INTRODUCTION

1. LIFE AND WORKS OF H.W. STEN

Haristwell Warmphaign Sten was born on 01.11.1938, in Barato village in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. Born to Late Momly Sten and Late Haristwell Lamare, he is the eldest of seven children. At the age of 13 he lost his father. Being from an agricultural family and constrained by the early death of his father, young H. W. Sten did not have the opportunity to concentrate on his studies. However, his determination to study motivated him to earn and learn. He persevered in his desire to study in spite of dire constraints and survived the challenges of life. With great difficulty, due to financial constraint, he completed his schooling in Barato, Mynsoo, Changpung and Shillong. He worked as a watchman till he qualified for the M.A. Degree. He changed from serving as a government servant to the profession of a teacher.¹ After serving as Professor in the Department of Khasi, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong he passed away on 7th September 1997. His passing away was a loss not only to the students and staff of NEHU but to the people of Khasi and Jaintia Hills as a whole.

A hard-working man, he struggled through life and achieved greatness as an author. The warmth and homeliness of the village surrounding, with its beauty of sights and sounds has a lot to do with the formation of H.W. Sten as an author. He was infatuated with stories and legends from books and oral tradition. In fact, his home village, Barato, has a connection with the story of _Ka Syiem Latympang_.

H.W. Sten started his career as a writer in the year 1961 with the publication of his religious booklet _Sumar na ki Nonghikai Ba Bakla_. Though a humble beginning, the sight of a finished product in the form of a book had encouraged and inspired the author to continue to dream and think big. The seed of the growth was the inspiration that he received from the writings of the early Khasi writers like U Edrenel Chyne, U Soso Tham, U Hopewell Elias Sohlia, U F.M. Pugh, Dr. John Roberts and Hari Charan Roy and others who wrote in Khasi. When we glance through the early years of the writing career of H.W. Sten, we notice that the majority of the published books are of miscellaneous types; he, later on, switched to poetry (1980), fiction (1981) and drama (1983).

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In a personal interview⁴ that this scholar had with H.W. Sten on 11ᵗʰ January 1997 at the Shillong Club, he, to some extent, revealed the secret of the inspiration to think big and to continue to write books. The context and the point of discussion with this scholar and another person (as eye witness) was the central idea of the novel, *Kwah Bym Ju Kut (Everlasting Desire)*. When this scholar asked him ‘what really is that everlasting desire’, H.W. Sten said many things but one of the things that he did was quoting from memory the following lines from U Soso Tham's poem, “U Khlur”:

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Khmih, samla ha khmat jong phi,
Ba phin tip shano ban jam.
Don u khlur ba lam lynti,
Im ka kyrteng, sah ka nam
...
La phi rit bor la phi tlot,
Jar jar la phi dei ban ŭam
Ei ba ong ba phim lah kot,
Sha ka kyrteng bad ka nam.⁵
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*(Look, young people in front of you,*

*That you will know how to proceed.*

*There’s a guiding star,*

*Name lives on, fame remains.*

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⁴ There is no published material on the interview. The conversation had been recorded by the scholar himself for his own personal interest.

Though you are weak and small,
Though silently you may cry
Who says that you cannot reach
The heights of name and fame.)

When H.W. Sten recited the above quotation he was explaining two things to this scholar, viz. i) the challenge of the invitation to a name and fame, ii) the lasting nature of the name and fame, i.e. that it lasts for ever. One of the ways to have one’s name remembered forever is through books. The issue of ‘living forever’ had always tickled the author of *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*. In fact, his recitation of the above lines makes it clear that the problem of the hero of the novel is linked to the vision of the author which poses a dilemma for him. He was disillusioned with the transient nature of human life, and, therefore, he nurtured a longing for permanence and stability.

Apart from treating the complex theme and matter of the novel *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, H.W. Sten unconsciously reveals his philosophy of life. It is clear that the idea of being remembered or living forever in the memory of others has captured the mind and the heart of H.W. Sten. Particularly, it is obvious that the author has been very much enamoured by the name created by the writers through their books, which are being read
by students and others. To a great extent, it is the surviving name and
fame of the authors which had attracted H.W. Sten to the career of
writing books because in comparison to all other means of preserving
the memory of someone, books are the most powerful.

H.W. Sten was a poet, a novelist, a critic, a dramatist, a linguist – all
in one and above all, a teacher. He has written extensively and it is
because of this that he preferred to be known simply as "u nongthoh" (an author) because he has contributed to the different types of
literature. The combination of the different traits in him has enabled him
to produce works of quality. Being a student of English literature, H.W.
Sten had the opportunity to compare its growth with that of the Khasi
literature. It is with great concern for the growth and quality of the Khasi
literature, that he wrote books of different types including fiction, drama,
poetry, criticism and linguistics.

H.W. Sten was a thinker and a reflective person and his approach to
fiction and drama is from the background of a person who has reflected
on the Christian themes side by side with the social and cultural realities

6 H.W. Sten preferred to be called ‘author’ (u nongthoh) rather than a dramatist or novelist or
poet. M.B. Jyrwa, Halor ka Burom Ba La Jah Bynta - I, (Shillong: Ha Sharing Cottage,
1998), p. (vii). In an exclusive and unpublished interview, on 11th January 1997, at the
Shillong Club, H.W. Sten expressed the displeasure of being called a novelist, a dramatist,
a poet, a critic, a linguist. He simply called himself, “u nongthoh” and rightly so, because he
was all in one.

7 His Masters Degree (M.A.) was in English from the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.
developed in course of time. The focus on human beings apart from being the theory of his art is the outcome of philosophical developments. The Freudian thoughts which have cast a wave of influence on psychologists and philosophers has influenced his thoughts.

From the humble beginning in 1961, H.W. Sten continued to write and publish books and the years that followed saw the maturing and growth of the person as writer of versatile nature. He rose to be a poet, a novelist, a dramatist, a critic, a linguist, a philosopher of no mean stature. In fact, he can be considered one of the greatest of Khasi writers and his contribution is great. Given below is the list of publications of H.W. Sten arranged chronologically according to the years of publication:

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<td>1966</td>
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<td>Ki Sur na Ka Duitara Ksiar</td>
<td>1967</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Meghalaya Year Book</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Meghalaya Year Book</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Meghalaya Year Book</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>William Wordsworth (Co-authored)</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>John Keats</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Meghalaya Year Book</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Ka Poitri u Primrose Gatphoh</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Meghalaya Year Book</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Ka Jingbishar Bniah</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Ka Histori ka Ktien Khasi</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Ka Burom Ba la Jah (Books I and II)</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Shaphang ka Novel</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>ABC of Paper Writing</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>Ki Snap ka Bishar Bniah (Co-authored)</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Ka Grammar</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>Khasi Literary Theory and Criticism</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Kwah Bym Ju Kut</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Na Kiwei Bad Na Lade</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Shaphang Ka Ktien Khasi</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>Ka Jinghikai Khasi</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>Ka Jingroi Jingsan Ka Khasi Fiction (2009)¹</td>
<td>1993</td>
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¹ The manuscript of the book shows that H.W. Sten wrote it in 1993. The book was published by his family in 2009.
2. **H.W. STEN’S CONTRIBUTION TO KHASI LITERATURE**

a). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Literature through miscellaneous writings

H.W. Sten began his career as a writer with writings on themes related to faith and religion. Even after he has established himself as a writer in poetry, fiction, drama, criticism and linguistics, he continued to write books of different types. The following are the publications of H.W. Sten on miscellaneous subjects:

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The beginning of H.W. Sten's writing career, which started in 1961 with the publication of his maiden book *Sumar na ki Nonghikai Ba Bakla* was an attempt of the author to conquer the uncertain and to leap into the unknown. However, one trend, which is clear, is the resolute determination of the author to march along the road less travelled in

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10 The journal *Khasi Studies* contains articles of different types written by H.W. Sten and others. Therefore, it appears in this list of miscellaneous writings and also later in the lists of criticism and linguistics.
Khasi literature and to contribute positively. In the course of his career as a writer, H.W. Sten has touched his hands in all fields of literature. Apart from his contribution into Khasi poetry, drama, fiction, criticism, linguistics, he has made a tremendous contribution through miscellaneous writings.

In 1966 H.W. Sten published three books, *Ka Mied Badum Kan Jah*, *U Jisu Khrist u Pdiang ïa ki Nongpop* and *Kajuh ka Bor u Blei*. These books are religious in nature and are the fruit of his reflection and experience as a thinker and a Christian. From 1971 to 1980 H.W. Sten contributed largely through the annual publications of *Meghalaya Year Book* which serves as a source book of information. In 1972 H.W. Sten published his *Kumno yn Ñatrei Lang* which is an attempt on the part of the author to contribute to the society through an exhortation to learn to work together towards a better society. H.W. Sten also contributed to Khasi literature in the field of journalistic writings; in fact, he started *Ropeca* in 1977 and was the editor of the monthly journal *U Kritik* which was started in 1981. In 1980 *Ka Jingpule Kyrpang* was published and in the following year it was revised and enlarged. Being a teacher, H.W. also felt the need of having an introductory guidebook in research methodology and the idea materialised in his *ABC of Paper Writing* published in 1982.
As his experience grew with years of teaching, H.W. Sten realised that there is a need to help students at the higher levels of studies and research. In collaboration with other writers, he published books for the degree and postgraduate students. *Ka Jinghikai Khasi* was published in 1993 with the aim of helping B.Ed. students. In 1994 he compiled and edited the works by different authors and published them in the form of a book *Ki Sngi jong Ngi*. In the midst of his concentration on writing academic books which are secular in nature, H.W. Sten found time to write and publish *Khatwei Tylli Ki Ese Halor U Job* which is a collection of religious essays. Of course, he expected that the essays would be considered as part of literary writings. In the last decade of his life, H.W. Sten realised the need of guiding students to higher standard of research and studies. His response was the publication of such books as *An Introduction to Literary Research* with the aim of reaching out to potential researchers and to guide them in their work.\(^\text{11}\) H.W. Sten also published the much-required book *Guidelines for Research in Five poetic Techniques*.

b). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Poetry

In the field of Poetry, H.W. Sten has the following publications:

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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>La Dkut Sohpet</em></td>
<td>1997</td>
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H.W. Sten has made a major contribution to Khasi Poetry with the epic poem "Ka Burom Ba La Jah" in the publications, *Ka Burom Ba La Jah I – III Bad Kiwei* and its sequence *La Dkut Sohpet*. Though two names and different volumes, they are essentially one poem – in fact, *Ka Burom Ba La Jah I – III Bad Kiwei*, consists of three books (Books I, II and III) of the poem, while *La Dkut Sohpet* has the two concluding books (Books IV and V) of the poem. In his preface to *La Dkut Sohpet*, entitled, *Ka Jingthmu* on page 3 (though not specified as page 3 in the text), H.W. Sten has stated, quoting line 504 and 505 of the poem, why he has put the name *La Dkut Sohpet*. The new name is intended to function as a culminating indicator to the theme of the poem, *Ka Burom Ba La Jah*. Moreover, the name has been put merely on the cover of the study.

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book. The body of the poem has the title *Ka Burom Ba La Jah* clearly indicated above *KITAB IV* (Book IV and V).\(^\text{13}\)

H.W. Sten's *Ka Burom Ba La Jah* is a secondary epic\(^\text{14}\) according to Prof. M.B. Jyrwa who also points out that H.W. Sten was greatly influenced in his career as an epic poet by Virgil, Dante and Milton.\(^\text{15}\) This is also confessedly suggested by H.W. Sten himself in his introduction, entitled, *Ka Jingthir Nia*, to Book I of the poem, "KA KITAB ka plie la ka phang jong ka phawar baroh kawei ha ka dur bad ka sur ba la Ɂalam lynti da ki Greek bad ki English."\(^\text{16}\) (*The book opens the whole theme in the style and tone modelled by the Greeks and English*). However, though H.W. Sten had been greatly influenced by the great epic poets, the creation of the first Khasi epic poem reveals the energetic power and artistic skill of the man in the art of creation. The existing legendary Khasi stories come alive from the mere skeletal oral tradition to an extremely carpentered structure.

In the context of artistic creation, H.W. Sten himself, in his speech "La Biang Ḿa Nga" at the release of Books I and II of the poem on 21\(^\text{st}\) June,

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\(^{13}\) Sten, *La Dkut Sohpet*, pp. 6, 28.


\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 5.


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1980, had referred to his role as creator in the introduction of the world of the Khasi evil spirits. The realistic appearance of the devils as they are being paraded, as on stage, is admirable. The personification of the evil spirits makes the description of their functions realistic and attractive. This is a great achievement of the poet in his act of creation. It fits in with his theory of art and fulfils his vision of the role of art:

Kat kum ka nia ba nga bat pyrkhing, ki tyngshop bakongsan u nongthaw la ia ka novel, ka drama ne ka poitri ki dei ban long ki baim bakhih, kiba kren, ba thngan, ba angnud, ba phohsniew bad ba don ka jingheh jingrit, ka jrong ka lyngkot, ki rong ki jaiñ ki nep, hynrei ka bakongsan tam ka long ki don ka bynta ban trei.  

(According to the theory which I strictly follow, the artist's main characters whether in the novel, the drama or poetry, should be life-like, those who speak and experience hunger, ambition and goal; they should have size, height and dress. But the most important aspect which they should have is action).

The Greeks, the Romans, the French, the Spaniards, the Germans and the English  have had their literature adorned with the grandeur of lofty and solemn epic poems. H.W. Sten deeply felt the need of having

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such a work in the literature of his people as it appears in lines 27 – 30 of Book 1:

Rangli nga long, ka phang ka jrong palat,
Marwei ban kot khlem nongialam ka eh;
Sha kliar ki Mangkashang nga thew ban her
Ha dur bad sur bym pat ju rwai mynnor
Ha ktien la jong. (Bk. I. 27 – 31)

(Lonely I am, the subject is too lengthy, alone to reach the goal without a forerunner; to the summit of the Himalayas I aim to fly in a way that was never sung before in my language)

H.W. Sten took upon himself the task of pioneering the epic poetry in the virgin soil of Khasi Literature. Backed by his knowledge, especially, of Milton\(^\text{19}\), whose influence is very much felt in the poem, H.W. Sten saw that the field, which has a lot of resources in the Khasi popular folktales, is a fertile soil which could yield a rich harvest. **Ka Burom Ba La Jah** with its sequence in **La Dkut Sohpet** which form one poem, written as an epic in blank verse of ten syllabic structure, is the result of the poet's hard work based on knowledge and reflection as the results of sensory experience, as is clear from the lines of the poem in Bk I: 565 – 566, “Mano ba tip khlem sngew / Da Shkor, khlem i da khmat, khlem ioh

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\(^{19}\) H.W. Sten had done his Post Graduate studies in English literature from NEHU and **Paradise Lost** was part of the Syllabus.
ban tba!" (Who will know without hearing with the ears, without seeing with the eyes, without touching!).

The poet ventures to try to understand the earnestness and seriousness, which God has taken fancy on His own creature, who has disobeyed him and fell from His favour. It is the ambition of the poet to explore the reasons why human beings fell from God's favour. This is the theme of the poem, which is an immense field of work for the poet as he sings in Bk I, 47 – 48, "lathuh nyngkong nyngshap kumno ki liat / Kumno ki hap: da buit thymmai ne mon sngewbha?" (Tell first of all how did they fall: through a new trick or by their own will?). In this immense task of looking for an answer for a difficult question, H.W. Sten exercised his skill in the ability to use the Khasi folk tales and legends and to systematically coordinate his proposed answer. To a great extent, the poem is a journey unto the unknown but the poet has artistically coded the different systems of organs of tales and stories to make the whole body of the poem a beautifully woven fabric of an epic with a wonderful touch of realism. H.W. Sten sumptuously adorns the poem with details from the Khasi folklore and merged them perfectly with his theme. On the use of Khasi folk tales as the base on which the epic has been built, Prof. MB Jyrwa has beautifully commented:
... U la lah ban shim ëa ki khanatang tang kum ki lyntang kynthih sha ka ban tai ban lap ëa ka daw balei ka longbriew manbriew ha ri Khasi kyrpang bad lehse ha ka pyrthei baroh kawei ka long kumba ka long mynta. 20

(He is able to adapt the folktales into a sort of spring-board for accelerating the process of finding the cause why human life among the Khasis in particular and in the whole world is as it is now).

The fourth book, La Dkut Sohpet (The Navel Broke) has been named in the context of the Khasi folktale of the cutting of the Diengiei tree 21 which leads to the detachment of the heavenly navel. When the devils have reached the foot of the Diengiei hill, they plan together to destroy man 22 and they lure him to accept the proposal to cut the tree. (Bk. IV, 510-515). After the cutting of the tree the golden ladder is broken, heaven is separated and remains far from the earth, and a new dispensation is set before man (Bk. IV, 540-557). The title of the poem “Ka Burom Ba La Jah” (The Lost Glory) is beautifully brought into focus at the end of the poem (Bk. V, 506-507). The glory is lost because the closeness and intimate relationship of man with heaven is over. What C.S. Lewis said of Milton with reference to his Paradise Lost can be

22 Sten, La Dkut Sohpet, p. 5.
applied to H.W. Sten. In this poem, he has touched the realm of the "basic images in the human mind – with the archetypal patterns of heaven, hell, paradise, God, Devil ..."23 In the poem, there is splendid fusion of Christian theology with Khasi myth and theology and the two are perfectly merged to form a complete system, which has an originality of its own. It may be said that the Khasi mythology has been Christianised or in the opposite, the Christian concepts have been contextualised to suit the Khasi system of popular belief. It is a tapestry of the various cultural designs skilfully grafted and encrypted to attune to the mind and psyche of a Khasi reader. The greatness of H.W. Sten as an epic poet largely lies on his ability to use the Khasi cultural background and transform it into a larger perspective with a universal context in such a way that the world of Ka Burom Ba La Jah is not restricted to a local environment but it has become the universe. In other words, the action is related to the whole human race and not in the Khasi context alone.

c). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Fiction

In the field of fiction, H.W. Sten has written two novels. However, though only two, they are valuable works of art in Khasi literature. H.W. Sten’s novels are the following:

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<thead>
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<td>Kwah Bym Ju Kut</td>
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H.W. Sten approached fiction from the standpoint of a teacher as it is clearly implied in the statement of his intention in writing the novel[^24] *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*. His second novel, *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, was actually written first in English[^25] and the manuscript was not published in book form though the same work was serialised in *Khasi Studies Volumes IV and V*. In the two novels, the writer’s artistic power has been beautifully displayed. A journey with H.W. Sten in the two novels reveals that “he has the power to touch the mind; he has the sharpness to tickle the heart; he has the nerve to pull the muscle; he has the rhythm to move the onlooker.”[^26]

The contribution of H.W. Sten in the field of fiction is mainly in terms of quality and the artistry of his works, which could be said to have become models in the art of fiction especially in the technique of characterisation.[^27] H.W. Sten excels in the art of characterisation and the two novels that he wrote have the characteristics of the greatest

[^24]: Sten, *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, p. III.
[^27]: Sten, *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, p. III.
novels. Basing on the theory that art is an imitation of people’s lives, his opinion is that, though it is a created world, the people who represent real people should be close to life in all respects. According to him, the characters (or ethos as the Greeks call them) should be life-like with feeling, passion, love, sorrow and ambition just as we human beings have, ("ka jingsngew, ka jingsngew shit mynsiem, ka jingieit, ka jingkhuslai, jingangnud kumba don ma ngi ki briew").

H.W. Sten propounds a theory that since the characters have many physio-psychological characteristics, the readers should be able to identify them by looking at the various aspects of their lives.

In spite of the complex nature of his characters, with the main characters being multifaceted and colourful, H.W. Sten is able to showcase each and every character in a distinct manner that they can be easily identified. His achievement in the art of characterisation can be convincingly attributed to the fact that he has overcome many challenges posed by complex human nature. His ability to observe human life and to interpret it in the light of experiences has helped him to overcome limitations. Being close to human and living persons he is able to present the characters objectively, impersonally, dramatically and

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through them not only external speech and actions but also inner thoughts, feelings and reactions too.

H.W. Sten depicts characters with details about their physical features. In *Shaphang Ka Novel*, H.W. Sten himself gives the example of detailed description about the character, U Puriblei, in Chapter XI of *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*.

... U ĭohi ha jingphohsniew pat ĭa u briew bakhuid, balieh kum ka dud, ha ki thapniang jong u la don ki sner kum ki jong u pukni. U ĭohi shuh shuh ba uta u briew u wan lang bad u lyoh khyndew. Ki kjat jong u ki long kum ki rishot ding, ĭa ki kti u buh hapoh ki thapniang. Īa ka khlieh pat la ker tawiar da u simpyllieng. Kata ka jingkhot ka riew pat kum ka jingsawa ki um ha ka por slap.29

(... *He saw in a dream a holy man, white like milk, in his wings are feathers like those of the vulture. Further, he saw that the man came in a fog. His feet are like the pillar of fire, his hands are kept inside the wings. His head was surrounded with a rainbow. The sound is like the tapping of the water during rainfall*).

Again, H.W. Sten’s technique of characterisation is through a detailed description of the physical appearances of a character with special

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reference to his or her secondary physical features and special characteristics. A beautiful description about Ruth in *Ka Samla Nongkyndong* will make the matter clearer. Keeping in mind the outstanding personality of Ruth, she can be easily recognised even when her name is not mentioned in the following word picture which occurs on the last page of the novel:

Nga pyrkhat keiň la ki tip ne em shaphang ki dor jong ka ha kane ka ri. Naduh ka dur, ka riam ka beit, ka rukom syndong i’a ki jaiň ki nep, ka mynsiem lei lei te ka mynsiem nongialam. Ka jingstad ka paw ha ka shyllang mat jong ka. Ka biang na dong sha dong ha ka rynieng ryniot ruh.³⁰

(I wonder if they really know the value of such a person in this country. Right from the physical feature, the dress, the way she dresses, the spirit of leadership. Wisdom appears on her brow. She is perfect in all respects in her personality).

H.W. Sten also follows the technique of self-disclosure in his art of characterisation in which a character tells about himself or herself thereby disclosing his or her personality. In *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, while remarking about a problem in her work, Ena discloses a fact about herself that she is forty-three years old, “A Blei, nga la klet lut haba nga

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dang sawpewh hai”^{31} ("Only forty-three, I’ve forgotten every thing, oh God!").^{32} In a similar manner, in *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, Boaz discloses his very own condition as he muses, "Tang manga ubym pat shong kurim. Ngam don jingmut ban leh kumta ruh. Ngam pat iajuh bad kano kano ka kynthei"^{33} ("Only I have not married. I do not intend to do so. I am not close to any woman").

H.W. Sten also employs characters to describe one another, for example, in *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, Boaz describes the personality of Ruth in a very vivid manner, "Toi u Mahlon u la jied ïa ka briew kaba da kat ka briew. Ha ka dur khmat, kum ka khangai pylleng. Ka met kaba da i wan dur"^{34} ("In fact, Mahlon has chosen a perfect woman. Her face is like the yolk of an egg. Her body is well formed"). The same technique is employed in *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, for example, when Pura answers Liza describing the early life of Abi, Liza comments more on his personality, "Kata keiñ! Naduh ba u dang khatlai snem u Abi u ju ïathuh ïa la ki lok ba un shong kurim ïa ka samla kaba don para bad shynrang bad kynthei bad kata kan kha shibun ki khun. Kaba lah ban sngewthuh; u dei u khun marwei ki briew"^{35} ("There it is. Ever since he was thirteen, Abi used to

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31 Sten, *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, p. 16.
34 Ibid., p. 102.
35 Sten, *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, p. 43.
tell his friends that he would love to marry a girl with several brothers and sisters and a girl would give him many children. It is understandable; he is the only child of his parents”).

The need of clear distinction of one character from another in order to identify them is emphasised in his Shaphang Ka Novel, “Ha bun ki novel Khasi jong ngi, ki nongpule ki shem jingeh ban pyniapher uwei u tyngshop na uwei pat; namar la ai āa ki tang ka kyrteng, bad la shu pynkren āa ki kumba kren ki kor” (“In many of our Khasi novels, readers find it difficult to distinguish one character from another, because they were given only names and were made to speak like machines”). On account of the lack of other characteristic features, the readers find it difficult to distinguish one character from another. In the aspect of characterisation, the writer has to show the particular features which differentiate one individual from another, like the height and the size of the body, the colour of the skin, the clothes they wear, even the type of eyebrows. H.W. Sten suggests that characters can be identified from some aspects relating to their personality, like physical peculiarity, speech mannerism and dominant character traits. The examples of the

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37 Sten, Ka Samla Nongkyndong, p. 48.
38 Sten, Shaphang Ka Novel, pp. 48 – 49.
39 Ibid., pp. 49 – 51.
application of such ideas are found in his own novels. In *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, Liza’s peculiar features are vividly described,

"I noted-ed", she responds. Each word moves and sounds according to the direction of her masticating machine because whenever she chews something a certain noise comes from her mouth; when she sips tea, a sound of a boiling water in kettle comes from her mouth.\(^\text{41}\)

Similarly, descriptions or references to particular manners, actions and reactions render recognition or identification of a particular character easier. In *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, Mahlon is easily differentiated from Chilion from his behaviour, “U Mahlon u syrpud biang īa la u ŋiuhtmoh, bad u rkhie khlem riew” ("Mahlon stroke his beard and laughed without producing any noise") while “U Chilion u kyrjaw īa ki kti kum uba la thaid ban sngap”\(^\text{42}\) ("Chilion squeezed his hands as if he is tired of listening").

In *Kwah Bym Ju Kut* Abi can be identified from his habitual action of

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\(\text{40}\) Sten, *Kwah Bym Ju Kut*, p. 42.
\(\text{42}\) Sten, *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, p. 10.
crossing his hands on the chest and walking up and down when he is in a state of confused mental condition. The information given once right in the first line of the novel is known from his action at the end “U thain biang ūa la ki kti ha shadem bad u ūaid hapoh ka kamra hotel”43 (“He crosses his hands on the chest and walks inside the room”).

Speech mannerism also differentiates characters. In *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, Boaz is distinct from others in the way he stammers when he speaks in public, “Te ha khmat jong phi baroh, bad katba im U Trai, e” u twad la ka shkor kumban wad ūa ki kyntien ban ūadei dur, “Nga pynbna a-a-a ba nga long u kur bajan tam mynta ūa u Elimelek namar u Zadek u la kyntaid”44 (“So in front of all of you, and as the Lord lives, he scratches his ear as if to find out some words, “I proclaim that I am the closest relative of Elimelek since Zadek has given up”).

Focussing on dominant character traits is another artistic technique an author can employ in characterisation. That Ruth’s face is round is referred to many times in *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*, and comparison to the moon is a point of discussion, “Me shisha te uba da matlah-ūapeit me! Kato ka samla te kam shym pyllun te kum utei u bnai. Da peit bha me ong” (“You are blind! The face of that lady is not round like the moon.

43 Sten, Kwah Bym Ju Kut, p. 141.
The dominant character trait of Pura as one who is persuasive, smart and intelligent is described in the perception of Abi, "Na ka rukom īeng bad rukom leh jong ka u syier ba mynta ka miet ka lah ban kham jrong ban īa kiwei pat ki miet. U lah ne em ban sngap īa ka jingproh jabieng jong ka?"*^45 ("From her strange gestures, he suspects that the night will be somewhat lengthy. Can he withstand her intelligence?").46

H.W. Sten has made a lasting contribution to the Khasi fiction through his two novels which are of high artistic and aesthetic value. With his firm conviction that life is the most important aspect of fiction, H.W. Sten handled art and life in a most skilful manner. In both the novels, H.W. Sten powerfully displays life in all its freshness, vitality and complexity. The intermingling between art and life in a most effective manner makes the novels of H.W. Sten not only powerful but perennially great. Art takes life in the form of action and conversation along with the various circumstances of the complexities of life. With ease and spontaneity he handles his matter and mingles art and life by merging the various aspects of plot and character, action and poetry, the past, the present and the future. The ability of the author to delve deep into the psyche of

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45 Sten, Kwah Bym Ju Kut, p. 70.
each and every individual gives sharpness and relevance to the novels. The emphatic rhythms at different stages are artistically situated to intensify the psychological conflict in the psyche of the characters.

d). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Drama

H.W. Sten wrote only one drama, *Ka Mahadei*, in 1983, but through this work he has made a great contribution to Khasi literature. He entered the stage with a rather cautious step. It was after a very careful and critical approach to the techniques of the art that he wrote the drama. It is because of his concern and priority for quality, and in line with “his main objective ... to give a product that is aesthetically splendid – the best”, 47 that he limited his productions.

In his introduction (KA PLIE PYRDA), H.W. Sten has clearly outlined his vision of the drama. *Ka Mahadei* is designed after the models of the great masters of the art of tragedy. Following the tradition right from the time of Aristotle, H.W. Sten tried to capture the scenes of the story of U Manik Raitong and transferred them into the stage with this drama. That the author has tried to fit in the shoes of Aristotle and other critics, is clearly hinted by him when he writes:

47 Warpakma, *Ka Pyrshiaw 2*, p. 34.
In other words, he has carefully studied the great masters and modelled his work after the framework set by them. It is in the context of the ability to reach the goal that the role of H.W. Sten as a writer of the drama could be assessed and his contribution to Khasi literature could be evaluated.

In the art of creating the drama, Ka Mahadei, H.W. Sten has been constrained,\textsuperscript{49} to a great extent, by two factors, viz.,

a) The existing legend of U Manik Raitong\textsuperscript{50} which is the source of the drama, and,

b) The existing models of the art of the tragedy.

\textsuperscript{49} Warpakma, Ka Pyrshiaw 2, p. 34.
H.W. Sten clearly points out that compared to the freedom of the novelist and the poet who have a large variety of flexible possibilities to create their own characters according to their own choices, the dramatist does not have as much scope, "Ki nongthoh epic bad novel ki lah ban leh kumtei, hynrei u nongthoh drama um don lad"\(^5\) (The epic poets and the novelists have scope to do like that, but the dramatist does not have). Though he has to move within the boundaries of the model that he has shown for himself as he had learned from that of the confirmed masters, he is able to present a piece of work which is unique and powerful. H.W. Sten has clearly outlined his vision of the drama in his introduction to \textit{Ka Mahadei}:

> Ha nga hi, ka drama ka batai īa ka jingim briew ym īa ka jong ki mrad bad ki sim. Kata ka jingim ka dei ban don ka met, ka mynsiem bad ka jingmut ba kan įasyriem bad ngi ki nongpule.\(^6\)

\(\textit{For me, the drama should describe human life not that of animals. That life should have a body, mind and thought which resemble the reader).}\)

The same idea has been emphasized in his critical work, \textit{Shaphang ka Novel}, when he outlines the features of the characters:

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\(^6\) Ibid, p. 40.
La u nongthoh u thaw ka novel ne drama ne poitri ki tyngshop – ki puron jong u ki dei ban pynpaw ba ki don ka jingsngew, ka jingsngewshit mynsiem, ka jingieit, ka jingkhuslai, jingangnud kumba don ma ngi ki briew.\(^\text{53}\)

(If the writer creates a novel or drama or poem his characters should reveal that they have feelings, emotions, love, anxiety, and ambition as the human beings have).

Thus, imitation of life is the objective of H.W. Sten, as an artist, in the presentation of his creation. Being influenced by Aristotle, E.M. Forster,\(^\text{54}\) and others, H.W. Sten worked within the framework of his objective, that is, to represent life whether it is in the realm of the novel or the drama. The tragic drama Ka Mahadei is a realistically and lively presentation of life. In fact, life comes in full form on stage and the characters are not merely paraded in the manner of a fashion show where behaviour and appearance tend to have been artificially made up, but they are real human beings with a body, mind and thought and have feelings, emotions, love, anxiety, ambition as the reader and other human beings have. The powerful depiction of life with emotions, feelings and passions, is seen in the following expression of Ka Mahadei:

\(^{53}\) Sten, \textit{Shaphang Ka Novel}, p. 38.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 39. Also, E.M Forster, \textit{Aspects of the Novel}, (Delhi: Doaba Publications, 2004), p. 43.
Ngan pynlait, ngan ym shah.
Lada pdiang ía ka daw,
Ngan wan rah í’u Manik
Ha ki syiem ki bakhraw.
Dei ban wad ía ka daw,
Rangbah kim sngewthuh
Ía ka dang ía ka duh.
San bnai bad u syiem,
Mat kyliang ym shym ai,
Tang shi miet bad Manik,
Ba ngan bah nga la íoh.55

(I shall release, I will not allow. If the cause is not accepted, I shall present Manik before U Syiem and his court. The cause must be sought for, since men do not know the origin. I was with U Syiem for five months but did not conceive, but only one night with Manik, and I have a baby).

There is a powerful intermingling of romance and passion in the above passage and humanity in its pristine nature is forcefully displayed. The speaker, Ka Mahadei, expresses her emotions and passion in the most intense manner and the elements of human nature are explicitly shown. Being a multifaceted writer, H.W. Sten approached the art of the drama armed with all skills. Having been skillfully and carefully produced, his Ka Mahadei is an exercise in art display, where human nature

55 Sten, Ka Mahadei, p. 53.
life comes alive on stage and the life and actions of the characters are artistically shown. With finesse and purity in language adorned with aesthetic language skills the drama remains as a pointed and finely sharp, rhetorical, lyrical presentation of life.

e). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Literary Criticism

The following are the publications of H.W. Sten in connection with literary criticism:

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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Names of Publications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Matric Khasi Poetry Made Easy</td>
<td>1962</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Ki Sur na Ka Duitara Ksiar</td>
<td>1967</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>William Wordsworth (Co-authored)</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>John Keats</td>
<td>1975</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Ka Poitri u O.M. Wahlang</td>
<td>1976</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Ka Poitri u Primrose Gatphoh</td>
<td>1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ka Jingbishar Bniah</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Na ka Hyndai sha ka Lawei</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Shaphang ka Novel</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>HSLC Khasi paper I</td>
<td>1984</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>U Prew</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ki Snap ka Bishar Bniah (Co-authored)</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Khasi Literary Theory and Criticism</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<sup>56</sup> *Khasi Studies* is a multidisciplinary journal edited by H.W. Sten. It has many articles on Khasi literary criticism.
H.W. Sten has made a solid contribution to Khasi literary criticism. He himself acknowledged that a scholar has described him as "a harbinger of literary criticism" in 1978. According to him, literary criticism in Khasi had appeared as early as 1925 with Edrenel Chyne's "Ka Jingaikhmat". However, H.W. Sten regretfully commented that it had not progressed much through the years as compared to the progress of criticism in other languages:

Naduh kata ka snem 1925, kane ka phang jong ka jingpule ći akathoh ka tar jong ngi kam shym ĩoh ka lad babi bang bahun ban paw pyrthei.

(From the year 1925, this branch of our literature had not received satisfactory opportunities to appear publicly).

It is in the context of this unsatisfactory situation of literary criticism in Khasi that H.W. Sten had set his aim to contribute positively and to fill in

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57 As mentioned above, the manuscript of the book shows that H.W. Sten wrote it in 1993. The book was published by his family in 2009.
58 Sten, Ka Jingbishar Bniah, p. ii.
59 Ibid., pp. 2, 85.
60 Ibid., p. 85.
the gap. Apart from the critical works proper, which appeared in the latter years, he had actually produced other books in the form of critical notes for students, which, though primarily are study notes for students, have the characteristics of criticism and could be considered as minor critical works since they deal with the works of literature and that they critically evaluate and judge such works. A natural bend towards literary criticism in H.W. Sten is found in his early works *Matric Khasi Poetry Made Easy* (1962) and *Ki Sur na Ka Duitara Ksiar* (1967) which are minor works but point the way towards a bright future in literary criticism. *U Prew* (1985) has also been written with a similar intention of immediately helping students to understand the substance and the meaning of poems prescribed at different levels of study.

The first major step taken by H.W. Sten in his efforts to enrich Khasi literary criticism is by having clear objectives and understanding of the subject and the field of criticism. In his preface to *Ka Jingbishar Bniah* (1979), he clearly underlines his objectives. First, his choice of including only certain major critics is due to the fact that he wanted to concentrate on those who have influenced Khasi literary criticism. Secondly,

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61 Sten, *Ka Jingbishar Bniah*, p. i.
H.W. Sten declines to accept the incomplete views that criticism is “appreciation”, “thorough study”, or “remark”.62

It may be said, that in his Ka Jingbishar Bniah (1979), H.W. Sten had set the tone for the journey in Khasi literary criticism by, first of all, clarifying the term “criticism” as it is translated into Khasi.63 He referred to John Dryden who first used the term with reference to and in the context of the works of Aristotle who critically evaluated literary works. Further, taking into account the etymology of the term “criticism”, that it comes from two Greek words, Krites and Kritikos, which mean to judge and a judge, H.W. Sten finds that the function of criticism is to critically judge the works in poetry, drama, novel, letters, essays or any story.64 It is in the light of this understanding that the Khasi term which is found to have the closest meaning with the word “criticism” is Ka Jingbishar Bniah,65 the term coined by Msgr. E. Bars in his dictionary.66 Apart from clarifying what is criticism, H.W. Sten also specifies the identity of the critic on the basis of the views of earlier scholars like R.A. Scott-James, W.H. Hudson, H.Combes, Mathew Arnold, D.H. Lawrence, Ben Johnson and E.M. Forster.

62 Sten, Ka Jingbishar Bniah, pp. i – 1.
63 Ibid., p. 1.
64 Ibid., p. 2.
65 Ibid., p. 1.
With the intention of enriching the Khasi language, H.W. Sten, in his book *Ka Jingbishar Bniah* (1979), describes the different forms of criticism and traces the history of literary criticism right from Plato. In the background of that great tradition of literary criticism, he traces the history of Khasi Literary Criticism. H.W. Sten defined criticism and also sought to define and describe who a critic is and what his roles and functions are. In the difficult task of giving definition and description (in Khasi) of criticism, H.W. Sten is characterized by simplicity and clarity of words and expression.

Having been a student of English literature, H.W. Sten, to a great extent, approached Khasi literature with that background. In his opinion, the English critics were influenced by the Greeks, the Romans and the French and they modeled their critical works on theirs. In fact, it is true that the early writers of Khasi Literature had been very much influenced by the masters of English Literature. In spite of that, H.W. Sten maintained originality in thought and expression in his works.

*Ka Jingbishar Bniah* is mainly a book of history of literary criticism from Plato to Wordsworth, and from Edrenel Chyne to F.M. Pugh. It is the result of H.W. Sten’s research and understanding of literary criticism.

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Through this work, the writer has inaugurated Khasi literary criticism in a big way. It is a task of launching into action that H.W. Sten has taken. In this sense he was aptly described as “a harbinger” of Khasi literary criticism. It is from then on, that critical work in literary criticism should take wings. The conclusive remark of H.W. Sten on the nature of criticism and the task of the critic is that it is the task of finding out the value of a piece of literary work whether it is poetry, drama or any other.68

H.W. Sten states that not much work has been done in the field of literary criticism in Khasi Literature though the spade work was done as early as 1925 with the “Ka Jingaikhmat” of Edrenel Chyne as the first piece of work. He gives few reasons why criticism has not developed in the same pace that poetry, drama and the novel have. It is important to note that the genuine interest which H.W. Sten had for Khasi literary criticism provoked his contemporaries to direct their attention to this branch of literature. His findings have a powerful impact in the development of Khasi literary criticism. He pointed out that the lack of interest in critical writings and in reading books in the vernacular language has slowed down the development of criticism. He said that writers do not give critical writings as introduction to their writings.

68 Sten, Ka Jingbishar Bniah, p. 3.
Further, he observed that people were not aware of the branch of writing and were not ready for it. 69

Another aspect of the valuable contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Literature is his painstaking examination of the writings of the Khasi critics. Apart from his achievement as a critic in this field, another aspect of his contribution to Khasi literary criticism is the value-added approach through his style of writing – throughout his works he is precise, concise, focused and simple. With his normal linguistic calculation and economy of language, he is able to give the most necessary, the best and the cream of the matter.

According to H.W. Sten, Edrenel Chyne, the first Khasi critic never thought that he would be so and probably he did not even know about literary criticism. He wrote “Ka Jingai khmat” on 27th January 1925, without knowing that it is a piece of literary criticism. H.W. Sten critically analyses and evaluates the short writing of Mr. Chyne. It deals with two items, a) the functions of poetry and b) the difficulties encountered by the Khasi poets. The two points have been elaborately examined in simple but clear terms. He found that, the ideas of E. Chyne were basically those of the Romantics of England. That the poet is to be concerned with truth and beauty is Keatsian in concept. As with regards

to the difficulties of Khasi poets, H.W. Sten agreed with Mr. Chyne on the point of lack of interest to read Khasi books. However, he does not agree that the Khasi language is too limited or dry to be the soil for the growth of poetry. In his critical work, H.W. Sten apart from throwing a valuable light on the work of the critic, he also set an example, a pattern for the scholars to make a study of a critic. In this aspect, H.W. Sten made a valuable contribution towards a methodology in Khasi literary criticism.

H.W. Sten is a critic who has consciously studied and analysed the works of the pioneers of Khasi literary criticism. His brief critical study of the Khasi poet, Soso Tham, serves as a pattern of criticism in the language. His critical study of Soso Tham gave valuable insights into the stature of the poet not merely as a poet but as a critic of poetry. What is true of Edrenel Chyne is also true of Soso Tham in as much as the latter never thought that he was writing a piece of literary criticism. He wrote two essays and his aim in writing them was to introduce the pages of poetry that he had composed. "Ka Jingpynshai" was written on 22nd June 1935 to introduce his book *Ki Sngi Barim u Hynñiew Trep* and "Ha ki Nongpule" was scripted on 31st December 1936 to introduce his *Ka Duitara Ksiar*.

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70 Sten, *Ka Jingbishar Bniah*, pp. 89 – 90.
71 Ibid., p. 95.
H.W. Sten has given a major contribution to Khasi literary criticism through his critical studies on writers and poets. The studies on William Wordsworth and John Keats enrich the knowledge of their works from the perspective of criticism. The studies on the poetry of O.M. Wahlang and U Primrose Gathphoh are valuable literary works, which apart from being studies on the works of the poets, also serve as examples of literary criticism. The critical work, *Na ka Hyndai sha ka Lawei* is a major contribution by itself on account of the matter that H.W. Sten has taken for his study. The work deals with the great poem of U Soso Tham, *Ki Sngi Barim U Hyrnñiew Trep*, which is one of the greatest Khasi poems. *Shaphang Ka Novel*, an acclaimed book, is a valuable work of H.W. Sten which deals with theoretical aspects of art of the novel. *Ki Snap ka Bishar Bniah* a collection of articles edited by H.W. Sten for the purpose of introduction of critical studies at the pre-university level. *Khasi Literary Theory and Criticism*, initially circulated in photocopies as study notes, was not published in book form till 2008. Similar to *Ka Jingbishar Bniah*, which was written in Khasi, here writing in English, the author examines "both the literary theories as propounded by Khasi writers and their criticism of the creative works during the past sixty five years." With two fold purposes, H.W. Sten was motivated in order "to

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73 Ibid., p. 6.
record and interpret the Khasi theoretical and critical minds. The book *Khasi Poetry: Origin And Development* being a product of research while tracing the history of Khasi Poetry it also analyses the various technicalities of the art. Written in Khasi, *Na Kiwei Bad Na Lade* is a valuable contribution to Khasi literary Criticism. The author discusses and clearly distinguishes the theoretical aspect from the practical aspect of criticism. The work incorporates the historical perspectives and the critical works of critics. With the intention of teaching Aristotle's *Poetics* in a simpler and clearer manner, H.W. Sten wrote *An Introduction to Aristotle's Poetics*. The book critically discusses poetry, comedy and tragedy. The journal, *Khasi Studies*, has articles of various types including valuable critical essays.

The books on literary criticism written in the last decade of H.W. Sten's life have specific areas of attention. With the intention of helping students at the higher levels and to guide teachers and researchers special focus was given to the theoretical aspects. Whether written in Khasi or English, H.W. Sten has contributed immensely to Khasi literary criticism. Apart from enriching Khasi literature, he has launched a vast movement. He not only traced the development of Khasi literary criticism

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but he strengthened its foundation. He is not only "a harbinger of literary
criticism" but also a revolutionary of a vast movement in Khasi literature.

f). The contribution of H.W. Sten to Khasi Linguistics

In the field of Khasi linguistics, H.W. Sten has the following
publications:

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<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ka Grammar</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Khasi Studies(^{75})</td>
<td>1987 - 1995</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Shaphang Ka Ktien Khasi</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Ka Jinghikai Khasi</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>An Introduction to the School of Linguistics</td>
<td>1996</td>
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H.W. Sten has made a significant contribution to Khasi linguistics through his writings. From his frequent references, comparisons and examples, it is clear that he has approached Khasi linguistics with the background and strength of English linguistics and with an up-to-date knowledge of the Khasi language. He is both a theorist and a practitioner of language. Both these aspects are displayed in his books.

\(^{75}\textit{Khasi Studies}\) is a multidisciplinary journal edited by H.W. Sten. It has many articles on Khasi linguistics.
In his introduction (Ka Jinglam Khmat) to Ka Grammar in 1987, H.W. Sten comments that a systematic teaching of ‘grammar’ is lacking at higher levels. The earlier ‘grammatical’ works like the Hints of Nissor Singh and Reader’s Companion of Job Solomon and those of Hugh Roberts and Mondon Bareh are mainly for the non-Khasi learners of the language. Further, Mrs. D. Franklin Basaiawmoit’s grammar book has been largely set in the traditional grammatical pattern. Again, the intention of F.M. Pugh in his Ka Jingiar Ka Ktien Khasi is to help in writing in Khasi and may be in speaking too. These observations of H.W. Sten came from a deep sense of concern and a strongly felt need of having a grammar book or linguistic book, which is fit to be taught at the higher levels of education whose need had been voiced and shared by some newspapers of the time. He emphatically observed this in the introduction (Ka Jinglam Khmat):

... Namar kata ka daw, nga pynmih ïa kane (ka kot) ba kan lam lynti sha ka grammar ba kham heh kham ïar.

(... Because of this reason, I produce this book so that it can lead to a bigger and richer grammar book.)

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77 Ibid., p. 3.
78 Ibid., p. 3.
79 A literal translation has been followed.
H.W. Sten always had the attitude of an understanding teacher and his main aim is to teach and hand over his experience and knowledge for the benefit of others. His chief instrument in describing the Khasi language in his book, *Shaphang ka Ktien Khasi*, is rationality. He appeals to reason, above all, as a prerequisite to the task of understanding Khasi linguistics:

Haba kren kumne, ka jingmut ka shai: ba yn pyni da ka nia ka jutang ha man la ka dkhot ba ngin lap ...^°

(When spoken in this way, it is clear: that every part has to be described reasonably)

To a great extent, H.W. Sten tried to be eclectic in his approach to language and linguistics in the midst of a strong traditional opinion of grammar. Basing on the approaches and understanding of English, he was able to present his vision, understanding and opinion of the nature of the Khasi language in a descriptive style that has a universal appeal. He departed from the traditional way of writing grammar books and innovatively launched into the new system of examining and describing language with his firm belief and conviction that 'grammar is a science which teaches to write and speak a language in the way the natives accept that it is correct' (*Ka grammar ka dei ka saians kaba hikai ban*

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^° Sten, *Shaphang Ka Novel*, p. iii.
It is in the context of his understanding of the position and function of grammar in a particular language, that H.W. Sten wrote his books on the Khasi language.

With language as the subject matter of grammar, H.W. Sten treats it in a descriptive manner. For him, it is clear, language takes the upper hand and grammatical structures and rules follow from the body of the language. The description of the language, even in grammatical forms, is based on the matter of the language and not applying a set of rules borrowed from English or other languages. It is in this context that H.W. Sten has made a commendable contribution to Khasi linguistics.

H.W. Sten presents his understanding of language in a very interesting manner. According to him language is the meaningful sound that comes from the mouth, that which is intelligible to the hearers. It is expressed in two ways, in speech and writing. Tracing the history of the development of writing in Khasi to the pioneering works of Thomas Jones, William Lewis, Hormu Rai Diengdoh, Jeebon Roy, Radhon Singh Berry and Nelson Jait Dkhar, H.W. Sten commented on the development of spelling. Keeping in mind the need of specificity and clarity, he keenly

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81 Sten, *Ka Grammar*, p. 3.
felt the need of standardising spelling. Judging literature and language, H.W. Sten found that there is a genuine difficulty to be precise and specific in spelling some particular names which have letters not contained in the existing and accepted alphabet. In this context, he suggests flexibility and openness for the inclusion of the letters like C, F, Q, V, X, and Z, in the Khasi alphabet\(^83\) which would help to specifically differentiate and precisely indicate different sounds. This gives rise to the need to specify different sounds including vowel sounds: é - to differentiate the sound from e, for example, in hér (to fly) from e in tep.\(^84\)

Another aspect which H.W. Sten found was that the earlier grammarians had unreasonably divided, joined or classified the morphemic elements. Since there had been no authorised standard, he found that the students had been misled. In the context of word juncture and spelling, he was very much against what seems like a competition of many writers to standardise spelling and word juncture.\(^85\) However, he too as one of the linguists, offered suggestions on the matter of word juncture on the basis of reasonable word classing. He classified and named the parts of speech as word classes. He abandoned the traditional system of dividing sentences into parts but straight away

\(^{83}\) Sten, *Ka Grammar*, p. 4. Also, Sten, *Shaphang Ka Novel*, p. 95.


classified them into word classes, such as noun, verb, etc. Similarly,
H.W. Sten pointed out that there has been confusion in the matter of
word juncture. Writers did not follow logicality in the matter and caused
confusion in the mind of the students and learners of the language. By
means of examples, he showed how this confusion could be avoided if
writers and readers follow logicality in the matter.  

In the footsteps of the famous linguist, Daniel Jones, H.W. Sten
introduced the science of sounds/phones with the description of the
positions of the mouth, the tongue and the lips for of the sounds of the
vowels and the consonants. The division of sounds into diphthongs and
tripthongs provokes and invites further scholarship.  

In the aspect of word formation, H.W. Sten had examined class
structure and phrase structure with a fresh approach which provokes
further scholarship. The author innovatively examined the different
classes of words in an elaborate manner. He has found some interesting
characteristics of the Khasi language. The description of word structures
facilitates the analysis and understanding of the phrase structures. He
sheds light on various types of phrases.  

86 Sten, Shaphang Ka Novel, pp. 33–37.
87 Ibid., pp. 20–26.
88 Ibid., pp. 45–68.
Through the efforts of H.W. Sten in his books and journal (*Khasi Studies*), the understanding of the Khasi language has progressed much. H.W. Sten has given a tremendous stimulus to the study of the science of linguistics through his progressive approach. He courageously crossed the traditional boundaries to find pastures on the other side in order to enrich the understanding and level of Khasi linguistics. He not only brought new approaches into the description of Khasi but used them convincingly and effectively.

In a manner not done before him, H.W. Sten introduced the study of function structure ("Ka Shynrong Kamram"), which, as an analysis of the structure of the Khasi language, is a new name. H.W. Sten reiterates the fact that it is new when he writes, "Ngi ai kyrte ng i a ka da ka 'shynrong kamram' namar ym pat don ba ai kyrte ng Khasi ia ka."\(^{89}\) (*We name it "shynrong kamram" since no one has given it a Khasi name*).

H.W. Sten has been definitely shaped by the scholarship of the English linguists, like Daniel Jones, David Crystal and others. A clear proof of this is the use of English names especially when no Khasi equivalent is easily found. There are many instances when H.W. Sten

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89 Sten, *Shaphang Ka Novel*, p. 69.
tried his best to find Khasi equivalents but when explanation seems to be clearer and the meaning more powerful, he prefers to use the original English linguistic names, e.g. ‘root’, ‘word function’, ‘cause’ ‘causative’.

The interest of H.W. Sten in the Khasi language is seen in his Ka Histori ka Ktien Khasi which is a study of the origin of the language and its features. Ka Jinghikai Khasi is a descriptive study of the language in view of teaching and learning at different levels. Co-authored with a view to meet the need at the higher level of teaching and learning the book has been beautifully planned and designed. The journal, Khasi Studies, in which many scholars have contributed serves as an eye opener for many people for whom the study of the language and its linguistic features was not important. The linguistic books which offer new ways of studying and understanding the language did not arouse interest in many and such books were considered only as part of the curriculum of studies. The journal which reached a wider circle of readers awoke a new consciousness in the people. H.W. Sten rendered a great contribution as editor and contributor of articles. The keen interest of H.W. Sten to promote learning of the language by non-Khasi learners took shape in the publication, Khasi Through A Crash Course, which coincidentally was his last book.
Though H.W. Sten had approached the Khasi language through the gateway of English linguistics, nevertheless, there is originality in him and the products are genuinely fresh and enriching. The greatness of the author who assumes the garb of a linguist is found in his ability to give a strong sense of originality to his works. This is the value of his contribution as a linguist.

3. THE PARADIGMS OF CONFLICT IN H.W. STEN’S NOVELS AND DRAMA

H.W. Sten was a prolific writer with literary outputs in different fields of literature. In whichever field of literature that he has written he has specific purposes and objectives. Different objectives and themes have been treated in his miscellaneous writings. Matters relating to criticism and language are dealt with in his critical works and linguistics books. His novels, drama and poetry deal with many different themes among which the theme of conflict has been given a prominent place. The subject of his novels, drama and poetry is life and it is on the basis of the treatment of human life, which is full of challenges that we find a realistic presentation of conflict. This study is focussed on his novels and drama with a specific purpose of examining the aspect of personal and interpersonal conflict which is a common factor in all the three books and
is paradigmatic for all times as the patterns of conflict are related to the nature of the unchanging human heart.

Among the many literary works, H.W. Sten wrote two novels, *Ka Samla Nongkyndong* (1981) and *Kwah Bym Ju Kut* (1989) and one drama, *Ka Mahadei* (1983). These works are basically the fruit of his reflection and study of human life and activities. He was a student of human life and he took special care to keenly observe life and to present it as it is generally experienced in real life situation. In reality, at times, the various rhythms of life surprise us and make it very difficult to describe adequately just as living persons are very difficult to understand.

H.W. Sten was a thinker and a reflective person and his approach to fiction and drama is from the background of a person who has reflected on the Christian themes side by side with the social and cultural realities developed in course of time. The focus on human beings apart from being the theory of his art is the outcome of philosophical developments. The Freudian thoughts which have cast a wave of influence on psychologists and philosophers has influenced his thoughts.
Having taken the theme of faithful and filial devotion of Ruth to her mother-in-law, from the Jewish and Christian Holy Scripture, the Biblical book of Ruth, H.W. Sten’s ideology has been infused with Christian philosophy of love, charity and reward in the novel, *Ka Samla Nongkyndong*. Having been transcreated from the book of Ruth, it has the stamp of Christian theology. Focusing on the person as a human being is the trend of modern philosophy strengthened by the concurrence of psychology. With centuries of traditional beliefs and practice in the society and the Church there is a clash in understanding and accepting certain issues especially when one is not moving at the same pace with the others. H.W. Sten brings the issues of a three-cornered conflict in *Kwah Bym Ju Kut* relating to the institution of marriage, where an individual has to face difficult choices to conform to. On a similar theme, based mainly on the Khasi cultural background, the drama, *Ka Mahadei*, assumes commitment and loyalty between the partners as a necessary aspect in marriage, and disloyalty is “ka sang”, (sacrilege). Though taken from a story, the emphasis is on human personality and issues and conflicts are linked to the human experience.

The journey motif is a very important artistic technique employed by H.W. Sten. On the theme of pilgrimage, he has commented on an
allusion to the poem, “Pilgrim through the barren land.” In all the three works, life is taken as a journey and in the course of this journey there takes place the effort to learn and unlearn in order to integrate the aspirations of ‘the body, the soul and the mind’ which are the aspects of life ("Kata ka jingim ka dei ban don ka met, ka mynsiem bad ka jingmut ..."). The idea of life as a journey in this world coincides with the Khasi concept of "ka pyrthei shong basa" (a temporary world).

The quest for wholeness and integration of the whole human person involves challenges and as ‘man or woman is not an island’, rubbing shoulders with one another is a reality of life which produces conflict. What H.W. Sten treats in his novels and drama is universal and relevant. It is part and parcel of every man and woman for all ages. It is in this sense that this study is relevant for all times. The paradigm of conflict in H.W. Sten’s novels and the drama is a paradigm of human realities of life.

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90 Sten, Kwah Bym Ju Kut, p. 148.  
91 Sten, Ka Mahadei, p. 3.  