CHAPTER XI

THE PNAR LITERATURE

People tend to view India as a veritable tower of Babel because of the large number of major languages and dialects which exist in this country\(^1\). A further complication, some people argue in the multiplicity of scripts. Sometimes one tend to think whether it is wise to encourage languages if it is only going to add to further linguistic differentiation and the feeling of a separate identity merely on the basis of language. By encouraging every language and dialect are we only compounding or making the unification of the country difficult?

One has to face the facts and problems on this point boldly and solve them sincerely. The fact is that ours is a pluralistic society in which the diversity of languages need not always be viewed negatively.

We have apart from the classical literature of the past, a growing body of modern Indian literature which is

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1. Interview with A. Pyrtuh M.A. age 40 Dy. Director of Census Mawkyndeng.
enriching the life of the people. Our language should create not suspicion and hostility among the people living in different parts of the country but mutual appreciation and coherance.

One must love one's own mother tongue while learning to appreciate and respect the mother tongue of others. India is not only the country with a multiplicity of languages.

The spread of culture and scientific knowledge requires that we pay more attention to our languages. Some critics opines that our languages have become too rhetorical and political instead of being a media for the communication of cultural and scientific knowledge. The same critics say that the major use to which our languages are being put today is for emotional and rhetorical appeals to the masses to sway them in elections.\(^2\)

Democratic country like ours have certain values like making the masses politically conscious. But however, the masses are still weak in logical, rational and scientific content.

\(^{2}\) Ibid.
Therefore, one of our major responsibilities is to make our languages better media for the transmission of modern rational thought and scientific and technological knowledge so that their content become more cultural and knowledge generating while sharpening the critical and analytical faculties\(^3\).

Language is also an important instrument of social change and transformation. Our language cannot avoid this moral responsibility for promoting social and economic change. It is through language we come to understand the meaning and value of freedom, liberty and justice for our own people and for all mankind. The task of education is to make language a means of widening horizons which ultimately enables people to sense the universality of culture and the oneness of humanity.

A study of the Pnar language will show how a language can be rich and vibrant even if it had no script in the past. One cannot but admire the way in which Pnar people preserved and enriched their language inspite of it not having adopted a script till recently.

\(^3\) Ibid.
The other striking factor about the Pnar language is the way in which it has preserved its intrinsic quality and character in spite of being subject to other powerful language influences. Any language is enriched by borrowing but not at the cost of losing its own identity. The Pnar has managed to remain intact as a language with great potentialities for further growth.

What the Pnar Hills seems to have is an inborn love of nature. The hills and dales, the rivers and streams, the blue skies, the whispering pines and the rains have evoked a sense of aesthetic appreciation for the trinity of God, Man and nature.

The Pnar language also provides us with a link with neighbouring South-East Asia as a member of the Mon Khmer family of languages. When one thinks of the historic past, the glorious temples of Ankor, what comes to mind. But recent events remind us of the living present and the pregnant future and the annihilation of distance which makes it imperative that we should develop better understanding and closer ties with other states and countries.

4. Interview with Donbok T. Laloo author of Ka Rongbirla U Hynniew trep age 39 Upper Shillong.
The Pnar is a developing language like most of the Indian developing languages. The fact that it has increased its vocabulary shows that it is a living language. Teachers and students should take incentive to teach and to learn more about this language.

THE ORIGIN OF THE LANGUAGE

The Pnar language is one of the dominant tribal languages in the North East India.

According to a renowned linguists, Pnar is an offshoot of Khasi consequently of Man-Khmer languages of the east, forming a group with Mon in lower Burma, Khmer in Cambodia, Vietnamese in Vietnam, Palaung Riang Wa in Upper Burma, Khmer-Lemet-Khmer in Thailand, Bahnar-Nanang and allied languages in Cambodia, Indo-China and Sakai of Malasiya.

The Pnars were confined first to the eastern frontiers of India before it emerged to its present location through both the Assam Hills and plains in the successive waves of migration.

5. Ibid
Linguistic evidence is corroborated by both the ethnological and the cultural affinities in culture.

**ORAL AND TRADITIONAL LITERATURE**

The Pnar has many wise sayings, proverbs, incantations, fables and folk songs. Proverbs treasured through generations and transmitted from father to son. Each household passed nearly every night in imparting ethical values to the young minds. The urgent need of learning righteousness, *Kamai Ia Ka hok*. The earth is nothing but a place of temporary abode, *Ha Ka Pyrthei basa*. Man should remember that he has a covenant with God, *Ienq rangboh a briew apiutang U Blei*. The covenant forms the backbone of the Pnar religion.

In the beginning, man lived close to God but sin sent man asunder from heaven. Man would have fallen victim to eternal torments but for the cock who came to save man by offering himself to suffer immolation at the altar.

Thus the cock is hailed by the sacrificers as the sangsterbird, the messenger, the liberator and the saviour.
A Pnar sacrifice opens with the following incantation:

"Oh son of the godess, show me the way: I am accursed of sin, plead then for me before God".  

A good deal of the use of parabolical expressions to point out a moral lesson. Stories are cited in a parabolical form. By parables the ancients sought to personify mountains, rivers, hills, rocks, flowers, plants and other images to bring out various ethical lessons. Philosophic terms are thus attributed to flowers and similies are brought out in comparison to human life. Thus U Tiew spang Jainkhar has a flower wrapped on his head with an embroidered turban. He is compared to a man who receives honour for his acts of feat. U Tiew Pathai Khubor implies a flower of odour compared to a person of virtue. U Tiewdohmaw is a violet hidden by a stone i.e. a person who performs deeds in silence and never demonstrate himself. Pawanglum a type of flower which overstretches and commands the view, is compared to an eminent person in the various fields of life. Even naming of the past settlements, ancient hills and streams is attributed to a philosophic conception after the important incidents.

7. Ibid ... p. 13
8. Interview with Sr. Catherine F.M.A. Nongbah.
Most of the popular Pnar folk-tales have been already published in books: Viz. The Khasis by Gurdon P.R.T., U Robon Sing "Ka Kitab Jingphawar, Mrs Raby's "The Folk tales of the Khasis", Bacciarello "Ka Dienjai Ki Long-Shuwa, P. Gatphol, "Ki Khanatang bad U Sierlapaland" H. Elias "Ki Khanatoang U Barim" etc.

Thus the Ka Hikai waterfall owes its name to the suicide of Ka Likai the mother who jumped over the cascade on finding that her drunken second husband had killed her only daughter born of the first husband i.e. child's deceased father.

U Lum Raitang the peak commemorates the burning alive of U Manik Kaitang, the piper at the pyre on its top for committing adultery with the wife of the king during his absence in the plains.

Not withstanding the commitment of adultery, which blemishes the story and the crime abhorred by the Pnars, U Raitang is one of the finest love stories which recounts that love is an eternal power blending itself with the undying music of the pipe.


Another peak, U Sohpethneng is called after the ladder, linking heaven and earth, at one time over its top. The peak commemorates the incident when the seven families i.e. ancestors of the Pnar race, were cut off from the nine celestial families i.e. the counterpart of the seven families, by a human being who worked under the devilish influence\textsuperscript{11}.

This little story throws light on the divine origin of the Pnars. Man's sin overshadowed the sun. Life became difficult. The birds and animals suffered in darkness. But the cock delivered the living beings by appearing before the celestial assembly held by God who pledged to save mankind by sacrificing himself at an altar.

God drew up a covenant and appropriated the sacrifices. The covenant having thus being sealed, the cock returned to its home and as he shrilled three times the sunshine returned to the earth\textsuperscript{12}.

The Pnars are music loving and express in songs their proverbs, folk-tales and epics.

\textsuperscript{11} Narrated by the people of Puriang.
\textsuperscript{12} Miri Sujata Religion and Society of North East India Page. 37
In the past, victories in wars were celebrated by folk-songs or community singings when the victorious men returned. Folk songs are sung to nature, to the wonders of creation and to the exhilarating scenes.

Dirges and lamentations are played by a pipe called Sharati during the funeral processions side by side with the women mourners who express lamentations. Pnar is rich in adverbs, adverbial phrases and imitatives. U Nissor Singh opines that they are never in want of a specific term to express the appropriate degree of quality.

The Pnar is remarkable for its dialetic variations which occur from place to place, from village and even inside a single village.

According to the opinions of Grierson Pnar is associated closely with Khasi, War, Lyngngam, and Bhoi.

13. Bareh H. The History and culture of the Khasi people page 310.
In the Pnar circle the elders have the special responsibility in seeing that community members bear good manners and conform to an ethical code.

PRE-LITERATE

The Pnar had no literature of their own in the past, the present alphabets from the Roman script were introduced as late as 1841. It was introduced by the Welsh Missionaries soon after British occupation of the area about one hundred and thirty six years ago. Prior to that the Pnar language was written in the Bengali script. It is worth mentioning here that the first translation of portions of the English Bible into Khasi was done in Bengali script. But the foreign missionaries finding difficulties in learning two languages Khasi and Bengali, at the same time, and the Bengali script also, took the easier cause and adopted the Roman script for the Khasi, and Pnar languages. The Khasis and Pnars readily accepted it and it continues to be in use to this day.

15. Prof. R.S. Lyngdoh speaker of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly delivered in his Presidential Address on 26th May 1975 at Symposium on Khasi Literature North Eastern Hill University Shillong.
According to tradition, an indigenous script was lost in a flood. It tells us that two survivors managed to escape the flood by swimming across the river. One was a Pnar and the other was a Hindu a dkhar. Both carried with them only the bundles of their respective scripts. The Dkhar managed to retain his script while swimming but the Pnar swimmer swallowed his. The swallowed script, the tradition says thus became mingled with his flesh and blood, his mind and heart which helped in turn to build up the fabric of an oral literature which freely expresses itself in the songs, folk-tales, epics, poetry and incantations.

In the absence of their own script the Pnars in the past were compelled to adopt the scripts of their neighbours - Bengali, Assamese, Persian, Devanagari for keeping records.

Commercial transactions in great volume of agricultural crops, betel-leaf, areca-nuts, cotton, oranges, limes, lemon, pineapples, jackfruits etc. were carried out with the neighbouring countries. Menerals and metals such as mica, silver, copper, gold, iron and others were carried.

18. Interview with Siang Pohthmi M.A. age 40 Lamin M.E. School Headmaster.
out with the countries beyond the Brahmaputra valley and thus necessitating the adoption of the foreign medium of expression.

The powerful states in the past also stamped their own coins. About sixteen coins of Pnar inscribed in Devanagri have been noticed corresponding from 1670 A.D. to 1788 A.D. They are called Takra Rupia, owing to the device of a sword they bear. Such specimens have appeared in a catalogue of the provincial coin cabinet section XXXVIII.

In 1963 Prof. G.G. Swell, a renowned personage unearthed fifteen silver plated coins in the pool of water at Jowai with the inscription in Persian and Arabic, which read Hamindine Muhamud Shah Fazl Alam i.e. literally Shah Razh Alam, the king, while the obverse connotes nineteenth Murshidabad council\(^\text{19}\). This was an important finding in respect of numismatic evidence. According to tradition, revenue was sometimes paid with muslim coins to the chiefs by the subjects. The finding further indicates the extension of commercial contacts between Pnar traders and their neighbours. Many artillery guns

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and canons were seized by the Pnars from the Muslim invaders during the muslim expeditions who sought their passage, through the hills to the Brahmaputra valley. One inscription in the canon captured by the warriors between 1700 and 1800 A.D. bears the name Shersha. There were also official seals inscribed in the above letters. Tradition maintain that Dolois kept tutors from Szlinet and Assam for preparing diplomatic correspondence and teach their respective heir apparent, the alphabets.

MODERN PNAR LITERATURE

The Pnar literature was born in 1841. The Baptist missionaries came to propagate christianity among the Pnars. Thus came the Welsh mission. Rev. William Carey baptized Krishna Chandra Pal a Bengali carpenter in Calcutta. The mission continued to grow upto 1338. Pal was baptized in 1813 and became an active worker. Due to the efforts of Pal bible was translated into the local language in the Bengali script by 1817. St. Mathew's Gospel was translated first.

20. Barkataki S. Tribes of Assam 1968 p. 43
In 1827 New Testament was printed in the local language. It was used in the school of the Baptist mission. In 1834 a young American missionary planned to abandon the Bengali script and to switch over to the Roman alphabet. In 1841 with the advent of the Welsh Mission the adoption was accomplished.

**ROMAN ALPHABETS**

In 1341 Thomas Jones I put down the vernacular of the Pnars, into Roman alphabet. Missionaries made efforts to produce books, mainly Christian. The Bible translation was over after 50 years in 1891 and came out in print in 1899. The main collaborators were Rev. Khanang, Rev. Ksanbis, U Sympat and others.

The mission in the year 1861 established a printing press which catered to print both government and mission books.

In 1867 Robert Perry's translation of the scriptural history came out. In the same year there came Mrs. W. Sewis translations of the pilgrim's progress. In 1855 we have an introduction to Khasi language by W. Pryse. In the same year we have the Anglo Khasi dictionary by
Hugh Roberts 306 pages. At this time Rev. John Roberts wrote his book 38 years in India.


MODERN LITERATURE 1895 - 1919

In 1895 U Hormon Rai Diengdoh edited the first non-Christian monthly U Khasi Mynta. In the year 1907 P.R.T. Gurdon's outstanding book the Khasis was published. Mainly those responsible for cultural awakening were U Jeeban Ray, U Raban Singh, and U Sib Charan Ray and Jaid Dkhar.

Jeeban Ray knew English, Bengali, Khasi and Sanskrit. He set up in 1895 the Ri Khasi press which was destroyed in 1397 by earthquake but was rebuilt with the help of his son Sib Charan Ray. He organised the dance, arts and music. In 1397 Jeeban published the book Ka Niam Jong Ki Khasi i.e. the religion of the Khasis.

22. Information received from Rev. Herman age 69 Raliang.
In this book any reader gets an idea of the kindship system, monolithic erection, sacrifices and ceremonies etc. In 1900 the two books Ka Kitab shaphang U Wei U Blei and History of India in Khasi were published. He tried to make an adaptation of the Mahabharatha in his book kitab Chaitanya. Jeeban edicted U Nongphira in 1903 a monthly. There were news columns which were rather anti Christian.

U Rabon Singh was a labourer in the Government press. He embraced christianity and wrote Ka Kitab Jingphawar i.e. short stories, religious practices etc. Rabon published the book Ka Niam khein ki Khasi i.e. on religion. In the same year he wrote Hynniew Trep i.e. the seven huts, Ka Niam Khasi, the divination system and Ka Kitab Puriskam i.e. a collection of 20 folk tales.

Sib Charan Ray way an eloquent writer from 1902 - 1919. He published Ka Jingpyni Ka Knniew Bad Ki Khun in 1911. It is a dialogue. Ka Kot Tohkrit Tir Tir (an inquisitor) was published in 1913. In 1919 he published Ka Niam Ki Khasi i.e. the religion of the Khasis. In the same year he published Bhagavad Gita in Khasi. Again in 1925 there came Ka Jingiakren Pule Shapkhang Ka Niam i.e. a treatise

23. Ibid.
On religion. He was helped by U Job Solomon for literacy improvements. His English Khasi dictionary 1895 was a great success. Ray wrote Ka Jingkyrsiew for learning Khasi, Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali.

U Nissor Singh wrote hints on the study of Khasi in 1900, Khasi English dictionary in 1902 and English Khasi dictionary. He published also books on Arithmetic text book and mental arithmetic booklets.

So far there were no original dramas, only translation from other languages. Hari Charan Roy in 1910 wrote drama entitled Savitri a translation from Mahabharata\(^{25}\). Srimmotimai was published by Dino Nath Roy in 1912.

B.K. Sarma Roy in 1914 edited the book 'Ka History Jong Ka Ri Khasi a delightful presentation of modern Khasi history. He published also books on grammar, hygiene and health.

Radhan Singh Berry 1902 - 3 published an original poetry in two parts Ki Jingsneng Tymmen. He did not borrow western ideas, style and composition\(^{26}\).

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JOURNALISM

U Nangkit Khubor started his 1st Christian journal 1894-95. U Khasi Mynta was published in 1895 by U Hormu Rai Diengdoh. In 1896 the presbyterians published Ka Pateng Khristan. The missionary Evans edicted U Nangialam Khristan. The catholic monthly U Nongialan katholic was started which went on for many years. Saso Tham edicted U Lurshai i.e. the bright star in 1903 which went on for 50 years. Then it was continued by W.Reade then D.N.S. Wahlang.

MODERN LITERATURE 1920-40

Those who contributed to the growth of literature in this period are Dr. H.Lyngdoh, P.Gatphoh, G.Gosta, H.Elias, T.Cajee and U Soso Tham27.

U Hamiwell Lyngdoh was born in 1877. He became a medical graduate in 1903. He served as an assistant surgeon in Dhubri and civil surgeon in Goalpora in 1906. He was the port Health Officer Chittagong in 1903. In 1917 he was appointed as the civil surgeon at Imphal. In 1921 he served the military as Leintenant and Captain. In 1923 he was made special officer and in 1932 he retired27.

27. Ibid.

U Hamiwell Lyngdoh was a gifted writer. He published on health and maternity 1922-23 Ki ain ka jingkoit jingkhoin. He contributed articles on the Lurshai monthly often. In 1937 there came out Ka Niam Khasi on the religious practices of the various tribes of the Khasi Hills. His book Ki Sylem Khasi Bad Synteng is an outline History of Khasi and Synteng. In 1937 he edited Ka pateng kristan a presbyterian monthly. Hamiwell visited Wales in 1938. He died in 1951.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE SALESIANS

The German fathers came to North Eastern part of India in 1876. In 1890 they strengthened their missions. At Raliang in the heart of the Pnars a mission was started in 1892. Again in 1922 the Salesian fathers or Don Bosco fathers set their foot in the Pnar Hills.

U Nongialam Katholic and Ka Iing Kristan are the two catholic monthlies started by the Salesian missionaries. There arose a sort of friction between the catholic and presbyterian groups. The leading writers among the Salesian missionaries were Rev. Bacchiarello, Rev. G. Costa and Rev. H. Elias.

29. Information received from the people of Kuth.
Rev. Bacchiarello who is still alive wrote in 1931 Ka Dienjat Ki Langshuwa i.e. the foot prints of our predecessors. It gives folktales, beliefs and deities of the Pnar people. He started also the Ka Ing Kristan i.e. the christian family. It is a monthly magazine.

Rev. G.Costa was a true research worker. His works are ethnological anthropological and sociological. He took interest and visited many interior places. He was acquainted with the facts and conditions of the people. In 1937 he wrote Ka Riti Jong Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem i.e. the customary laws in the land of thirty kings. It consists of 2 volums and are still considered to be a masterpiece. In his vol. I he explains the origin, culture, political, jurisprudence and laws of inheritance. In Vol II he illustrates the religious ceremonies, sports, festivals and it is more anthropological than literature. It may be recalled Rev. Costa makes no polemic conclusions.

Rev. H.Elias wrote several books for school children as well as college students. In his time the folklores reached a stage of blossoming. His writings are indigenous, unadulterated and unsophisticated. He was also a poet.

32. Information given by R.T. Rymbai
33. Narrated by his nephew Vincent-Pokseh.
Bah Terence Cajee contributed much for the history of Assam. He wrote Ka Pyrthai a geography book. Cajee translated notes on Khasi law of land from English into Khasi.

Beh. P. Gatphoh in 1939 was a renowned folklorist. His works are historical, ethical ideas associated with traditions.

In 1915 Mandan Bareh from Jowai edited a quarterly Ka Seng Presbyterian i.e. a presbyterian book. In 1922 K.M. Roy published U Nongialam an evangelical book. In 1920-40 many journals were born but short lived. Freedom of press was also restrained. In 1921 M.N. Das edited the monthly U Nongpyrta the crier. U Khasi was published by K.Swet. In 1922 Rev. S.R. Manners and Siang Blah jointly edited U Jaintia. 1924 saw the publication of A.C. Macdonald Ka Sngi the sun. Ka Jingshisha i.e. the truth was written by L. Gatphoh in 1926. B.I. Pugh's U Woh i.e. Jaintia brother in 1930 was much appreciated. In 1930 S.G. Nalle published U Jingtip i.e. the knowledge. M.Bareh's famous Ka Jingshai Jing Ka Ri Khasi i.e. the licht of the Khasi was published in 1932.

34. Information given by Siang Pohthmi M.A. age 40 lamin
In 1933 there came out Ka Juk (era) by A.S. Khangphai.
Ka Meirilung (Mother nature) was published in 1939 by Khasi students together with P. Gatphoh.

CONTEMPORARY 1941 - 1981

We have nothing special upto 1950. U Mawpun Jingtip was published by D. Bareh in 1955. In the same year folk-tales were collected by Mandam Bareh. In 1959 Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum published U Khasi Hyndai (a Khasi of old). In 1960 there came out F. M. Pugh's Nangno U Khasi U wan Mih a dialogue on Khasi ancestry.

R.T. Rymbai's article in English on U Kiang Nongbah is the most fascinating historical truth pertaining to the last century. He tells us how U Kiang Nongbah a Pnar patriot and a hero marched forward with the masses of the warriors to fight the English from 1860-63. It was the 3rd and the final war of independence. He was betrayed by one of the chiefs. The hero was captured and hanged at Jowai. His last words were "Children of the Mother Pnar

35. Information given by Donbok T. Laloo author of Ka Rongbiria U Hynniew Trep age 39 Upper Shillong.
36. From the lips of R.T. Rymbai.
in a moment or two I shall be hanged but let not your souls be massacred. Please watch my head when I swing on the rope. If it turns to the east, the British rule will end within three generations, hence the gods will also come back to you". 37

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS FROM THE PNARS

Rhymes and Rhythms are the indispensable elements in music, poetry and dance, enshrined in the cultural heritage of the people. Rhythms are most essential for maintaining discipline in music, poetry and dance. The strongest rhythms are obtained from drum beats. True music cannot exist without proper timings. Music played at random without well balanced timing, does not constitute true art and does not go in harmony with the dance or other connected arts. A song sung, a tune hummed and incantations raised in proper rhythms have attributes of arts.

The Pnars in the ages past had a well-organised rhythmic system by which they had composed their verses and songs and which have survived until the present day 38.

38. Ibid.
They are music lovers. They have also their own prosody, their own system of measure and feet, beat and accents, metre and rhythm, rhyme and identical terms. With the birth and growth of literature in the languages, poetry too flowered. The Pnars have traditional verses, since time immemorial, which convey several ethical lessons. They are called Phawars and serve as incantations. These are used at festivals and functions, political processions, community work, social gatherings, hunttings, fishing, expeditions, names and sports.

Though some are humorous, they usually serve as pieces of high ethical expressions and have social significance.

To cite a typical Phawar:- Kynthem U saisiej, U Bsang ia u khnai Haba iashem para baieij, ki iisong da u kwai?

Meaning - Guests on visit to their loved ones are entertained by Kwai.

Ka Syrdeng U jasieh shikynda ka kyndad
To pynieng ki ryntieh ka samila kynrad.

Meaning :- addressed to archers:
Hold aloft your bows
Cheer up and drive the arrows to the target.\(^\text{39}\)

\(^{39}\) Borrowed from Donbok T. Laloo Upper Shillong.
It may be noted that the first line is a complete whereas the second line propounds the idea and ethical lesson of the verse. According to Prof. (Mrs) A.G. Tham, in a paper entitled literature and Art, submitted to a symposium of Khasi Literature held on May 26th 1975 the poetic conception derived from the Phawar shows a transition between chaos and orderliness and how man in the dark, gropes to seek the light.

Besides, poetic thought had properly been cultivated in other ways. It was largely used it the verbose expressions in the personification of streams, pools, falls, orchids, peaks, groves and other natural images and giving expressions to their traditional philosophical usage.

It is not the drum beats alone which provide rhythm in poetry and music but also beats of other musical instruments notably the harp.\textsuperscript{40}

Harpists recitals, with the powerful strains on the harp, are also considered as sublime whether it be comedy, tragedy, jest romance or epic etc. A harpist is a prolific

\textsuperscript{40} Chowdhury J.N. The Khasi Canvas 1978 p. 94.
singer having a treasure of profuse philosophy, folklore, mythology which he conveys all in the strains of his Ka Dintara (harp). He also has the natural capacity to develop such themes both in musical and literary terms, the flow becomes more spontaneous when he recites his composition at dead of night to his audience. It is prose, the harpist takes the role of an orator using recitals on divergent views containing lot of moral instructions.

Sometimes two or more harpists play the part of debators or spokesmen mutually arguing on a selected theme or a case at issue. To a herpist a modern poet sings:-

Those golden strings of heaven
The further goes the night
More tuneful your strings vibrate
And what befitting robes shall I wear.

The herpist carves models of poetry through his strains tunes and recitals on his harp. He stirs the spirit poetry and by the beats of a harp, he helps to evolve a metrical and consistent form.

41. Ideas furnished by Bah Marchel age 42 - a good musician from Upper Shillong.
Drum-beats are connotative usually with dances. Hundreds of arts in drumming exist. A divergence is indicated in beats and use of sounds from place to place. The Kyrim art which is considered a proper model does not represent the musical heritage of the entire race. Various parts of Meghalaya have different annual worships, ceremonies and festivals and the usage in musical arts in quite divergent. Each sonance system in largely connotative and symbolic a drop from loud to low beat and several other transitionals beats are connotative of invocative, player and worship and the several other usages adopted in those ceremonies.  

Some beats sound so solemn, in very low pitch or at ebb, others turn loud and when choroses of drums join, they develop into more penetrating pitches, particularly when simultaneous performances are given by a congregation or by a group of priests. As such the role of music is recreative and demonstrative which leaves its natural and spontaneous effect.  

Dance embraces different arts, consistent with drumming and pipings in the background. For men there

42. Interview with the people of Kuth.
are war and sword dances whereas women have a virgin dance. There is a group dance for both males and females. The people have several other religious and fertility dances which are governed by other arts such as drumming and piping and use different musical instruments.

There is great diversity in performing the arts of music and dance handed down from the ages past. All these dances are connotative of cultural moods, temperament, gestures, actions and tendency. A few of the agricultural dances are performed without any orchestra but are just accompanied with the singings or chants in the background.

The male dances consists of stepping up forward and backward in a circle, lifting up and occasional hopping of feet with slightly inclining body, somewhat in imitation of the hopscotch. In some places women stand in a row surrounded by two men each who cross hands over shoulders, step forward and backward, occasionally lifting up their feet. The females move slowly rather than take to the free style. They perform agricultural dances by lifting up and dropping hoes and at the harvest they dance by reaping and placing crops in baskets. They have other numerous dances.

44. Narrated by Bah Peter Shullai - Jowai.
The art of drumming has great cultural significance. Anthems political processions, social gatherings, picnics, resound with loud drum-beats. At funeral ceremonies, a lament is played on a pipe to the accompaniment of drumbeats. Village announcers convene the Durbar with drumbeats. Meetings start and close down with the echoes of drum-beats. Exchanges of drum-beats occur on the occasion of visits of dignitaries. Drums in various sizes are used, according to the significance of the occasion.

The Tangmuri which is a pipe, has coarse and penetrating effect and is played to the accompaniments of drum-beats from a drum called Naoka during the meetings and group dance. Padiah gives rhythmical accent in giving balanced accentuation to a tune played with other instruments. Katasa, sing kynthei, Sing Nalai are smaller drums used during various occasions.

Ka Sing Diengphang is made of reeds used for mild tunes. A Sharati is a pipe used for lamentation with drum-beats from small drums. Cow-boys also compose several tunes. The Pnars have a great heritage of dance and music. The folklore mentions Ka Pah Syntiew,

45. Narrated by Bah Chism headman of Pokseh village.
46. Chowdhury J.N. The Khasi canvas 1978 p. 92
U Manik Raitang and U Sajar Nangli as originators of dance, music, phawars and other arts. They were great besides political figures. The folklore reflects a rich diversity of musical moods and tastes and have a large field for poetry, epic and drama.

The Pnars have old war hunts, harvest dance, partner’s choice dance and fertility dances. Besides there is a general dance where both men and women perform functions. They depict different moods and gestures reflecting cultural emblems. The Grika dance belongs to men only while women just look on. Males hold in their hands a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left representing combats. But this is for warding off evil spirits too, who have brought upon them certain mishaps. The harvest dance is Wangala.

In Partner’s dance (Jikseka) girls and boys appear in appropriate gestures as if they were suitors. Boys approach and advance while girls express either consents or refusal. The boys turn rivals to one another. The dance is held as if it were against the background of the blossoming of trees.

47. Narrated by Vincent Khympat age 36 village Tluh
48. Interview with Sr. Catherine, Nongbah.
Chamdilran represents plucking of fruits in which a boy with a tail tied behind his waist and looping down, is surrounded by three to five girls performing the plucking, as the boy skips or hops to turn round and round his tail. Fertility is indicated by the digging of sticks as if the group was performing tilling or digging or actual plucking of crops. In a group dance Chroka men in a line strike with their feet the other one who in turn becomes invested and women move in and out with their hands around. In the past, head-hunters demonstrated their accomplishment by loud beating of drums, raising of incantations with uproaring noise, while festive dance was being held.

Gariooa is a merry-go-round, boys taking side on the left row and performing blowing of pipes and trumpets, beating gongs and drums in an orchestra while girls on the right row dance and hop forward and both go round and round the circle.

Among the musical instruments gongs are called rang when resounded, they mark certain auspicious occasions like meeting of councils, opening of markets, resumption of community works and location of festival dates.

In the past Pnar men were sent off on expeditions with the hoary beasts of drums. Similarly they were welcome from their victorious campaigns, with tumultuous cheers of the drumbeats.

Besides, there are drums Dama with heads, of animal skins commonly used by male dances beating them and dancing at the same time. They are beaten as accompaniment to the music of flutes and pipes. They are played by clapping upon the skin with the arm and not by clubs and sticks\textsuperscript{50}.

Other pipes are played with the mouth in which the notes are produced by blowing in various fashions. One of them is a buffalo horn which when played, produces a coarse note. It is a must in festive dance and music. There are bamboo flutes and pipes of different lengths. Festival music is uproarious yet melodious, forming a background in which the arts of dance are disciplined and played as choral music.

The Pnar singers and balladists have several folk tunes which preserve their legends and history\textsuperscript{51}.

\textsuperscript{50} Interview with the people of Pamura.

\textsuperscript{51} Narrated by Bah Marchel a musician from Upper Shillong.
Some are meditative and invocative. There are oral poetry emerging from the hills and rivers and beauty-spots and the charming scenery. Their love songs are melodious and penetrating. Some of them survive as classical music handed down from the past.

Modern prosodic rules have also been adopted which are at some variance from the ancient traditional verses. In case of phawars, the measure at times may be found loose and irregular but such flaws of course should not more the beauty of the original phawars. With the growth of literature in Pnar, circumstances made it necessary to have a bulk of the Christian hymns translated from English and Welsh.  

The traditional verses and prosody was recreated by local writers. Some good spade work was also done to dig out the traditions. Rabon Singh and Radhan Singh Berry stand out eminently in this field. Rabon Singh gathered the metrical rules of ancient poetry and collected phawars and rhythms. Radhan Singh Berry collected the ancient proverbs in the form of couplets. Soso Tham, though using western prosody, largely succeeded in revealing historical episodes, cultural grandeur, mythological aspects and other

52. From the lips of Rev. Bacciarello age 70 - Mawlai.
highlights which explode in his mighty lines with profound Pnar thought, expression and fashion. By laying the foundation of modern poetry, he added luster to the past greatness and glory and thus becomes an inspiration to poets who cultivate this school of thought. Other poets made additional contributions by digging out from the rich tradition and ancient epics. Some are nature lyric which reflect the mode of their forefathers approach to nature. They have a compact musical metre and beauty. There are parabolical expressions against the social evils and moral degradation. These creations came from the pen of H. Elias, P. Gatphoh, B. Thangkhiew, V. G. Bareh. Rev. H. Elias was a versifier inculcating traditional rhymes and rhythms. S. J. Duncan and D. S. Khangdup have adopted new models in their works, which greatly help to enrich modern poetry.

Stress and strain resulting from the present social change have also been felt in the field of music. It is well-known that western musical arts and songs have become more permeating while the original arts are being forgotten. Whatever be the case, the paramount need is to popularise original and traditional arts of music and dance and maintain their standard.

53. Ibid.
The need has been felt to discover more of the indigenous tunes and setting them down to beats as should be fitting into the art of drumming, blowing pipes or playing on the harp.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} Suggested by Donbok T. Laloo