Chapter IV

AN OUTLINE OF KHASI AND NAGA CULTURE

The Khasi Hills and the Naga Hills are situated at the north easternmost region of India. During the British rule and also for a few years after Independence, both the hills were part and parcel of Assam, being two separate districts of Assam. The Naga Hills became a separate state on 1st December 1961 and came to be known as the state of Nagaland. The Khasi Hills became a separate state in the year 1972 and it came to be known as the State of Meghalaya. Here in this chapter we will try to make an endeavour to discuss the history of these two hills in brief and also make an attempt to study their culture in details. It is needless to say that the definition of culture not only includes the material things but also includes non-material aspects of the life of the people. Therefore while dealing with the culture of a particular society we will have to refer to practically everything which their material and non-material life bear from their dress to their religious beliefs.

The Khasi

The Khasi is the general name given to the people living in the Khasi hills which include many tribes and sub-tribes. Our intention is not to take into consideration all the tribes in this hill range; but to have a grasp on the Khasi culture by discussing in details the tribe Khasi which is also known as the Khynriam inhabiting the middle ranges of Khasi hills. There are
many tribes other than the Khasi such as the Pnars, the Var, the Amwi, the Bhoi etc. Other than these tribes there are many non-Khasi tribes the Vikirs, the Lalungs, the Amongs, the Lyngugams.

Origin of the name Khasi and the Origin of the Tribe

The term Khasi has a particular significance. 'Kha' means, born of and 'si' refers to, an ancient mother. In Khasi hills many clans bear their mothers name. Sawian clan, for instance, owes its name to 'Sa', the ancestress of that particular clan, Kurkalang owes its name to Ka lang, the mother. There are many instances similar to this which signifies the similar practices. This system of ascribing the names of clans after mother is due to the matrilineal system of the people themselves.

There is a lot of controversy regarding the origin of the Khasis. Though the problem is dealt with by many writers at different times, yet there is no satisfactory answer available to it. The statement that the Khasis migrated from the east appears to be satisfactory as there are some evidences to prove it so. They came from the direction of cambodia or laos. It is interesting to note that there is a matriarchal tribe called Khasi associated with the Woi and Rode Jarai groups of clans.

There is a traditional belief among the Khasi themselves that they originally came to Assam via the Patkoi range, the similar route which was taken by the Burmese while they invaded Assam. Gurdon (1914) finds many affinities among the Khasi and the people of the Far-East-Burma, Cambodia Malay etc. There are certain
resemblances in the stone implements, dresses, ornaments and objects of worship of these people to those of the Khasis from which it is possible to come to the conclusion that Khasis came from no other direction but from the east.

If we look at this problem from the point of view of language as language has an important bearing on the origin of the people we find that Pater Schmidt has drawn a more concrete picture of the Khasi language in its relation to various Mon-Khmer languages including the Nicobarese and the native dialects of the Malay Peninsula. He finds a striking similarity between these languages and the Khasi language (Bareh 1967: 19-20).

Various archaeological factors throw light on the subject. This can be dealt with in terms of neoliths and megaliths. Neolithic spade-celts have been found in various parts of Assam which resemble the Burmese type similar cels are found in various parts of the Khasi hills. In the opinion of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, original specimens of such cels are available in the Far-eastern countries like Malaya, Indo-China and Cambodia (Bareh 1967: 24). This is another proof to support the fact that Khasis are the immigrants from the east.

As for megaliths, Khasi megaliths may broadly be classified into two sections - monumental stones and ossuaries. To discover the link of Khasi megaliths with their original home is difficult due to the fact, that in Assam infinite variety of megaliths are erected by various tribes and other people of Tibeto-Burman stock. There, however, are certain cultural
factor associated with megaliths. Gurdon (1914) finds the funeral ceremony of the Khasis to be similar to that of the Hos. The similarities may be found also in the dress of the corpse, arrangement of the pyre, collection of bone after cremation and offering of food etc.

There are certain other cultural and material factors which give us some insight into the origin of the Khasis. The most important among them are the matrilineal descent and iron-smelting. The matrilineal system of today's Khasi family is connected with its long course of migration. Pure matriarchal customs are to be found among the people in Malay and adjacent countries in Sumatra. Most of Laos have similar matrilineal and household usage. Both love rice-bear and betel chewing is their favourite habit. Similarities are even noticed in their dress and ornaments.

Thus it is certain that the Khasis are the descendants of the Far-East and still retain many of their cultural and linguistic traits which they brought from the East in their migration.

The history of the Khasis can be dealt with only from 1500 A.D. The early periods can be reconstructed only on the basis of traditions which unfortunately are often misleading and mythical in character. The episode of Ka Meitha illustrates the earliest Khasi settlement in Assam. There is a legend associated with the modern Kamakhya hillock in Gauhati which the Khasis call U Lum Ka Meikha. Khasis and Bodo tribes lived together in
Kamakhya prior to the advent of the Aryans. One mythical story describes that Khasis halted at Kamakhya during their journey from Makachiang. Later on Hindus occupied this place and raised a temple on it to worship sati. Though the validity of this belief is doubtful, there are many traditional points to prove that the Khasis passed into their present home through Nowgong and Kamrup.

If we look into the cultural history of the Khasis we come across clear evidence of cultural traits which they brought from their ancient home i.e. from the place of their origin - the east.

It is evident from the definitions of culture that it includes almost the whole of man's material and non-material world. Therefore to study the culture of a tribe we have to deal with practically everything which their material and non-material life bear. A description of the various cultural characteristics of the Khasis along with some other factors are given below.

Appearance, Physical and General Characteristics

The Khasis in general are beautiful people. They possess a skin which is usually brown, varying from dark to a light yellowish brown, according to locality. The women are generally fairer than man. The nose of the Khasi is somewhat depressed and the nostrils large and prominent. The forehead is broad and the space between the eyes is often considerably large. The skull may be said to be almost branchy-cephalic. Eyes are of medium size,
The Khasis are usually short in stature, with bodies well nourished, and the males are extremely muscular. The trunk is long in proportion to the rest of the body and broad at the waist, calves are very highly developed. The women when young are comely, of a buxom type and like men with highly developed calves.

The people are very cheerful in disposition and are light hearted by nature. They are fond of music and they know how to appreciate nature. They are inveterate chewers of betel-nuts and pan-leaf. In the interior they still follow the practice of measuring distances by the number of betel-nuts that are chewed on a journey. They are fond of their mountains and their traditions, and have an aversion to falsehood.

Dress

Khasi males of the interior wear the sleeveless coat or 'jymphong', which, is a garment leaving neck and arms bare, with a fringe at the bottom and with a row of fanels across the chest; it is fastened by frogs in front. This type of coat has now been going out of fashion in the Khasi Hills, its place has been taken by coats of European pattern in the more civilised parts. When smartness is desired the men wear a white turban, which is fairly large and is well tied on the head. The old-fashioned Khasi females dress is a garment called 'Ka jymphien', which is a piece of cloth worn round the body and fastened at the loins with a kind
of cloth belt, and hangs down from the waist to the knee or a little below it. Over this is worn a long piece of cloth called 'Ka jainsew'. It is kept in position by knotting it over both the shoulder. Over the jainsew another garment called 'Ka jainkup' is worn. Over the head and shoulders is worn a wrapper called 'Ka tap-mon-khlieh'.

**Occupation**

The greater portion of the population subsists by cultivation. Rice is the main form of cultivation. Other than rice they cultivate potato, orange, betel-nut, pan etc. The form of cultivation they engage in are called 'jhum' cultivation. After burning up the trees and jungles on the mountain they arrange the land in steps and then start cultivation. Many Khasis earn their living as porters carrying the goods from the field to the market. Manufacture of the country liquor gives employment to a considerable number of people. Large number of Khasi women are engaged in weaving. Almost every Khasi women knows how to weave.

**Houses**

In olden times and also at present in the interior villages, Khasis live in small low cottages with stone walls having just one or two very small openings. The original Khasi house is oval-shaped, which is divided into three compartments, a porch, a centre-room, and a retiring room. The nails were considered taboo in olden days and some kind of timber was used instead. The investigator herself saw many such houses while she was in the Khasi
villages. In the village Smit, the huge house of the Syiem lies erect without a single nail. But now-a-days concrete houses are coming up even in the villages which are near about towns. When a Khasi girl gets married she builds a house in her mother's compound, either on the left of the original house or at the back.

Villages

The Khasis build their houses a little below tops where they find some depression. This perhaps is due to have some protection against strong wind and storms and for the defence against an enemy. They build their houses quite close together.

Weapons

The weapons of the Khasis are swords, spears, bows and arrows and a circular shield which was used formerly for the purpose of defence. The most favourite weapon of the Khasis is the bow and arrow. The bow is made of bamboo and is almost 5 feet in height.

Hobbies

Hunting and fishing are two of their favourite hobbies. Weapons used for hunting are bows and arrows with iron heads and spears which are used both for casting and thrusting. Most of the Khasis in olden times killed fish by poisoning them with the juice of some poisonous leaves and later caught them with bamboo scoops shaped like small landing nets, but now-a-days most of them have
started using modern method of fishing.

Food

Khasis usually take two meals a day - one in the morning and one evening, but the labourers have to have a midday meal for their hard work. Other than rice they have kinds of meat, especially pork and beef but some Khasis who have Hindu influence abstain from eating beef. They are also fond of dry-fish. There are still some people in the villages who do not have any milk products. Rice beer is their favourite drink.

Games

Though the Khasis have many games, archery is their main game. Two groups of people with bows and arrows assemble in an open space with some target at a distance of about forty to fifty yards. The targets are small bundles of grass about 1 feet long and 4 inches in diameter fastened on a small pole and placed in a line. Members of both the groups hit at the targets. A person gets a few chances and at the end of each turn the number of hits are counted by representatives of both sides. At the close of the day the side with the greatest number of hits wins the match, the successful party returns home, dancing and shouting. Generally large wagers are made on either side.

Jewellery

Khasis, specially the Khasi women are fond of jewellery. They are fond of gold and coral bead necklaces. Silver or gold
crown is a peculiar piece of jewellery of the Khasis which they wear during festivals and dances. The silver collar called Rupe-
tylli is a peculiar Khasi jewellery which is a broad flat silver collar worn at the front of the neck and tied with a thread behind.

**Tribal Organization**

Khasis live in clans and many of these clans origin from particular grand-mothers. Sub-clans are from one great-grand-
mother, i.e. a particular ancestress. The next division is the family. Khasi family is quite big as the grandmother, her daugh-
ters and daughter's children all live in the same compound. Grand-
mother is the life-time head of the house. It is considered to be a great sin to marry within the clan. Some of the clans are prohibited marriage in some particular clans as such clans are supposed to have common descendance.

**State Organisation**

The head of the Khasi state is the Siem or chief. Khasi chiefs are not territorial sovereigns but are like democratic chiefs, he cannot perform any act without first consulting with and obtaining approval of his durvar where his mantries sit. In some states there are village head men who are known as sirder to settle cases, collect labour and be in close contact with the common people.
Marriage

Khasi society is matriarchal. Thus after marriage the boy comes to live with the girl who in turn builds a house in her mother's compound to live after marriage. The children adopts the mother's title whereas the father retains his own i.e. his mother. Polygamy does not exist in the Khasis. A husband can have alliance with another woman but contrary to his first wife Ka tuga trai (the real wife); the second wife is called Ka tuga tuh (the stolen wife). This practice, however, is very rare at the present time.

Divorce

Divorce is common among the Khasis. Rai sahib Hormurari Diengdoh gave a few causes of divorce in Khasis which, however, are not any different from the reasons for divorce among other tribal or non-tribal people. For him failure to live together happily, dislike of the husband for his wife and a desire to leave her, dislike of the wife for her husband, usually on the account of dissolute habits or his ill treatment of her, adultery of the wife and lack of children (Cantle 1934: 76-77). If one party is unwilling to agree to the divorce, there is a custom that the party desiring must pay the compensation. Other than this each takes his or her own property i.e. divides the jointly acquired property. Divorced persons cannot marry again, nor can they marry into the family to which they were previously married. Contrary to other societies children do not suffer from divorce other than being
deprived of fathers love as they are looked after by the mother and gets share of their mothers property.

Adoption

The family where there is no girl or no girls remain due to death, can adopt girls from some other family to perform the family religious ceremonies and to inherit the family property. The girls take the place as ka khun khadduh or the Youngest daughter and becomes the head of the family. It is a custom among the Khasis that the youngest daughter gets all the property but, now-a-days she gives it to the other siblings also according to her will. Though she is the head of the family she always takes advice from her brothers regarding property matters.

Inheritance

Inheritance is purely matrilineal in nature. In War tribe however, both males and females own control and possess property and thus observe both patrilineal and matrilineal customs. As Wars are not included in our sample we will not discuss their customs in details. In Khasis, except for some property which belong to the clan, the youngest daughter gets the whole property of her mother which includes the house where the mother lives. The sisters also get some property in the form of land vessels, ornaments, residential houses but the main share goes to the youngest daughter. She has to take care of her maternal uncles if they are met with ill-fate.
The position of the Man

The general belief of the people outside is that as Khasi is a matriarchal tribe, the position of man there, is a very tragic one but, it is not really so. As Bareh maintains, "in Khasi tradition, a man is U Nongda (the protector) and a woman Ka Nongrilung (Keeper of the house), the custodian of family property. In his Kur's (mother's clan) family he has the position of U Kuil (Uncles i.e. counsellor), at his wife's house, he is the father. The father is the executive, the mother the spiritual head of the house (Bareh 1967 : 334-335).

Impact of modern civilization have changed the law of inheritance and also the position of man and woman. The old system had put restriction to the women and she was only confined to the house and thus only concerned with the house-hold affairs. Now they engage themselves in other fields of work too. Though there have been a great impact of modernization on the Khasi culture, I myself have found that they have yet managed to keep their basic culture intact. This is more true to those who have not yet been converted to Christianity.

Religion

The Khasis believe in a God who they think is the creator (U Blei Nong-thaw). This belief of them is very vague. Their religion consist mostly on animistic beliefs and spirit - worship. The Khasis propitiate these spirits with the help of lyngdohs (the priests) or some old men well versed in the field. Khasis
never symbolize their gods by means of images, their worship is offered to the spirit only. They have different gods for different purposes. Ո'lei muluk is the god of the state, Ո'lei umtong, the god of water, Ո'lei longspan, the god of wealth, Ո Ryngkew, the tutelary deity of the village. Other than these they have many other gods and goddesses and spirits for different diseases. If a person suffers a serious disease he is thought to be possessed by an evil spirit. Rives says, "the Khasi religion may be thus briefly defined as forms used to cure diseases and to avert misfortunes, by ascertaining the name of the demon, as the author of the evil, and the kind of sacrifice necessary to appease it" (Gurdon 1914: 107).

Though the religion of the Khasis is very similar to Hinduism, they do not usually call themselves Hindu. They like to call themselves Khasi only. Only recently those who have not got converted to Christianity have come to associate themselves with the Hindus. More than half of the people in Khasi hills are now Christians. But at present people are becoming conscious and making an attempt to keep their traditions and customs alive. We found from our own experiences that even those who have faith in Christianity fall back on the gods and goddesses at the time of distress.

Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship is an important aspect of Khasi religion. They glorify their dead and adore them by means of periodical offerings of articles of food and other materials. Offerings are
usually made in times of trouble but, it is done otherwise also. They believe that chief ancestors of the house or clan should be pleased as they have become supernatural beings, getting equal position as God and have got enough power to aid, assist and bless their descendants to prosper in life. If they are not contented they may stand as obstacle in their life and hinder in both their material and moral happiness. For the same reason proper measures are taken during funeral ceremony so that no punishment befall the descendants. The Khasis collect the bones of the dead washing them three times in water and wrapping in a white piece of cloth and keep them at home. Later on they bury the bone in the form of jubilant worship. This they do as they observe funeral ceremonies. Khasis thus observe continued funeral ceremonies in the form of ancestor worship and maintain a link with the dead. Thanks giving ceremonies to the ancestors are performed regularly in the form of family sacrifices and offering/food over the ossuary associated with the family cromlech.

There are numerous other household deities. One very common Khasi worship is the Thlem worship. The Thlem is a serpent spirit kept by certain houses which must be appeased by the human blood. Thus though human sacrifice is not practised in Khasis as is the case with the Nazas, the keeper of the Thlem have to collect blood by murdering any victim to appease it. Else it comes out of its place of dwelling and kills and sucks blood of anybody nearby.

Traditions show that from a very long time most Khasis worshipped deities in the form of the mountain and the river
spirits. Sacrifices of animals are still made on the bank of rivers and streams. Bareh observes that among the mountain deities, the Shillong god is considered to be the most powerful, propitiated with sacrifices by members of the syiem's family (Khyrim) as well as by some priestly clans of Nongkrem and others over the peak (Bareh 1967: 360).

In Khasi hills one finds a number of monoliths, table-stones and cromlechs almost everywhere in the hill-range. Memorial stones are ordinarily the stones memorial to the dead but there are names of places which signify the names of stones such as Mausmai, the oath stone, Maophlang, the grassy stone. It is a common practice among the Khasis to commemorate an important event with a stone and erect grave stones, to mark/spot where the remains of the dead are buried.
The Nagas

The Naga tribes inhabit the hills south-east to Assam. It was a part of Assam prior to 1963 when it was declared a separate state within India with a government to its own. There are more than a dozen tribes in this hill state who differ from each other in dialect, dress, appearance and thus also in their culture. We have chosen only the tribe Angami. The Angamis occupy the section to the north of Manipur.

The Origin

There is no definite clue as to how the Naga tribes came to occupy their present position. Whatever there is, has passed into the dim obscurity of vague traditions and we have no alternative than just to depend on them.

The origin of the Nagas have often been traced back to China. As language is considered to be a reliable clue to the origin of a race tracing the origin of Nagas with the help of linguistic clue we find various classifications given by many philologists, but Hutton, who has done intensive study of the Naga tribes, in his book supports the classification put forward by Sir George Grierson and holds that the Angami Naga is of the Tibeto-Chinese family (Hutton 1969 : 8).

About the origin of the Naga tribes, they themselves believe that the Angamis, the Aos, the Lothas and the Semas descended from four brothers. From the eldest of the four
descended the Angami.

The Angami story of the origin of the Naga tribe is that in the olden times, there was an old couple with three sons in the village Kesakenoma. The sons used to dry paddy on a large flat stone which had spirit in it. The sons spread paddy in turns. But one day they quarrelled badly as to whose turn it was. The parents of the brothers thought this quarrel to be the work of the spirit and they were very scared to see the sight. They broke eggs on the stone and covering it with wood and grass set fire to it and the spirit went up to heaven in smoke. The three sons then got separated and became the ancestors of the Angami, Lothas and Sema tribes (Huttan 1969: 8).

Habitat

Of all the tribes inhabiting in the Nagaland Angamis occupy the largest area and their number is greater than any other tribe in that place. The tribal name of the Angami Naga is 'Tengima'. Angamis live in the area situated on the western region of Nagaland. On the south the Angamis are bounded by the Barail range and the Diphu river and on the west by the Namber forest. On the north they are bounded by a line running from a point slightly south of where Dayang river issues into the plains. Except for a village or two the whole of Angami tribe can be located in the area mentioned above.

Within the above mentioned area there are many villages. As mentioned in the 1st chapter sample was drawn from the population of three villages viz. Jotsoma, Khonoma and Kohima. These three
are purely Angami villages and though they are pretty near to Kohima, the state capital, they still retain their traditions. It may be mentioned here, though it may not be relevant that Phizo, the underground Naga leader is from the village Khonomega.

Appearance

The appearance of the Angami Naga is quite an impressive one. For a hill-man they are quite tall in height too; which goes up to eleven feet nine. They have enormous physical power. The features of the Angamis are pleasant but it is difficult to describe them as they differ from village to village. Their complexion is fair in general. The most remarkable thing is their voice which is a very pleasant and melodious one. Angamis are known for their cleanliness.

Dress and Ornaments

Angamis wear a variety of cloths. Patterns on the cloths differ from village to village. Predominant pattern is stripes, which may be of various colours, mainly red and black, occasionally we see blue and yellow stripes. The dress of the ordinary Angami women consist of a sort of sleeveless bodice formed by a cloth crossed under one arm and fastened on the opposite shoulder, and a petticoat made by wrapping a cloth round the waist. In olden times the hair of the unmarried girls were shaved but this practice is not usually seen today.

Angami women never wear cowries. They are worn only by Angami male. Angami women wear nothing on the legs but wear a
bracelet on the upper arm. They are very fond of wearing beads on their neck. On the ear they usually wear brass rings. The cloths worn by women on the occasions of ceremonies differ from everyday cloths only in the addition of two long scarlet tassels of dyed goat's hair worn hanging down from the ears in front.

The ceremonial dress of the men on the other hand is strikingly different. With fringe, feathers and colourful ornaments they become a different person altogether.

Physical and General Characteristics

The young Angami men possess fine, well proportioned figure. The complexions are brown, mouths large, nose flat, high cheek bones, sharp small eyes and a cunning arch. The women are short, stout, fair and rosy in complexion.

The physical features of the Angami Nagas denote their trait of character i.e. cruel, treacherous and vindictive. The crime murder in them cannot be expiated. The relations of the murdered person instantly spear the murderer. In case he takes refuge in another village he can be killed years after the crime. This is perhaps that revenge is considered a sacred duty among the Angamis. Adultry is another offence which has no provision of compromise rather the man is speared by the woman's husband on the first opportunity. Theft and such minor offences are dealt with by a council of elders and a fine is imposed according to the degree of guilt. Verrier Flwin, while commenting on the general characteristics of the Angamis says, "The average Angami
is a fine, hardly, athletic fellow, brave and warlike and among themselves, as a rule, most truthful and honest. On the other hand, he is blood thirstily treacherous and revengeful to an almost incredible degree" (1969 : 301).

Revenge is considered to be a very essential act which is taught from childhood itself. The 'blood-fend' of the Nagas, not merely of the Angamis is handed down from generation to generation and an everlasting affair. The petty family quarrels, generally about land and water, when taken up by clans they may end up in bitter civil war which devastate whole village killing many helpless old men and women, innocent boys, girls and children.

Like the Angami men, the women too are fatter than the average of other hill-women. They are faithful and merry and always on the go. Chastity is a very important characteristics of the Angami women. Prostitution is a thing unknown among the Nagas. The unfaithfulness in both man and woman is not tolerated at all. Young boys and girls mix together enjoying the full freedom but not the married people.

**Villages**

The Angamis build their villages on the summits of the high tabular hills and due to the state of constant war, most of the villages are strongly equipped. Their usual defences are the stiff-stockades, deepditches with sharp-pointed bamboo stakes and huge stone walls etc. Specially during the wartime hill sides and approaches to the villages are thickly studded over with sharp
and pointed bamboo stakes usually of three to six inches of length. A foreigner is unable to notice these stakes. Deep pitfalls and small holes covered with a light layer of earth and leaves keep them concealed and they are very skilfully placed along the paths by which an enemy is expected to approach, and if one tumbles in to one of them he is met with serious injury.

The approach to the villages are narrow with high banks on either side. This perhaps is for the defence of the village as there is constant warfare among Angamis.

Houses

Their houses are built with a ground floor but we observed that for the roof they also use straw. Houses are constructed in irregular lines but in two rows. The houses have high gable ends which almost touch the ground on either sides which perhaps is a precaution taken against rain and wind. The gable in front is decorated with broad, handsome weeder boards if the person is of wealth. The width of the houses vary from 20 to 40 feet and 30 to 60 feet in length. In some villages each houses is surrounded by a stone wall to mark the compound. Each house is divided off into two or three compartments according to the wealth or wish of the owner. In the front room kept the huge bamboo baskets wherein the grain is stored away. The inner room is used for sitting and sleeping where there is a large open pre-place and around it are placed thick, broad planks. The back room usually contains the liquor tub, which is a very important commodity in Naza house.
Angamis are very fond of liquor which they call 'dzu' which is often called 'madhu'. It is a kind of fermented beer, made of rice and other ingredients, composed of herbs found in the wild jungle. It is surprising to see the amount of liquor a Naga person consumes during the day.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage and divorce are among the simplest of rites noticed in the Angamis. Slightest of provocation may lead to divorce. Incompatibility of temper is the cause of divorce among them. Angamis are monogamous in the strict sense of the term, though they can marry and remarry whenever they so desire. Man can marry the deceased wife's sisters and also the brother's widow. But the marriage among the cousins are strictly forbidden. Offsprings after divorce are looked after by the mother until they are able to look after themselves.

Parents never try to control their sons and daughters in their choice of partner. But may give advice. Villages are consist of different groups which they call Khels. Within the same village one Khel keeps a distance with other Khels. Conflicts arise between two or more Khels. Within the Khel they generally remain friends. The Khels among Angamis are being exogamous subdivisions, a man has to look to his wife among the women of a Khel different from his own. The marriage is solemnized by a large feast and the bridegroom makes a present to the bride's parents if he can afford it, which is a kind of bride price. A boy never marries till he is established and he builds a new house
and lives separately after marriage. In divorce all the property derived at the time of marriage and since then are divided. The wife of the divorcee gets one third, and the rest goes to the man. The woman either returns it to her parents and lives with them or lives separately until she remarries.

On the death of the father all the property is divided among the sons alone excepting the house which goes to the youngest son along with his other share. The daughters have no claim on her father's property other than their clothes and ornaments; they, however, are supported by the sons until their marriage or death.

If a man dies leaving no male child, his property as a rule is divided among his nearest male relations, not his daughters. But, by word of mouth a man can offer certain portion of property to his daughters. In case of a married woman, with property of her own, in the form of land, dies without children, if it not sold to meet her funeral expenses, goes to her nearest male relations.

Religion

The Angamis, like other hill-tribes have a vague indefinite belief in a supreme being. They believe themselves to be subject to the influence of evil spirits and try to keep them pleased by various sacrifices. Every misfortune is ascribed to evil spirits and lot is spent on appeasing them. The usual way of appeasing is to offer fowls, of which the head, feet and entrails are offered to the demon, the other parts are eaten by the sacrificer.
The Angami Nagas have no ideas of future state of re-
tribution of good and evil. They believe in many gods and goddess
and good and evil spirits residing in their hills. They offer
sacrifices of cows and mithuns, dogs, cocks, spirituous liquor to
them. In their estimation each god or spirit has the power to
afflict them with sickness, ill-luck and a variety of calamities.
They even have the power to make them successful in their incursions
and prosperous in their occupations.

If a man falls sick, the chief person of the family sacri-
fices a fowl asking the spirit to restore the good health of the
person. If the sickness is severe, a person takes a fowl to the
jungle and leaves the fowl alive as an offering to the living
spirit. If a person falls sick after cultivating a large portion
of land, he kills a pig and the chiefs or elders partake his
feasts and assist him to cut his grain and next day after the
feast they cut the corn.

Like all hill tribes they have certain superstitions and
all important business are decided by consulting omens. The method
of ascertaining whether a hostile incursion on a neighbouring tribe
would be successful; they cut a soft reed into flat pieces, if the
slices fall of one side or one upon the other success is certain.
They claim to have the knowledge of future events by the flight
of a cock, if he flies strong and far it is an auspicious omen, on
the contrary, if the flight is for a short distance, ill-luck would
inevitably attend any hostile expedition. A deer crossing their
path is bad sign and if such case occur they postpone the under-
taking and return home immediately.
Now Christianity is widespread in Nagaland. But the influence of Christian religion is less in Nagaland compared to other tribal areas of Assam. This perhaps is for two reasons—one is that the missionaries entered Nagaland later than in other hill areas; and the other is that Nagas are strong in their views and less susceptible to suggestion for which they are able to retain their old traditions.

**Occupation**

Cultivation is the main occupation of the Naga men. Hunting is another occupation which the Nagas engage themselves in. The duty of the women is to fetch the wood, draw the water, cook food, and brew the liquor. Other than these they also work in the fields and weave cloths at home. The Nagas are skilful iron-workers and turn out very beautiful spears. Naga spears are seen in the drawing room of many modern families these days and Naga spear dance is known in almost every corner of India today. They make pottery which are not very smooth but without the potter's wheel.

**Food**

All Nagas are mainly rice eaters. But meat is their second substantial food. All kinds of animals are readily eaten by the Angamis and those dying a natural death are not readily rejected by some Nagas. Dog's flesh is thought to be very superior in quality. While in the village Jotsoma I saw some young
children collecting some insects and on enquiry I found out that after roasting they will eat those insects.

Angami Naga Organization

No regular government can be expected to exist amongst such tribes as Nagas who are ignorant of the use of letters or the art of writing (though now-a-days they are educated enough to rule their own land we are talking about the interior) and whose dialects differ from the tribes of the adjoining hills. But Angami village has a polity of its own. Their government can be called democratic. Although each village community has a nominal head they have no absolute power over the people. In all transactions of importance, the aged and the warriors of the village assemble together and decide on what is to be done. The authority of the chief of a village is hereditary, the eldest son on the death of his father or even before death if capable, succeeds the dignity.

Comparison of the Khasi and the Naga Culture

In the above discussion an attempt was made to deal with various culture contents and culture peculiarities of the tribes under study i.e. the Khasi and the Angami Naga. After dealing with the culture of these two tribes in details we find that there are some cultural characteristics which are very different in both the tribes though there are some points of similarity. Again, there are some cultural actions and habits which are very common in one tribe but are not present in the other.

If we look into the history of these two tribes we find that they have very different origin. The Khasis are believed to
have come from Far-East as many resemblances are found in the stone implements, dresses, ornaments and also many religious beliefs and objects of worship of these people to the people of the Far-East countries such as Burma, Cambodia, Malay etc. There is a very striking similarity in the language of the Khasis and the language spoken by the people of the Far-East countries. Angami Nagas on the other hand are thought to have come from the direction of Tibet and China (Hutton 1969 : 8).

Like any other hill tribe both the Khasis and the Nagas possess enormous physical power. They look well-nourished and the males are extremely muscular. Females, too, are not much behind man in physical strength. The amount of load carried by a Khasi or a Naga female is enough to surprise any people living in the plains just below these hills.

It is difficult to compare these two tribes in their physical features as within the same tribe itself, they differ from village to village. The features of the people of these two tribes however are not similar and therefore a person who knows what a Khasi or a Naga looks like can easily make out the difference. As for complexion, Nagas are fair in general. But there are many Nagas who possess brown complexion. The complexion of the Khasis vary from dark to a light yellowish brown to fair, according to locality.

Khasis are of very cheerful disposition and light hearted by nature. They know how to appreciate the beauty of the nature and are very fond of music. We found most of the Khasi men and women singing when they were at work. Specially, the women sing
melodious songs when they walk along the mountain tract with bundle of wood on their head. The main general characteristic found among the Nagas is that they are of very practical nature. They have a very strong aversion for falsehood, theft, adultery etc. Revenge is considered to be a sacred duty among the Angami and it is taught from childhood itself. Other than that they are very enthusiastic in nature and full of energy.

Being two separate tribes living in two different hills they naturally differ in things like dress and in their favourite ornaments. The dress of the Nagas however are more colourful than the Khasis. The women of both the tribes are fond of ornaments. But the Khasi women wear more of gold and silver jewellery whereas the Naga women are more fond of coloured beads than gold and silver.

Cultivation is the main occupation of both the Khasi and the Naga. Hunting is another occupation which is very popular among the Nagas but Khasis are engaged less in it. The Nagas are skilled in iron-works. They also engage themselves in pottery making without the potter's wheel. Both Khasi and Naga women are expert weavers.

Both the Khasi and the Nagas are mainly rice eaters. Meat is their second substantial food. The Khasi mostly have pork beef and dry fish, whereas Nagas eat meat of all kinds of animal. Both Khasi and Nagas can consume an enormous quantity of country liquor.

The Khasis build their villages a little below the tops of the hill where they find some depression, whereas, the Angami
Nagas build their villages on the summits of the high tabular hills. The reason for building villages below the top of the mountain may be as a protection for strong wind and storms and also defence against enemy. War among villages is a common phenomenon for the Angamis and to protect themselves from enemy and to observe the enemy approaching they build their houses on top of the hills. Naga villages are very well-equipped. Their way of defences are mentioned above. Both the Khasis and the Nagas build their houses quite close together.

Khasi houses are constructed with stone walls, whereas, the Nagas build their houses with a ground floor. Both make just about three compartments in a house - a porch, a centre-room and an inner-room.

The most favourite weapon of the Khasis is bow and arrow, whereas, it is the spear for the Nagas. Khasis too occasionally use spear, but bow and arrow is more popular among them. Nagas use spear for all purposes including in war against enemies.

Khasis live in clans which are from one grandmother. Sub-clans are from one great-grandmother. The next division is the family. In a Khasi family the grandmother, her daughters and daughter's children all live together. Marriages are prohibited within the clan. In an Angami village there are different khels which are exogamous sub-divisions and within khels there are many families. A man has to look for his wife among the women of a khel different from his own.
If we notice the organizational life of the Khasis we find that the Khasis have chiefs who are not territorial sovereigns; instead they can be called democratic. They cannot perform any act without first consulting with their durbar where their mansries sit. Similarly, Angami Government also is democratic in nature. Although each village community has a nominal head he has no absolute power over the people. To decide all important matters, the aged people of the village get together and try for a solution. The authority of the chief is hereditary. The eldest son on the death of the father or due to his inability succeeds the dignity.

The society of the Khasi people being matriarchal, the boy comes to the girls family after marriage and lives there. The girl builds a house in her mother's compound and lives there after marriage. Boys and girls are free to choose their own partner, only that they cannot marry within the clan. The children adopt their mother's title whereas the father retains his own i.e. his mother. Among the Nagas also, parents never try to control their sons and daughters in their choice of partner. One, however, cannot marry from the same khel. Before marriage the son makes a house of his own and the girl comes and lives with him after marriage. The marriage is solemnized by a large feast and the bridegroom gives a present to the bride's parents as bride price, if he can afford it. A Naga man can marry the deceased wife's sister and also the brother's widow.

For both the Khasis and the Nagas divorce is as simple as marriage. Among Khasis it is a custom that if one party is unwilling to the divorce, the party desiring must pay the
compensation. Other than this each takes his or her own property and also divides the jointly acquired property. Divorced persons cannot remarry (neither a new person nor to the same person) according to the Khasi Customary Law. But now-a-days this law has been made flexible. After divorce the children stay with the mother taking her surname and acquiring mother's property. Therefore, no confusion or suffering is felt by the children due to the divorce of their parents. Even among the Nagas, all property derived at the time of marriage and since then are divided in divorce. The wife of the divorcee gets one-third and the two-third goes to the man. The woman after divorce either returns to her parents or live alone till she remarries.

Adoption is not prevalent among Nagas but there is no ban on it. But among the Khasis, the families where there is no girl generally adopt girls from other families to perform the family religious ceremonies and to inherit the family property.

Among the Khasis, inheritance is purely matrilineal. Except for some property which belong to the clan, the youngest daughter gets the whole property of her mother which includes the house where her mother lives. The sisters only get some property in the form of vessels and ornaments. The youngest daughter, however, has to take care of the maternal uncles in their distress. On the contrary, Naga custom is that, on the death of the father all the property is divided among the sons but the house goes to the youngest son along with the other share. The daughters have no share in her father's property other than her clothes and ornaments. If a man dies with no male child, his property is divided
among his nearest male relations. But the man can, according to his will give a portion of it to his daughters. If woman with property of her own dies without children, the property other than those sold to meet her funeral expenses, goes to her nearest male relations.

The Nagas have the patriarchal form of society and therefore, men are the inheritors and better off among the two sexes. Like in any other patriarchal society, men are usually more on the limelight than the women. But in the interior villages both men and women are engaged in cultivation and other activities and both seem to be of equal footing other than the right of inheritance. But among the Khasis, the men have a very different role in the society. It is true that he comes to the wife's house after marriage but this does not mean that he has a very tragic position. He still retains his own surname, remain the father, the executor, whereas the mother remains the spiritual head of the house. In his mother's family he is the maternal uncle who is consulted in every important affair. One striking difference between the Khasi women and Naga women is that the Khasi women are less inhibited than the Naga women and even in developed towns their number is equal to men in offices and in the field of business.

Both the Khasis and the Nagas are very religious minded. They believe in many gods and goddesses and good and evil spirits. Many prayers are said and many sacrifices are made to the gods and goddesses to keep the people away from misfortunes. It is just that both Khasis and Nagas have different ways of praying and different means of sacrificing. They are described in details
earlier in this chapter. A very common worship, i.e. the Thlem, the worship of serpent spirit was not seen in Nagaland.

A very common form of worship which is not found in Nagaland is the worship of ancestors. Ancestor worship is a very important aspect of Khasi religious life. They glorify the dead and always try to keep them pleased by means of offerings of articles of food and other materials. They continue to observe funeral ceremonies by burying the bones of the dead which are collected at the actual funeral ceremony and preserved at home.

It was observed during my stay in the Khasi and the Naga hills that there are many points where both the Khasi and the Naga culture appear to be similar to each other and also in many points the two cultures differ considerably. As we have mentioned earlier, we will here try to find out the influence of these two tribal cultures on the people inhabiting the hills. For the purpose we applied certain tests to our selected samples and statistically treated the data obtained therefrom.

In the next chapter we will discuss the results which objectively point out the differences between them in some cultural traits influencing personality pattern. It was, however, observable that the Naga and the Khasi people have some points of affinity between the two cultures. But at the same time it was noted that they differ from one another in many cultural habits.