums), ka Duitara (stringed instrument), Ka Tangmuri (flageolet) and others to the measure of two beats. It can be accompanied with the beat of Ka Ksing Lynti which is played as an invocation to God to pave the way into his domain through music and rituals. Ksng means ‘drum’, and Lynti is the ‘path’ or the ‘way’. This drum beat is also played in front of the ũng Sad (Religious House) at Smith, just before going to U Lum Pomblang for the religious rites. This is exactly the way the Catholic Church has done in adapting this drum beat in singing the above hymn to accompany the incoming procession of celebrants and the people who are on their way to the sanctuary or altar where the festivity or celebration is being held. As explained by L. Syiem, Ka Ksing Lynti is said to have its origin in the form of Ka Lymmuh which is a folk unorganized beat used during the local festivities such as the sport of archery, village proclamation, and others. This may be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beats</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drum</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Dun Kyn</td>
<td>Dun Dun</td>
<td>-Dun</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Dun Kyn</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Dun -Dun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllables</td>
<td>Tonic</td>
<td>d : d ,</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d : d</td>
<td>d : d ,</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d : d</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solfa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This drum beat is said to have been adapted by the Catholic Church in all big occasions and solemn celebrations whenever the above hymn is being sung at the entrance part of the Mass or other liturgical worship services. The singing of the

* Ksing means ‘Drum’ and Lynti means ‘Path’ or ‘Way’.
74 L. Syiem, op. cit., p. 53.
** Ka Lymmuh literally means ‘unorganized’.
hymn is often being accompanied with Khasi traditional dancers who dance in their colourful costumes, ornaments and dancing arena to the beat of Khasi traditional musical instruments which add solemnity to the incoming procession.

Another hymn-To kmen maphi bynriew baroh (Rejoice all you people) which bears No. 24 of Ka Lynti Bneng as specified above is a Christmas hymn tune which the congregation enjoys singing every year rejoicing at the birth of Christ at Christmas. The hymn whose music is produced below also falls under the measure of two beats which goes along with the drum beat of Ka Ksing Shad Wait. The word Sing or Ksing means ‘drum’, Shad means ‘dance’, Wait means ‘sword’ and Shad Wait means ‘Sword dance’.

Key D To Kmen Maphi bynriew baroh (by G. Khongngain)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{To kmen maphi bynriew baroh} & \quad (\text{by G. Khongngain}) \\
\{ \text{| m .m : - .m | s : s | f .m : r .m | d : - |} \} \\
\text{To rwai bad to ri sa,} & \quad \{ \text{| l l : - .l | d' : t .l | s : f | m .r : d |} \} \\
\text{Ka dei ka por kyr khu mynta,} & \quad \{ \text{| m .m : - .s | r : r | d : - | : - |} \} \\
\text{I'u Nong pyn im la kha.} & \quad \end{align*}
\]

Ka Ksing Shad Wait is a drum beat which has again developed from Ka Lymmuh as stated above. It is therefore a traditional non-religious beat which can be
used during festive occasions like *Ka Shad Weiking* (Weiking Dance) and others.\(^{75}\)

Its beats and drum syllables may be illustrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beat</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drum</td>
<td>Kyn</td>
<td>Dun Thang</td>
<td>-Thang</td>
<td>Dun Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun Thang</td>
<td>- Thang</td>
<td>Thang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these two beat hymn tunes, the Catholic hymn book also contains a number of Khasi indigenous hymn tunes in it, set to the measure of four beats in each bar or division. A good example of this is the hymn entitled - *Ri, Ri ɪa Nga*” (Take care of me) as appeared in No.225 of the hymnal illustrated in this staff notation music form.

**RI, RI ɪA NGA**

\[\text{Composed: Vincent Kympet}\]

\[
\text{Ri, ri ɪa nga, ba hyng - hoh kti jong Me, ba}
\]

\[
| d^\prime: r' \cdot t | d^\prime:--. d^\prime | m^\prime. r^\prime: d^\prime . r^\prime | d^\prime:--. d^\prime |
\]

\[
\text{ngan sngew shngain ba - roh shi - lyn - ter jing - rm jong nga, ba}
\]

\[
| t. \ t : t. \ t | t. : s. s | t. : s. s | s :-. s |
\]

---

\(^{75}\) Dance of the joyful hearts held annually at Weiking ground.

\(^{75}\) *Ibid.*,
This hymn tune bears the theme of God’s love and care. It is a prayer expressed in singing, seeking for God’s constant help to protect us from the worldly temptations that may draw us away from him. It is at the same time a prayer asking for strength from God to help us to remain always true to our promises to him. This hymn is found to fit well with the drum beat of Ka Padiah Ardieng. The word Ka Padiah implies a ‘small drum’ and Ardieng means ‘two sticks’, as it is played with the help of two sticks. This small drum according to L. Syiem, serves as an embellishment to the rhythm or time-measure of the beats. It gives the continuous
flow of rhythm to the main drum beat and to the song that is sung. The beat of this drum can be explained as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beat</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taka</td>
<td>Taka</td>
<td>Taka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Padiah:

Tonic Sol-fa:

Therefore, in line with these illustrations, a number of other hymns may similarly be analyzed as exemplifications to the manner in which Khasi music forms have been adapted and translated into the church music and hymn singing practice of the Catholic liturgy. It is perhaps this positive mindset and its open mindedness to the religious, cultural and music aspects of the Khasi people that has greatly helped the Catholic Church in its attempt to popularize and give due importance to the role played by Khasi indigenous tunes in its church music.

In the light of this, and as a matter of following and keeping up with the above trend which has already been established on a firm ground, the Catholic Church follows the practice of revising and updating its hymn book *Ka Lynti Bneng* at regular intervals, normally every ten years or so. Before each revision goes for its publication, the Music Ministry of the Archdiocese, which consists of a board of music experts, takes care to collect compositions and new works produced by different composers and songwriters. These new compositions, whether they are of western music form or indigenous forms, will be scrutinized and analyzed by the

---


* Archdiocese is the chief diocese that is headed by the Archbishop (Chief Bishop) that coordinates other dioceses which are covered under an ecclesiastical province.
concerned authority and music experts. Those compositions which are found feasible, having satisfied all the requisite norms fitting for worship and church services, are incorporated in the hymn book for regular use by the congregation.

To have a wider understanding of the part played by Khasi indigenous music in the church, it is perhaps relevant to refer to its role in the church music of other denominations besides the Presbyterians and the Catholics. Before touching this aspect, it is recorded that during the 19th century period, many prominent Khasi thinkers and believers of Christianity were passing through a period of frustration and dissatisfaction over Biblical doctrines and teachings as interpreted by Presbyterianism. As a reaction to this, many Christians like H.O. Mawrie, B.D. Pugh, D. Shangpliang, Atiar Syiem, P. Dkhar, P.S. Lyngdoh and so on reverted to the Khasi traditional religion. While others formed new Christian denominations of indigenous character.77

Among the so called offshoots of the Presbyterian Church, mention may be made of the Church of God which is the earliest indigenous church in Northeast India founded in 1902, Christ National Church (Ka Balang Trai Ri) formed in 1924, the Unitarian Church founded in 1931,78 the Assembly Church of Jesus Christ in 1932,79 Church of Christ in 1933 and others. These denominations may be called as splintered groups which broke away from the Presbyterian Church (Parent Church)

as a reaction to the policy and in opposition to doubts about doctrines of orthodox Christianity.

Like the Presbyterians and Catholics, these denominations as and when they are formed, also began to introduce their own church music, hymn singing, hymn books and church choirs in their respective worship services. No doubt, most of their hymns appear to be translations from western and other sources, but at the same time after they have detached themselves from the parent church they are now free to show their attachment to their culture which they could not earlier. This has therefore led many of these indigenous churches to start introducing Khasi indigenous hymn tunes in the church which are expressions of their Khasi way of worshipping God in the most indigenous way. For instance, referring to the Church of God hymn book *Ki Jingrwai Shem Mynsiem* (Inspired hymns), 16th edition, published in 2001, it is found that it contains a total of 682 hymns. Majority of these hymns are inspired compositions contributed by church musicians and songwriters, while others are translations from different sources and original compositions in the Khasi indigenous forms. A sizeable number of hymns appear to have mixed influence of the western and Khasi indigenous music elements. However, of these, hymn No.613 – *U Jisu U Jingshai phyrnai* (Jesus the shining light) composed by Jlipson, and hymn No. 647 – *U Shah Namar Jong nga* (He bears for me) by H. F. Wallang are the two Khasi indigenous hymns whose tune and music forms are found to sound quite indigenous.

In an interview had with some elders and musicians of the Church of God like P. Mihsil and others, they are of the opinion that their church has no restrictions on the

---

use of Khasi indigenous hymns, instead they are very positive and welcome all original compositions as long as they are found fit and appropriate for use in the church and outside services.

Again, on analyzing hymn singing in the church music of another denomination Ka Balang u Khrist (The Church of Christ), it is observed that its hymn book Ka Kot Jingrwai Balang u Khrist (Church of Christ hymn book), Fifth edition, 2004, comprises a collection of 450 hymns. These are mostly translations from the Great Songs of the Church, Favourite Hymns, and Hymns for the living Church and original compositions. It is interesting to note that, the Church of Christ like the Catholic Church is one of the denominations which have greatly advanced in the use of Khasi indigenous tunes in its worship services. As a matter of fact, around 15 to 20 hymns included in the hymn book have been composed by local musicians in the original Khasi indigenous tunes. To cite a few numbers, we have hymn No.27 –Sha Me long Jingainguh (Give thanks to Him), hymn No. 52 –Ka Hima la nangwan (the Kingdom is come), hymn No. 114 – Ngi long paidbah jong me (We are your people) and many others, which are mostly composed and contributed by C. Khongwir, Sobestel and others, are some of the indigenous hymn tunes which the congregation love and cherish to sing. Likewise, we have the Unitarian Church an entirely locally born church which was founded by Hajom Kissor Sing a Khasi elite. A careful look at the Unitarian Church hymn book entitled Ki Service Jingiaseng Ka Niam Unitarian (Prayer Meeting Services of Unitarian Church) a revised edition in 2004 reveals that there are 339 hymns in Khasi or Khasi hymns, 12 English hymns

---

and 29 Responsorial hymns. Most of the hymns are either translations or adaptations from welsh or western tunes and others are original compositions. It is further noted, that the original compositions contributed by local songwriters do not bear the truly Khasi indigenous music forms in the real sense of the term, but have a mixed influence with western tunes. However, in an interview had with Battina Rani, Secretary of Unitarian Church, she is of the opinion that though so far there have not been any Khasi indigenous hymns in the hymn book, the Church has no restrictions on their use provided that there are musicians and songwriters who can compose them. She continues to assert that the use of these hymns as special numbers and choral pieces in the church as well as outside functions have in fact captured all the big celebrations of the church.

A similar practice is also experienced by other denominations like the Church of England (CNI), and the Assembly Church of Jesus Christ (India) in which church hymns like other churches, are again taken from English, western and welsh tunes in the form of translations and adaptations. In interviews held with Pastor Skinner and church elder S.Giri respectively, they are of the view that till date hymn singing in their church is mostly of western tradition, and Khasi indigenous hymns are sung by the choir as special numbers on occasions. But they emphasized on the fact that though the church does not specifically mobilize or call for local tunes, they are not barred from use either in the church or outside celebrations.

---

83 Interview had with Pastor Skinner and S. Giri, Dated 19th July, 2008, Shillong.
From the above analysis, it may not wrong to say that the role of Khasi indigenous tunes have touched almost each and every Christian denomination in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. No doubt, for many churches, their use in the church still remains marginal but their usage as far as outside functions and celebrations are concerned, they appear to have become more popular and widely used than other hymns. However, to give due credit and attribute the rightful importance to the part played by these tunes, it also depends on how we define the terms ‘Church’ and ‘Worship’. If the word ‘Church’ is restricted to its definition as a place or building where Christians meet, then Khasi indigenous tunes have a limited role to play. But if the term is extended to also mean the Christian community that worships, then it is obvious that these tunes already have a great role to play, as worship services can be held not only in the church but also in the open spaces depending on the needs and occasions that may arise. Therefore, the fact that different church denominations have introduced these tunes into their worship services either in the church or outside indicates that they are accepted and recognized and hence play a prominent role in church music.

Considering the above observations and the extent to which Khasi indigenous tunes have so far been introduced in the church music of different church denominations as discussed, it may perhaps be pertinent at this juncture to study the present trend and attitude of these churches and their respective church communities towards Khasi music. This will stand a long way in giving due place to the part played by the music traditions of Khasi people as a means of worshipping God in the most homely and indigenous manner.
With the lapse of time, coupled with the recent developments that are taking place in many church denominations, it is noted that the present trend of thinking among the Khasi people today, is their keenness to revive the rich Khasi cultural elements and indigenous forms and express them not only in their socio-cultural life but also in their Christian life. This has again led various sections of Christian communities comprising of youths, composers, songwriters, church workers and others to air their views regarding the need to give due recognition to the use of Khasi indigenous music in the church. Among the exponents who have expressed their opinions on this aspect, a church pastor and theologian B.C. Lyngdoh writes,

"The potential trend of thinking overwhelmingly prevalent is that Jesus Christ belongs to all cultures and he is to be unveiled to every culture and tradition for the effective application of complete divine salvation of mankind. It is a matter of prime importance that the indigenous music with its traditional performance both vocal and instrumental be practically utilized in all forms of Christian worship. This far-reaching attempt on the part of the church has deeply ingrained the basic root of the Christian faith within the Khasi traditional and cultural setting".\(^\text{84}\)

The author therefore, in supporting the urgent need of giving recognition to indigenous tunes in the church strongly views that the incorporation of the Khasi

\(^{84}\) B.C. Lyngdoh, op. cit., p. 1.
indigenous tunes are (is) exceedingly imperative for the purpose of the efficaciousness of the Gospel Message within the Khasi contextual setting. They are to be instilled more vigorously so that the worship services and the mission energetic plan can be articulated in a meaningful and dynamic process.85

Ever since the coming of Christianity as explained earlier, the trend of developing church music in the Presbyterian Church in particular, may be said to have been one-sided. The local tunes and indigenous music forms which the people always love to cherish were not given place in the church through which they could worship and adore their Creator. Khasi music is noted to have been greatly influenced by the western music tradition which touches both church as well as secular music. There are a number of eminent writers and Khasi thinkers who have expressed their observations and regrets on the attitude which the missionaries have shown towards the rich cultural values and music traditions of the Khasis. Among these, a reputed writer Nigel Jenkins in his writings on “Thomas Jones and the Church He Founded in the Khasi Jaintia Hills” writes,

"The Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian church, which has been organizationally independent of the ‘Mother Church’ since 1940, is now sufficiently mature to begin to acknowledge the harm done to the Christian cause by the missionaries’ virtual demonisation of indigenous culture, and their imposition on the Khasis of substantially Welsh patterns of worship, to the

85 Ibid., p. 2.
exclusion of Khasi thought-forms and musical traditions.”

Again, in giving more emphasis on the above observation, another church leader and writer, J. Fortis Jyrwa in his article “The missionaries and the Khasi Jaintia People” comments,

“Both the missionaries and the church could have taken much more seriously the notion of expressing the Christian faith in the context and thought – forms of Khasi culture and tradition, such as dance and music”.

The writer in fact, not content with what he writes, goes on to justify his point by relating an awkward experience he had as a B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) student at Serampore College, West Bengal way back in 1968. Dr. William Stewart the then Principal of the College asked his Khasi students to come up with a Khasi hymn for inclusion in a College hymn book to be used in chapel worship. The Khasi students searched through their Khasi hymn book and eventually found one and went to meet the Principal. “What is this?” he said, “I told you I wanted a Khasi hymn, not a Welsh hymn”. The students went back and continued their search. At last, they appeared at the Principal’s chamber with a hymn that was originally Welsh but could be adapted to Khasi folk music. The Principal accepted it with a smile and told them

in all seriousness that they had better start composing their own songs for worship alongside the Welsh hymns which have been translated into Khasi and which, intrinsic to their experience, have entered their blood. It was that awkward experience, which later on, as an active church leader, made him write this observation which runs,

“If our missionaries and our church had taken seriously the need to use and enrich Khasi traditional and cultural forms, things might have perhaps been different. All Khasis who knows might have become Christians, because genuine evangelization means indigenization. This is the challenge that confronts the Khasi church today”.

This trend which continued for many years in the Presbyterian Church is however found to have undergone some change in the recent decades. Commenting on this, E. Kowall and R.T. Rymbai, in their joint observation assert,

“It is their folk songs that the Khasis and Jaintias preserve the vast wealth of common customs, traditions, and legends of by gone days. Unfortunately the influence of Western music and culture has caused traditional tunes to diminish its importance. Although many young people prefer to play Western music,

---

88 Ibid.
efforts are being made to revive traditional music and instruments along the lines propagated. Local tunes are being used by church choirs and modern popular Khasi and Jaintia songs blend indigenous notes and western harmonies".  

Among other writers who have put forward their views to substantiate this changing trend, Radiancy Rnga in her observation says that recently, encouraging signs can be seen among some composers who are introducing choir pieces and chorales that drew from the folk music tradition of the Khasis. These have been sung by the choirs outside the church, and on special occasions, in church services.  

Another keen observer on the changing attitude of the Presbyterian Church towards indigenous Khasi music is a church Pastor and writer H.M. Rapthap. His observation on this aspect finds expression on his note "Ka Jingkyrkhu Kyrdoh" (words of blessing) that appear in the already mentioned song book *Ki Sur Kymud Na Mihngi* (Melodies from the East) by E.W. Kharsohnoh, in which he writes,

"Ka long kaba shisha kumba la pympaw, ba baroh shi
katta ha ki jinglaseng mane Blei jong ngi, ngi la
pyndonkam tang ta ki jingrwai ba la pynbit pynbiang
ha ki sur jong ki nongsepngi. Wat na ka bynta ki
jingrwai kyrpang (special numbers) bad ki jingrwai
choir, ki samla ha ki Balang jong ngi ki hap ban wad

---

90 Radiancy Rnga, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
da kito ki number kiba la don lypa ha ki ktien Phareng, 
lada ka dei ha ka tonic solfa lane staff notation. Khlem 
artatien, kine ruh ki don la ka jong ka dor ban ngin hap 
hi ban iaipyndonkam ia ki na ka por sha ka por. Ka don 
ha ki ka borban sai̇ndur ia ka jinglong mynsiem jong ki 
nongrwai bad jong ki nongsngap kumjuh ... Ha kajuh 
ka por, la katto katne snem mynta, ka la don ka 
jingpynkhih ia ki samla trai Ri ba ka la dei ka por ba 
kin shna hi da la ki jong ki jingrwai bad ha ki sur 
Khasi. Ki la pyrshang ban leh kumta bad la kham 
pyndonkam ia kita ki jingrwai ha kaba rwai choir bad 
kaba ai special number. Namar ba kine ki jingrwai ki la 
mih na ka dohnud kaba shlei da ka jingieit ia la ki jong 
ki sur Khasi bad na ka jingshem mynsiem jong kito kiba 
thaw ia ki, la shem ba ki ktah shibun ia ka dohnud jong 
ki nongsngap. Ka long kaba dei ban pynshlur ia ki 
samla kiba don ka sap rwai ba ki nangiaid shaphrang 
ha kane ka jingpyrshang jong ki khnang ba ki jingrwai 
ikba ngi pyndonkam ha ki jingiaseng jong ngi kin ym 
long tang kito kiba la shu shim kyliang nawei pat bad 
ba la shu pynylla sha ka ktien Khasi na ka ktien 
Phareng". ⁹¹

⁹¹ E.W. Kharsohnoh, op. cit., p. 2.
Free translation:

It is true as it appears that during all this time, in our worship services, we have been using the hymns arranged in western tunes. Even for those hymns used as special numbers and choir pieces, the youth of the church have to search and use those numbers that are already there in the English text either in the tonic solfa or staff notation. Undoubtedly, these hymns have their own values which have to be preserved and used from time to time. They have the power to touch the hearts and shape the spiritual life of the singers and the listeners as well. At the same time, during the last few years, there has been a movement among the youths who have expressed that it is time for them to compose their own hymns in the indigenous Khasi tune. An attempt has been made to do so, and these hymns are often being used by the choir as special numbers. Because these hymns come from the hearts of the composers overflowed with love for truly indigenous Khasi tunes, they are found to have deeply touched the hearts of the listeners. Therefore, encouragement should be given to these talented youths to persevere in their attempt so that the hymns we use in church services and
prayer meetings will not have the pre-eminence or
dominance of those hymns which have been borrowed
from others and translated into Khasi from English.

From the contributions made on the subject, it is revealed that the need to
introduce indigenous tunes in the church does not arise from the mere fact that since
we are Khasis, our indigenous music should also have a place in worshipping God in
the manner that is most dear to us. But over and above, these hymns are found to
have the capacity of drawing the taste, liking and appreciation of the people. In fact,
based on the experience of those who have heard the performance of these songs on
different occasions, they unanimously agree with the point that they possess the
power to touch the hearts and shape the spiritual life of the singers and listeners as
well. It is an undeniable experience expressed by many regular churchgoers today,
that from time to time when the choirs stand to sing in any public services, the very
moment the choirs start singing a Khasi traditional song the listeners are seen to raise
their heads and ears listening with joy and appreciation along with their body
movements to the beat of the music. 

This liking for Khasi indigenous songs is now being witnessed during annual Synods, Eucharistic Processions and other celebrations irrespective of denominations.

To elaborate substantial evidences on this changing trend, it is observed that
from the 1980s onwards the attitude of the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Church
towards Khasi indigenous music began to take a different turn. The inner urge for
giving due exposure to local tunes in the church among the people which remained

---

92 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
unexpressed through the years, began to be exposed in the form of a movement among the youths, church members and songwriters who have expressed their taste and liking for the same. This may be said to have inspired many local musicians to compose choir songs and choral music in the indigenous forms. Promptly enough, the composition of a choir piece *Ah Jerusalem* by S. S. Syiemlieh in 1985 turned out to be a very enlivening and encouraging experiment. The piece has been set to a truly Khasi indigenous tune with all the elements of Khasi music. Through the song, the composer drives home a lesson that we need to change our lives and turn away from our sinful ways. It falls into the beat of 2 counts and can be accompanied with the beat of *Ka Ksing Shadwait Kynting Dieng* (Sword Dance by tossing up the stick). Its tune is being notated below:

```
Key D

Ah Jerusalem
S.S. Syiemlieh

.s | s.-, s:m .r / m : s . l | d.' -. , d.'

shi sien U Trai Ji-su U leit sha Je-

: r' . l / d' : . d' | m' -. , m' : m' . m' /

ru - sa - lem, U jaw ki um mat

m' : m' . d' | r' -. , r' : r' . m' / r' :

kthang u pyr- ta Je ru sa lem

. d' | d' : - / - : - d' | !s . - / - : -

Hm hm Hm hm...

.s | d' : - / - : . d' | !s . - , s : s . s / s .

Je ru sa lem Je ru sa lem
```
This hymn tune is normally accompanied with ka *Ksing Shynrang* (Male Drum) which, as explained by L. Syiem, follows the variations of the drum syllables\(^\text{93}\) as illustrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beat</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drum</td>
<td>Kyn</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllables</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
<td>Dun</td>
<td>Thang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like other drum beats as indicated above, the drum syllables employed in this hymn can also be notated in both the staff and tonic sol-fa notation systems.

The performance of the song may be said to have made a landmark in the history of introducing Khasi indigenous tunes in the Presbyterian Church as it could deliver the taste, draw the liking and appreciation which aroused the enthusiasm of not only the songwriters and composers, but also other listeners and believers alike.

---

\(^{93}\) L. Syiem, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
The popularity of the song as such, does not stay within the walls of the Presbyterian Church community only, but is being sung by church choirs and singing groups of other denominations as well. However, unfortunately enough this song has not been incorporated into the Presbyterian hymn book for regular use by the congregation. The beauty of the song therefore, for reasons already stated, continues to be restricted for use in the church, though widely used as a special number by church choirs in open air services and celebrations.

In the light of this, and perhaps as the first attempt made by the Church to move forward in the direction of introducing Khasi indigenous tunes, E.W. Kharsohnoh records that the Synod which was held at Jirang (Ri Bhoi District) in 1998 resolved that for the present a Song Book containing 50 (fifty) songs all set to indigenous Khasi tunes, will be published which will be incorporated at a later stage into the Khasi hymn book. Referring to the interview had with J. Fortis Jyrwa on this, he optimistically expresses that the Church is seriously showing its concern on the resolution taken, and perhaps in the next revised edition of the Presbyterian hymn book something positive will take place. This has therefore given great hope that in future, the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Church will have a positive attitude towards accepting and recognizing the use of indigenous Khasi music in all its prayer meetings and even in church services.

Referring to the trend and attitude of the Catholic Church and its Christian communities towards Khasi indigenous music, mention has already been made in different parts of the previous chapters that perhaps does no longer need to be

94 Ibid., p. 4.
emphasized. The progress made in this direction right from the start till the present
day, is clearly being expressed in the series of editions of its hymn book and the
manner in which it has been able to create more and more place for the indigenous
tunes in church music. Therefore, it may not be out of place to say, that what the
Catholic Church needs is no longer a change of attitude but to continue forging ahead
in this endeavour. It is therefore, in the light of this progress that a Catholic Church
leader S. Loniak Marbaniang asserts,

"The Vatican Council II has been strenuously harping
on this theme. In fact, Pope John Paul II, on his visit to
Shillong on 4th February 1986 has greatly stressed on
the ‘inculturation of the church’. As a consequence, the
church hierarchy in Khasi and Jaintia Hills has
translated these aspirations into practice with greater
gusto, not forgetting that in earlier years this was going
on at a slow pace". 95

Therefore, apart from the developments as noted in the Catholic Church, and
taking into consideration the need for a change of trend and attitude in the
Presbyterian and other denominations, references may be made to the views and
opinions contributed by church representatives of different church denominations.
Interestingly, it is noted that ninety per cent of the responses to the Questionnaire
received on the aspect are found to be positive. Of these, mention may be made of a
Khasi writer and church elder H. Bareh who comments,

"I agree that indigenous tunes have to be given due recognition and place to play its role in church music. Therefore, composers have to come out and compose appropriate tunes and words, which may be used side by side with existing hymns used already for decades".  

Kmensila Budon, Programme Executive, All India Radio, in giving her observation on the subject expresses,

"There seems to be a change in the trend of church music during the past few years with the entry of indigenous music in the church. Although they have not entered in the Hymn Book they are sung as special numbers (items) by the choirs, which show that they are allowed and accepted".

She continues to elaborate by saying that during the early part of the Church indigenous music was not so popular in the church. This happened because the missionaries have given us the taste of their music from the west and moreover there were not many local music composers. Time has changed now, we need to have variety, and introduction of our own music will be very much welcomed.

96 H. Bareh, Response to Questionnaire No. 23, 2004, p. 3.
98 Ibid., p. 2.
According to another church leader Rev. B. Sohhlet, in support to the above opinions, is of the view that Khasi indigenous tunes should be recognized and encouraged for use in church music, because not only western tunes are accepted. Indigenous tunes are also considered by theologians of music as divinely inspired, through which one can praise and exalt vocally and instrumentally. Hence, they should be recognized and encouraged for use in the church. In line with this, B. Laitflang, a Khasi musician also observes,

“If Welsh and Roman forms of music are acceptable here, I see no difference. Thanks to the missionaries for the music they have taught at that time. But, since we are born with our own indigenous tune, it is high time that we should also grow and worship with it”.

Other persons and keen observers who have voiced their concern, perhaps with some regrets of what could not be done, are other active church elders and musicians like S.Lyngdoh, E.B.R.Wanswett, E.H.Kharkongor and others who have expressed that the need for recognizing indigenous tunes in church music is a subject that is long overdue which should have been done. Therefore, it is high time for this. Hence, in support to these views, Oberland Snaitang, a Khasi writer strongly asserts,

---

99 B. Sohhlet, Response to Questionnaire No. 4, 2004, p. 2.
100 B. Laitflang, Response to Questionnaire No. 5, 2004, p. 2.
"Khasi tunes, if they are truly indigenous require neither recognition nor encouragement but public circulation and sing".\(^{102}\)

In the light of these observations and deliberations expressed above, and taking into consideration the urgent need for a change of mindset and development of a positive attitude that have come alive in the church music of many church denominations today, it may be pointed out that as of now, the Khasis have no dearth of local music composers and songwriters. We have sufficient music experts and well trained musicians who are capable of composing songs both, in the secular and church levels. The benefits to this aspect have in fact been extended by the Shillong School in Tonic Solfa which was started since 1911 in Shillong under the supervision of Rev. Pongwern Jones.\(^{103}\) A good number of Khasi students were trained and also cleared their examinations. As a matter of fact, many of these students are now in a position to write and compose songs. The facility to this was further extended in the later years, with the establishment of the Board of Synod Institute of Music (BOSIOM) in Shillong in 1988 by the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian Church.\(^{104}\) Through this Institute, training is being imparted to the youths in tonic solfa and staff notations, writing and composing music and the also the art of playing musical instruments both western and Khasi traditional. One of the most recent thrust areas of the Institute is to train students in the highly desired area of Khasi indigenous music both vocal and instrumental. With this objective, it is therefore hoped that the music

\(^{103}\) E.W. Kharsohnoh, op. cit., p. 5.
\(^{104}\) Ibid.,
and songs that will be produced will not only focus on the secular and outside functions, but also on devotional and religious hymns at the church level.

Perhaps, for our people to be able to appreciate Khasi music, and to learn the art of singing and playing musical instruments in a systematic manner, they should grasp the opportunity of availing the music courses being offered in our own State. In addition to the Music Institute mentioned above, thanks to the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong which has paved the way for our students and talented youths to get themselves trained in the one-year Post Graduate Diploma Course in Music in which Khasi traditional music (vocal and instrumental) has been offered as one of the units of study. Again, perhaps the first of its kind in Shillong, a recent opening in the line of music is also seen in a highly reputed St. Anthony’s College of Shillong which has started a three-year Degree course in Music (B. Mus), in which Khasi traditional music prominently figures in its course structure. The course as such, serves as a very great opportunity to our local youths to reap the academic benefits and to take advantage of getting them trained and well equipped with Khasi indigenous music. In like manner, to cater to the needs of our people desiring to pursue higher studies in music, the Martin Luther Open University has been established in Shillong, in which again a special focus is made on the study of traditional and Khasi indigenous music from the academic level.

In addition to the opportunities offered by these courses, and as already referred to above, a notable development that is very much alive today is the awareness that has spread among the Khasis of their desire to revive Khasi tradition music. In this regard, special mention may be made of Helen Giri a renowned Khasi
performing artiste and writer, and a Padma Shri Awardee in the field of art. She is the first lady in the state to have been given this prestigious award for her contribution in the field of Khasi music. She has been very instrumental in creating this awareness among the Khasi people, of the need to revive, preserve and enrich Khasi culture and heritage in all its forms and traditions, particularly the Khasi dance forms and music traditions. She has gone up to the extent of touring every nook and corner of the state to carefully identify the hidden and unknown traditional musicians, master craftsmen, cratsmen, and the different dance forms. In an interview had with her on the subject, she is of the opinion that the people's attitude today towards traditional music has become a cultural movement. This can be seen from their desire to procure Khasi traditional musical instruments, and their eagerness to learn the art of playing them. She further comments that traditional music and Khasi traditional musical instruments, which were on the dying stage and extinction in the past few decades, have now come to a renewed stage: Today, there is so much demand for Khasi traditional musical instruments, like Ka Bom (big drum), Ka Ksing Shynrang bad Ksing Kynthei (Male and Female drums), Ka Duitara (stringed instrument), Ka Tangmuri (flageolet), Ka Padiah (small drum) and other instruments. This demand she says, comes from schools, colleges, music institutes, cultural clubs, social organizations, church organizations, individuals and other quarters, irrespective of age, religion and church denominations. Therefore, looking at the manner in which different church denominations have now freely come forward to avail Khasi traditional musical instruments and their initiatives to provide opportunities to impart training to the youths, she is highly hopeful that

\[\text{105 Interview had with Helen Giri, Dated 10^{th} \text{ October, 2007, Shillong.}}\]
sooner of later Khasi indigenous music will find a respectful platform in the church music of these denominations. It is perhaps this positive trend and enlivening attitude in cultural awareness and Khasi music, that has led the author to observe,

“There is no doubt that Christian teachings and doctrines have come into direct contact with the local culture of the concerned society. One is aware of the indigenous movement pervading the church or Christian denomination or even outside the church. The concept of indigenous Christianity or churches of indigenous origin has assumed a very important study in the North-eastern states. This has a profound influence on the use of indigenous tunes in the church. Though there is some reservation, yet the process is on”.

The desire to introduce and recognize indigenous Khasi tunes in church music, has in the few recent years become widespread, which finds place in the thoughts and minds of many. To cite as an example, a 15 (fifteen) day workshop on ‘Traditional Music’ and ‘Traditional Musical Instrument Making’ was held in the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong in 2002, where a number of young trainees representing different church denominations of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills

---

participated. In a discussion had on this subject, the Scholar himself has recorded the views and opinions expressed by the trainees in these lines,

“Na ka jingiatai bad jingpashat jingmut ba la iohlum na ki nongiashim bynta ha ka Workshop, kiba kynthup ia ki nonghikai bad ki khynnah pule kiba la wan na ki Balang bapher bapher jong ka Ri Khasi bad jaintia, la don ka jingpyrkhat thymmair bad ka jingkwah na ki baroh ba ki sur tynrai jong ngi ki dei ban roi, ban ioh ia ka jingithuh kaba pura ha ka Church Music sic jong ki niam khrisstan baroh jong kane ka thain jong ngi. Ki la ai jingmut shuh shuh ba kam dei shuh ka por ban nging ap khmih lynti ne shim kylliang ia ka sur bad jingrwai jong kiwei pat, hynrei ka la dei ka por ba nging ieng ha ka ki jing ki kjat bad pynmih la ki jong ki sur bad jingrwai, ban pynroi bad pynriewspah ia ka Church Music ha Ri Khasi bad Jaintia jong ngi”.107

Free Translation:

We accept with deep appreciation the music brought into our land by your good foreign missionaries, which should be preserved, treasured and used. However, it is

no longer the time that we should wait, expect and go on borrowing foreign tunes, but it is high time that we should bring out our own indigenous compositions, stand on our own feet and also contribute something of our own to enrich church music in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.

Hence, based on the views and ideologies specified above, it may be right to say that the concern expressed by everyone has become a sort of a challenge to the present day Khasis of the need to recover the musical heritage that is uniquely ours and to use it to express ourselves in Christian worship. In this regard, the Khasis should not be content with altered music forms, but must reach into the past to discover the truly indigenous and to employ it for sacred music.

Therefore, considering these observations, we may arrive at saying that the present trend and attitude of many church denominations towards Khasi indigenous music is very positive and encouraging. No doubt, as stated earlier, the attitude in the Presbyterian Church and others is still very marginal, yet it is there. Hence, in conclusion, it may be said that all these developments that have taken place and are still taking place are substantial contributions towards indigenization of different church denominations. They serve as eye-openers for spreading cultural awareness all around, leading to the present movement which is in favour of reviving, preserving and enriching Khasi cultural and traditional forms and indigenous music in particular. This changing trend, no doubt is a gradual process but at the same time, it is an on-going process. In the event the views and opinions echoed above are
considered and translated into practice, Khasi indigenous music will find place and get due recognition in the church music of all denominations, in which they will play their part at par with the already long established foreign music forms, in praising the Creator and in enriching church music in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.