Tattva – Journal of Philosophy
2026, Vol. 18, No. 1, *17-37*
ISSN 0975-332X/https://doi.org/10.12726/tjp.35.2

Between Practice and Principle: Understanding Ka Jingsneng Jingkraw as the Ethical Foundation of Khasi Moral Life

Wandashisha Mary Nongbri*

Abstract

"Ngi im bad ki jinghikai bad ngi iaibud ia ki jinghikai " - *we live with teachings and we follow teachings.* As the insight focuses on teachings, the paper delves into ka jingsneng jingkraw as the foundation of Khasi ethical life. These teachings are not mere strict rules and regulations ones that command the life of an individual but rather they act as dynamic moral practice which shapes the conduct of an individual led by obligations and ancestral teachings and they affect moral behavior, the communal interactions and the spiritual life as well. The practice of ka jingsneng jingkraw revolves around the three foundational tenants of the ethical life of a Khasi 'ka tip briew ka tip Blei', (to know man, to know God) 'kamai ia ka hok', (earn your righteousness) bad ka tip kur tip kha' (know your maternal and paternal clans). The paper also tries to demonstrate how Khasi ethics actually bridges the gap between practice and principle where Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative struggles to do away with the generational criticism that it is rigorous and conventional and Aristotle's virtues ethics focuses on habits and reflective morality ka jingsneng jingkraw stands as a moral conduct that mold the daily life of a Khasi from practice and not injunctions that commands but as a guide to live among others in the society that conduct the behavior and the relational life with the others. The khasi ethical practices is other concerns one that does not seek to be practice only for the good of oneself but that which focuses on the

* St Anthony's College Shillong, Meghalaya, India; wandashishano ngbri77@gmail.com

wellbeing and dignity of other. A key study of this paper is also the existential dimensions that is richly preserved in the culture which deepens the cultural ethics where authenticity, responsibility, and relationality coexist. Ultimately, this paper argues that ka jingsneng jingkraw constitutes a distinctive philosophical system rooted in indigenous knowledge yet resonant with universal ethical concerns offering a rich framework for understanding moral life as both lived experience and reflective practice.

Keywords: Khasi ethics, ka jingsneng jingkraw, relational ethics, virtue ethics, categorial imperative, authenticity, communal morality, moral habits.

Introduction

Considering themselves as 'kiba peit burom' (one who looks for dignity and respect) captures the broader meaning of who a Khasi is and the narrower meaning captures someone who sees manners and respect. A Khasi moral life is more than just a set of ethical prescriptions rather it is a lived philosophy an expression of values, inclination and modes of beings. The Khasi ethical worldview therefore is inextricably linked to life which is woven into rhythms of behavior that nurtures relationship and well-being. Moral life for a Khasi, therefore, is not viewed as an abstract discipline but as 'ka rukom', (a way of life) that affects who one is and who one becomes. ka jingsneng jingkraw emerges as one of the most enduring expressions of Khasi ethical practice. It functions as the continuous moral thread linking individual behavior, communal expectations, and ancestral wisdom. Ka jingsneng jingkraw finds its meaning in daily instructions, teachings and practices to reflective advice which shapes and groom character, the way one thinks and act by cultivating relational sense of responsibility. It also embodies proverbs and moral instructions which grounds a Khasi on ideals of respect, dignity and harmonious living.

The Khasis based their beliefs on three foundational philosophies which have guided them for generation which are: ka tip briew tip Blei (to know man to know God), kamai ia ka hok (to earn one's righteousness), and ka tip kur ka tip kha (to know one's maternal and paternal relations). These maxims are not held in isolation but are interconnected ethical pillars that influence a Khasi conception of selfhood, community, and the divine

These foundations highlight a very important aspect of the Khasis. It is other's concern in a sense that one is expected to engage with world and with others. They are not simply principle and formulas that could be lived selectively and practice only when needed rather they are to be live

everyday as intrinsic orientation which adds meaning and purpose. This captures the existential dimension among the khasi practices. How do these three philosophies operate within the ethical architecture of Khasi life?

Moving from knowing humanity and knowing the divine, to the ethical discipline of earning righteousness through action, khasi ethics is grounded in a philosophy of concern for the Other. Moral life is never solitary rather, it unfolds within the relationships with family, clan, community, and even the divine. It captures a life lived among others which is characterized by respect, responsibility and reverence. Therefore, for a khasi ethical existence is relational rather than individualistic.

As an important traditional practice which embodies relational ethics the term ka jingsneng jingkraw has a dual meaning. On the one hand it refers to explicit moral instructions, guidance and counsel that is imparted across generations whereas, on the other hand it refers to moral lessons which is learned through the consequences of one's action. And the paper concentrates on the former meaning of ka jingsneng as intentional moral cultivation and transmission.

Philosophically, ka jingsneng jingkraw can be compared to Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative where both of them aim to guide moral action. The difference between them lies on the fact that they are fundamentally distinct in form and in orientation. Where Kant's imperative stands as universal, rational principle that seeks to govern moral reasoning one that remains largely in its realm of theoretical normativity. Whereas, jingsneng jingkraw is profoundly practical, in a sense it breathes in the everyday habits and dispositions of life. It shapes how one speaks, sits, stands, honors elders, performs rituals, and participates in communal life. It is moral knowledge that is lived rather than that which is prescribed.

A line of similarity can also be drawn between ka jingsneng jingkraw and Aristotelian virtue ethics, that is based on the notion that virtue is formed through habits. *Ka jingsneng jingkraw* molds character through actions one that is patterned and it shares a similarity with Aristotle ethics. However, jingsneng jingkraw is distinct when it comes to moral formation that is grounded on oral tradition, the communal memory, and an emphasizes on interconnectedness over individual autonomy

As the moral conduct ka jingsneng jingkraw is shaped not merely as verbal guidance but as action that are expressed through what a khasi calls 'akor', (manners, etiquette and outward conduct. H. Onderson Mawrie in Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, strongly expressed the following:

"Ka akor la lam da ka buit, ka buit ka ieng na ka bynta ka jingstad, jingsngewthuh bad ka jingshemphang. Ka buit khlem ka akor kan shu long

lymboit,ka akor kadei kata kaba u briew u pynpaw shabar ha kiwei pat ia ka jinglong jingim kaba u don." (Mawrie, 1981).

Akor(manners) is guided by reasoning, buit stands for knowledge, understanding and discernment towards others. Wisdom without manners becomes useless akor is what a person outwardly displays to others as the expression of their character. Wisdom and manners go hand in hand and it is what determine our moral relation with others in the society.

This relationship of jingsneng (teaching), buit (knowledge), and akor (visible conduct) makes Khasi ethics a real practice, not a mere system of laws. Moral disposition and manners cannot be separated, outward conduct is a reflection of the internal forming of character, and both are the result of the continuous cultivation of ancestral teachings. Thus, ka jingsneng jingkraw is the ethical foundation through which a Khasi learns to be social, moral and relational.

Hence, jingsneng jingkraw is not just an ethical framework but a cultural-philosophical system that supports khasi identity. It connects ancestral wisdom to the moral life of the present, reminding the community that ethical living is always relational, embodied, and connected to the dignity and well-being of others.

The Philosophical Foundations of Khasi Moral Life

The basic moral and religious tenant of ka Tip Briew,Tip Blei, according to Sib Charan Roy's is that a khasi understanding of God is rooted in a profound monotheistic vision God as creator, sustainer, giver of life, and distributor of destiny.

U Blei Najrong, U Blei Natbian; U Trai Kynrad; U Nongthaw, U Nongbuh,
U Nongsei Rynieng Nongsei-Rta;
U Nongsam Bynta Nongbuh Bynta;
U Blei Shihajar Nguh
(Roy, 1979, p. 3)

God is depicted as omnipotent, eternal, and the ultimate source of all things. Knowing God has both theological and ethical impact. Perceiving God's creative and sustaining presence is to become aware of one's place within the moral order. Roy further states that God has given soul (ka mynsiem) to all creatures both human and non-humans. Thus, Khasi moral thinking is not confined to humans only but embraces animal, nature and all created beings. The universal spiritual being confirms the dignity of every life form.

The notion to "know man" (tip briew) within this broader scope, takes on depth. For Roy observes that one is really Khasi only if one has a soul

and wears the human face. To know man is to actually know his human relations, especially his kur (maternal clan) and kha (paternal lineage). Knowing one's kin is not only a genealogical awareness of who our dear and near ones are but it is actually moral in nature for it is this knowledge that orders social conduct, sets limits, and secures respect for others. Respect is based on the recognition of the humanity and the common spiritual worth of every person.

Kamai Ia Ka Hok: To earn one's righteousness

Kamai ia ka hok, is often translated as "earn your righteousness," but its meaning is more than that. For the Khasi, to earn means to achieve the ethical merit and not just material wealth. Sib Charan Roy insists:

"Ngi im ban kamai ia ka hok ka sot ym ia ka spah bad ka mangkarong."

We live to earn righteousness and truth, not wealth or material abundance.

Ka hok (righteousness)here means behaviour which help develop one's moral character and are useful to oneself and to the community. Righteousness is inculcated through what we may consider the simplest act of love and respect towards our parents and respect of elders living life in truthfulness (jingim ha ka hok), showing care and love (jingaiei), and contributing to social harmony. Among the khasis ka hok can also be earned by living a well guided life (kaba im shisur shidur) where a person is not easily swayed by material wealth, desires.

Crucially, Khasi belief maintains that righteousness is earned in this life, not merely as an afterlife expectation. Ethical life is therefore lived among others, within society, where one's conduct continually shapes one's moral standing. This reflects a practical moral philosophy in which actions, not beliefs alone, determine moral worth. Righteousness is therefore, not an award that is earned in the afterlife but it is earned in this life. The khasi moral conduct is therefore practice among the others in the society and not in isolation and these shapes one's moral standing. Therefore, khasi ethical life reflects actions in practice and not beliefs alone that determine moral worth.

Tip Kur, Tip Kha (Knowing one's maternal and paternal lineages)

The importance of understanding one's maternal and paternal clan is emphasised by the ka tip Kur tip Kha. This knowledge is essential for establishing one's identity as well as upholding moral and societal order.

Although the kur is the basic kinship unit among the khasis where the lineage is traced from the mother's side, the kha is still crucial in defining roles and acceptable connections.

The principle is very important for fulfillment of marriage conventions. If marriage happens with the kur and few selected kha it usually leads to 'ka sang' (social taboo) and it is believed that it leads to deformity in birth, it brings shame, disorder, misfortune, and disharmony to the individual, family, and clan. Therefore, for a khasi marriage is considered a sacred convention which needs to clear all the transgression and lineage connection among couples.

Knowing the mothers and father's clan also organises the rituals of birth, death, and inheritance. Some rites, offerings and duties can only be performed by the kur, others are for the kha. Such interdependence protects the sanctity of life and guarantees that social duties are recognised as such. *Ka liang Kur ka liang kha* the balance between the duties of the mother and father. Ka niam iap ka niam kha death rites and birth rites. Ka jingkynmaw ka niam ka riti memory and continuity of clan customs. All these ideas stress the relationality of moral existence, that you cannot be moral without your kin.

These basic principles demonstrate that Khasi morality is highly relational, action-centred and spiritual. But principles by themselves do not produce a moral life, they have to be embodied, taught, and lived in society. This shift from principle to practice is best seen in the tradition of ka jingsneng jingkraw, the living moral instruction that forms character and directs behaviour.

Ka Jingsneng jingkraw: A Khasi Ethical Practice

The Khasi way is a way of life, not a school of thought (Miri, 1988, p. 8). The above line suggests that khasi moral philosophy is not some abstract doctrinal concept rather it suggest that the khasi way of life is embedded in everyday practices, communal responsibilities and relationships. It is not theorised rather moral understanding is lived. Carried in customs, oral instructions, and the habitual rhythms of conduct that take a person from childhood to adulthood. In this worldview, ka jingsneng jingkraw is one of the most essential ethical activities that shape the moral character of the individual and the community.

The word jingsneng has two meanings. The first one **is moral instruction.** That is, explicit education from elders, parents and community members. On the other hand, it **can mean learning through experience**, whether by one's own consequence or by correction by others.

In this context ka jingsneng jingkraw is defined largely in its first sense: moral instruction as a formative process. These lessons, the do's and don't's of daily living, are not only prohibitions or restrictions imposed from above. They serve as moral anchors to guide behaviour, maintain respect and support social cohesion. Jingsneng is hardly theoretical but is genuinely pragmatic in nature, it is anchored in repeated activity, habitual discipline, and embodied conduct.

Ka jingsneng jingkraw manifest in many ways the simplest guidance like everyday instructions(jingsneng) such as a mother reminding her child, khun, haba kren ki rangbah phim dei ban iakren lang! (my daughter when elders are speaking, you must not interrupt) It functions at the level of the instant act, moulding politeness, self-control and social awareness. These simple injunctions act as the first layer of moral nurture which govern behaviour in actual situations.

In contrast ka jingsneng can also be structured and metaphorical cautions which is recorded in literary and cultural text. Such jingsneng as recorded in J. Bacchiarello's Ki Dienjat Ki Longshwa (1974, p. 137) has more symbolic and philosophical meaning. For example, the saying "wat tap eit miaw ia la ka iwtung" (do not bury your filth like a cat) which warns against the tendency to hide one's mistakes and defend one owns wrongdoing conveying ethical insight through metaphor. Nevertheless, such proverbial lessons do not train behaviour in the direct way of domestic directions, but on a more reflective level, imparting knowledge for contemplation rather than simple obedience. The two modes of ka jingsneng jingkraw, the immediate and the proverbial together illuminate the layered character of Khasi ethical practice: one rooted in everyday habits, the other in permanent moral deliberation. Jingsneng jingkraw is made up of such common injunctions. They promote humility, mindfulness and respect all of which are crucial for leading a good life.

The term jingsneng is generally used to denote moral instruction, advise or direction. However, when combined with the word jingkraw it adds a feeling of seriousness to the instruction, as well as discipline and moral weight. In Khasi thinking, jingkraw is the firm, corrective measure of ethical life the kind of counsel that is meant not merely to enlighten, but to shape, correct, and steady a person's actions. Hence, jingsneng jingkraw is a kind of moral teaching which is not just suggestive but restraining and this stands for the disciplined side of Khasi moral education. Whether through softly spoken words in the family or through metaphorical and philosophical precepts in literature, jingkraw emphasises that living an ethical life is serious work that requires awareness, humility, and openness to the knowledge of elders.

These activities are also in accordance with the teachings contained in Radhon Sing Berry's ka jingsneng tymmen where he systematised ancestral wisdom in textual form. The things that he learned from oral tradition are still performed in Khasi houses today.

The relational aspect of jingsneng jingkraw governs how one speaks, walks, behaves, respects elders, treats peers, and even how one sits in communal gatherings. It involves hospitality, dispute resolution, the duty to share and the avoidance of arrogance. It influences one's relations not just inside the family but also with the community and the environment. In many ways it is the Khasi equivalent of a moral habits, an ethical formation through regular, socially ingrained practice.

Moreover, jingsneng jingkraw illustrates the Khasi concept that moral existence begins in the everyday and not in abstract ideals. It ties the individual to the community, the present to the ancestors, and behaviour to character. It is not a universal moral theory of the grand kind, but arises out of lived experience, cultural memory and communal expectation. It is ethics as learning, ethics as practice, ethics as relationship.

Ka jingsneng jingkraw is handed throughout generations until it becomes a normative structure of Khasi ethical existence. These precepts shape the most rudimentary types of behaviour, from how one speaks to how one moves, and always in relation to others. At its heart, ka jingsneng jingkraw is an ethic of concern for others, a reminder that the moral life is never lived in isolation but always through respectful connection with community. It teaches that the "other" must be exalted, treated as a creature deserving of dignity, restraint and reverence. The practice of ka jingsneng jingkraw is therefore inseparable from the three fundamental Khasi precepts of ka tip briew ka tip blei, kamai ia ka hok and tip kur tip kha. To know God is to respect the dignity of others; to gain righteousness is to live according to these moral precepts; to know one's kin is to act responsibly within networks of relations. R.S. Berry in Ka Jingsneng Jingkraw, emphasises this link by stating explicitly that to offend or to injure men or women is a sin against God (Berry XII, XV, XVI). Moral duty for Berry is not simply a social demand but a spiritual demand. Thus, the Khasi concept that "to know man to know God" confirms the deep entanglement of morality with transcendence, so that ka jingsneng jingkraw is a cultural ethic and a theological imperative.

Universal Principles and Lived Practices in Ethical Thought

The Khasi ethical practice of ka jingsneng jingkraw, bears similarities as well as differences with the Western ethical theories, particularly Immanuel Kant's deontology and Aristotle's virtue ethics. Where Kant's ethics pave

the way for seeing moral worth of action not from consequences but purpose of the agent. The basis of morality for Kant is *goodwill* a will that acts not from personal desires or end but from obligation. A good action for Kant is an activity that is done as a result of moral rightness, not an action that is done as a result of a favourable outcome. The subjection stance on morality is partial and deontology stressed on situational variation where real moral behaviour could only be based on following rational and universal rules.

However, Kant's system has long been criticised. His categorical imperative demands that individuals act only on maxims that can be universally applied, often does not consider the complicated, relational and culturally varied decisions of ordinary life. The universality he wants limits social situations, emotional bonds and civic responsibilities. So Kantian ethics tends to stay more theoretical than practical: one can comprehend the command of reason, but it can be difficult to live it out in the face actual moral dilemmas.

On the other hand, the Khasi concept of ka jingsneng jingkraw is rooted very much in the realities of day to day existence. It is not an abstract principle but a moral discipline executed in the way one speaks, behaves, respects others and reacts to social expectations. While Kant's ethics starts with intellectual thought and works towards action, Khasi ethics begins with action habitual guidance, relational commitments, and embodied practices and only indirectly discloses the moral rationale underlying them. Kant viewed morality as the creation of an independent will, governed by universal norms. But jingsneng jingkraw is the product of communal wisdom, relational ethics and inherited moral sensibility. This divergence is indicative of the originality of Khasi moral theory, which tries to ground the ethical life in the reality of things, so that morality is not only thinkable but attainable.

To compare further, it is necessary to see how ka jingsneng jingkraw expresses moral demands in tangible, lived instances that direct everyday conduct. An example can be taken from Radhon Sing Berry in Ka Jingsneng Tymmen where he cautions: *wat ju mlien kylla la ka juban, wei la kren pyndep la eh ne la tan, wei phi la kohnguh,wat ju kyrngah shuh, bat ia ka hok haba kut haba duh.* This condition requires that when a person has vow one should not reverse his commitments under any scenario or under any kind of pressure. Further a man must preserve righteousness whether it result in loss or gain. This principle is an ethic of determination, integrity and relational accountability, moral behaviour is not a concept, it is a matter of honour, of one's word and of one's responsibilities to others.Since, Kant expresses obligation as a matter of universal logical maxims, while Khasi ethics

expresses duty as a matter of culturally entrenched, practice-oriented injunctions derived from lived experience. Kant writes of duty as a rational necessity, jingsneng jingkraw describes obligation as a social, embodied commitment grounded in trust, relational harmony, and moral constancy. What this contrast shows is that there are not only distinct sources of moral authority (reason for Kant, community and relational obligation for Khasi ethics), but also diverse ways of internalising and acting on moral ideas.

For the Khasi morals, ka jingsneng jingkraw is not just an action but the ethical perspective with which one looks at others. A great example is the teachings of Radhon Sing Berry who warns, *wat ju kren bein ia ki sniew dur bapli ba ioh shisien ka sngi phi kit ka raibi – do not mock or speak ill of the misfortune or deformity of others, lest one day you must bear such burdens yourself.* This injunction does more than discourage destructive speech, it creates a moral conscience that understands the shared fragility of all human beings. Such teachings promote humility and understanding as they impress upon us the fragility of human dignity and the necessity of respecting it in every encounter. Curiously, this comports with Aristotle's conviction that true virtue is not a passive habit (ethos) but an active moral state (hexis)—a stable equilibrium of the soul from which correct conduct issues spontaneously. In the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle argues that virtue entails "doing the right thing, at the right time, and for the right reason" (1103b 23–25), which assumes a developed sensitivity to the moral value of others. Similarly, in Physics VII, Aristotle states that moral understanding emerges as humans are guided from an original state of chaos to an 'active knowing already at work' (247b 17-248a 6). This active knowing is exemplified by the above Khasi moral instruction: it is not externally imposed but slowly internalised until it becomes a part of one's ethical character. Both Khasi and Aristotelian perspectives, therefore, agree that moral life is not about blind habit but rather developed perception: an inner connection to the humanity of others. Khasi ethics, however, intensifies this relational orientation by rooting it in ka tip briew tip blei, in which knowing the human other is inextricably intertwined with knowing the divine. In this way, the Khasi jingsneng jingkraw adds a spiritual and community component to virtue, reminding people that the ethical life is supported by a sense of relationship accountability as well as reverence.

Aristotle is commonly linked to the view that morality is mainly about habit, however, this is an over simplification of his real perspective. Scholars note (Kraut, 2018) that Aristotle does not connect virtue with passive routine. Instead, he views moral virtue as a hexis, an active and persistent state of character acquired by habituation but not reducible to it. In Nicomachean Ethics II.4 Aristotle claims that virtue only exists when a person acts "knowingly, for its own sake, and from a firm and unchanging

disposition". Habit (ethos) is only the preliminary training in which the deeper moral state can strike root. But the virtue itself is an active disposition of the soul, and requires decision, insight, and choosing. This is confirmed by Aristotle's remarks in Physics and De Anima which states that true knowing and virtuous activity are always modes of being-at-work . Aristotle is no advocate of mindless routine, but he sees habituation as the first step that frees human nature for moral greatness. This understanding is a valuable conceptual segue to Khasi jingsneng jingkraw which, too, starts with disciplined habits but grows into reflective ethical consciousness.

For a khasi to be *is to be in relation with the others.* If Aristotle's virtue ethics proposes habituation as the way to a mature moral consciousness, khasi moral life completes this notion by situating habits in a social reality where every act is aimed at the presence, dignity, and well-being of others. Jingsneng jingkraw is not just the interior formation of character, but the external performance of relationship obligations. The moral relevance of it is that one continually recognises that one's voice, gestures, conduct and decisions will eventually alter the fabric of communal life.

In Khasi ethics the person is not seen as a self-sufficient moral being. In ka tip briew tip blei, kamai ia ka hok, tip kur tip kha, a person's identity is always tied to kinship, ancestry, and the immediate social world. So, the moral life is fundamentally participatory one that aligns with practicability one learns to speak with restraint because words matter, one walks mindfully because movement is a sign of respect or disrespect, one behaves ethically not out of fear of punishment but because of an internalised consciousness that every action is watched by humans as well as the divine. Thus, jingsneng jingkraw turns the Aristotelian notion of habituation into something broader and more social, a process by which a person becomes ethically comprehensible within the web of relational life.

Khasi moral formation does not end in the *solitary* rational agent envisaged by Kant; nor does it end with the fully absorbed individual of Aristotle alone. Rather, it finds in a shared moral realm in which the ethical worth of an individual is inseparable to the structure he or she upholds, among others. To follow ka jingsneng jingkraw is to observe that the self exists only in the presence of parents, elders, clan members, neighbours and the community of beings endowed with mynsiem(soul). In this approach, Khasi ethics expands the notion of virtue beyond personal ideals to relational flourishing ethics as a means of ensuring that to live well is always comparatively to live well with others.

The Khasi ethical life is not only a matter of external conduct but psychologically it nurtures deep internal shaping of thought, perception,

and moral awareness. As Radhon Sing Berry's writings reveal, these teachings are not prescriptive of behaviour but develop the inner landscape of the moral agent (Berry, 1974). They give a psychological basis for how people learn to interpret the world, to judge options and to comprehend themselves in relation to others. In this sense, ka jingsneng jingkraw not only governs a person's conduct, but also affects the way a person thinks, feels and perceives moral circumstances.

This can be seen by contemporary psychology and philosophy. Cultural psychologists such as Shweder (1991) argue that culture is not an external veil that is placed on the person, rather "a framework within which the mind learns to think." In addition, Vygotsky (1978) observes that human consciousness is a product of the internalisation of culturally mediated practices. What a young person hears, observes and does again and over again becomes part of the child's thinking framework. This is in great accord with the Khasi moral formation where the everyday admonitions, to walk mindfully, to talk politely, to honour the elders, to restrain wrath, gradually become the very grammar through which one understands the moral life.

Phenomenologists offer a deeper view. Merleau-Ponty (1962) highlights that the body takes in cultural meaning through repeating of practice, and that this creates a habit of vision, a manner of seeing the world that is influenced by lived experience. In Khasi society, ka burom, ka akor and ka jinglong briew are learned by children through daily embodied interactions rather as through abstract laws. The young person develops the ability to respect the elders, to feel shame upon disrespect, and to anticipate moral demands without being taught. This is a psychological effect of jingsneng jingkraw, which is a moral awareness embodied.

This aspect is also shown by existentialist psychologists. Rollo May (1958) and Viktor Frankl (1967) argue that meaning cannot be discovered in isolation, but is created through societal ideals and human relationships. Khasi moral principles – especially those emphasising responsibility, integrity and authenticity – resonate with existential convictions to choice and accountability. This existential moral psychology can be seen in Berry's warning against concealing wrongdoing or blaming others: a person becomes oneself by taking responsibility for one's acts. Even psychoanalysis is mindful of the moral strength of culture. Freud (1930) proposes that the superego, the inner moral voice, is moulded by cultural prohibitions and parental supervision. The Khasi ethical system is considerably different from the Freudian one, but the psychological insight is still useful: moral principles heard in childhood often become the inner voice by which one judges oneself. In Khasi usage, this inner voice usually

sounds like ka jingkraw, the voice that humbles you, stabilises you and tells you to behave with dignity.

Collectively, these insights imply that ka jingsneng jingkraw determines not only the external moral behaviour of the Khasi individual but also the internal structure of moral awareness. It determines the manner in which one reads social situations, guilt or pride, responsibility and the presence of the Other. In this broader psychological meaning, jingsneng jingkraw is not only a cultural ethic, but a cognitive and affective frame, a way of seeing and feeling the moral world. Radhon Sing Berry's Ka Jingsneng Tymmen brings a startling existential dimension to Khasi moral framework where honesty was a major moral expectation in the community. Berry's poetry are an appeal to personal responsibility, a refusal to avoid the ethical consequences of one's actions. As he puts it:

"Ia kano ma ka pap ba phi leh,
La ha kaba rieh ne kaba dum eh;
Kano kano ka jynjar ba phi shem,
La dei kaba eh lane kaba jem;
Wat ju leit tei pap halor kiwei pat"
(Berry, 1974, p. 59)

Whatever evil you do, whether in secret or in darkness, whatever suffering you undergo, whether hard or easy, do not blame others for your wrongdoing.

This teaching holds the Khasi moral agent totally responsible for his or her actions and experience. It has a very strong share of existentialism in it, from the likes of Sartre , that authenticity arises when people understand that they are the originators of their decisions and cannot pass the responsibility on to anyone else. In this way, Berry's jingsneng confirms the perspective that to live morally is to live genuinely, knowing that one's life is fashioned by decisions for which one is accountable.

Berry determines back to this point through another injunction

"Haba shem pop ne long sniew wat ju tei pop ha ki kmie ki kpa"
(Berry, 1974)

When you encounter tragedy and misfortune, do not blame the wrong unto your parents.

Berry takes the idea of authenticity further here: it is a demand of moral life to accept one's freedom, reject irrational explanations and to avoid the urge to blame family, circumstances, or fate. For the Khasi, authentic existence is an honest understanding that one's moral state is self-created and dignity is to be found in taking responsibility, not shifting blame.

Also, this existential dimension of Khasi moral existence, as reflected in Berry's instructions, offers a significant insight that complements the relational ethics outlined before. If ka jingsneng jingkraw locates morality in community, family and reciprocity, the existential layer guarantees that ethical duty does not evaporate into communal anonymity. Rather, the Khasi moral actor is an individual who is with others and responsible before others. This tension between the individual and the relational is one of the most conceptually distinctive elements of the Khasi ethics.

Also, one of the clearest articulations of the existential dimension of Khasi moral existence is found in the work of H. Onderson Mawrie. In Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi, Mawrie (2023) describes the Khasi person as *"u Khasi u long u ba don ka jingpyrkhat tynrai ba ka jingkit khlieh na ka bynta la ka jong ka jingim ka dei ka jong u hi." Translated, this means: "A Khasi carries an innate conviction that the burden of responsibility for his life rests upon himself alone."* Mawrie's observations shows a profound existential sensibility: the Khasi does not hand over responsibility to God, fate or fellow human beings, but views himself as the sole author of his acts and their consequences. This is in line with the existentialist concern with authenticity and self-accountability, the realisation that one must meet life directly, without deception and without excuses, responding to the circumstances of life through your own choices. His story therefore shows how profound a consciousness of personal responsibility is in Khasi moral theory, and how this awareness is situated within a wider social and spiritual schema.

In this sense, Khasi morals connect together the two ethical perspectives that are generally kept separate in Western philosophy: the relational ontology of communitarian ethics and the true selfhood emphasised by existentialists. In khasi culture that they are not opposing frameworks but interconnected strands of the same fabric of morality. To live with others is to learn to live with others. Yet one also has to learn to face the truth that the significance and moral weight of one's acts rests, eventually, with oneself. Authenticity and relationality thus co-exist, with each encouraging the other.

The clarity of this connection is further evident when we consider how ka jingsneng jingkraw shapes the inner and outside dimensions of moral life. It regulates behaviour – how to speak, how to act, how to welcome elders, how to resolve a quarrel, how to retain dignity. It produces in us a moral self that is able to self-examine, self-criticize, and have moral bravery. Berry's existential guidance encourages people not just to do the right thing, but to be morally aware - to act with a full consciousness of the consequences and moral significance of their decisions.

This double movement, forward to the community and within to authenticity, shows that Khasi moral philosophy is much more than a set of behavioural guidelines. It's sort of like a phenomenology of everyday life (how moral meaning is made through lived experience) existential responsibility (you cannot deny that your actions are yours), relational ethics (one's life is not separate from others' lives), spiritual orientation (moral obligation based on ka tip briew ka tip blei).

In contrast to existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, who maintains that the human person is "condemned to be free" and hence totally responsible for their choices (Sartre, 2007). Unlike Sartre's existentialism that eliminates a supernatural basis, Khasi ethics affirms authenticity in human accountability and spiritual order. Martin Heidegger's idea of Eigentlichkeit (authenticity) emphasises the importance of facing one's own existence instead of hiding behind societal duties (Heidegger, 1962). Berry's teaching resonates with this idea and takes it further: authenticity in Khasi life is never only individualistic but rather relational and accountable to the community and the divine. The ethics of ambiguity by Simone de Beauvoir (Beauvoir, 1948) also echoes here, as freedom must be lived in connection to others. This is inbuilt in the Khasi way of life: freedom and duty are in an organization of kinship and respect.

This is reinforced by Khasi proverbs and oral teachings which often remind people of the fact that one's wrongdoings have consequences not just on one's self but also on generations to come. Moral failure is never an exclusive matter; it undermines the relational equilibrium maintained by the kur, the kha and the community at large. Authenticity in Khasi moral life is therefore the understanding that one's decisions affect the dignity, honour and welfare of other people.

The existential strand also helps to explain how ka jingsneng jingkraw develops one for moral maturity. It allows a person to get into the identities of others in society. When authenticity is integrated into Khasi moral existence it displays the depth of its philosophical complexity. Khasi ethics is not merely a cultural past, but a whole moral philosophy that addresses universal questions: What does it mean to do right? How do we live with other people? What is the essence of responsibility? What grounds a moral life? Ka jingsneng jingkraw responds to these problems, knitting together habit, character, duty, and relationality into a coherent ethical perspective. It demonstrates that moral life is lived simultaneously in the intimacy of the household, in the knowledge of ancestral teachings, and in the choices, people make when no one is watching.

Relevance of ka Jingsneng Jingkraw

(The findings in this section are based on casual conversational interviews with three Khasi individuals, Jacob L. Shylla, Auswyn Winter Japang and Bobbymore Kharbani, whose perspectives helped to shed light on the lived significance of ka jingsneng jingkraw in modern Khasi society. Their views are cited with permission and treated as personal communications.)

The importance of ka jingsneng jingkraw in current Khasi life is most clearly shown not only through philosophical analysis but through the lived voices of those who occupy this moral universe in everyday interactions. What follows is not a survey of abstract opinion but a rich reflection of these talks, in which memory, experience, concern, and hope are braided together to illustrate how strongly jingsneng still affects Khasi moral identity.

Time and again, jingsneng jingkraw comes across as an expression of compassion, not control. It is the unspoken but forceful moral presence of the parents and elders who formed your character with stories, warnings, examples, and constant reminders of what it is to be human. One view is that jingsneng is an ethical story through dur ki khana (through stories), ki nuksa (through examples), bad ki jingmut (through thoughts), not just to punish but to improve moral awareness. It is laid down as that which teaches a man to weigh his own words and acts long after the voice of the elder has died to memory. This means the jingsneng spirit exists within the person as an internal moral compass, not an external command.

What is especially notable is that jingsneng jingkraw is recalled less as a set of prohibitions and more as a basis for ethical self-understanding. One discussants recalled how simple instructions on honesty, discipline and responsibility became lifelong habits - repaying excess money to a shopkeeper, learning to place duty before pleasure and avoiding the urge to compromise integrity even when no one is watching. These recollections show that jingsneng operates slowly, through repetition, example and inner conflict, constituting what your article has already recognised as ka akor, the embodied moral manifestation of one's inner character.

At a deeper level, it confirms one of the key philosophical claims: that ka jingsneng jingkraw maintains the humanity of the Khasi person. Jingsneng was considered to be the difference between being fully human and not being entirely human. This is directly in line with the theoretical underpinning in ka tip briew ka tip blei, to know the human is already to stand within the sacred. Here, moral importance is not indicated by social achievement or external religiosity, but whether one continues to live with dignity, restraint and responsibility towards others.

The relevance of jingsneng now is therefore inseparable from a common fear about moral decay. Another frequent issue expressed in these conversations is that younger generations are more and more growing up without persistent ethical formation. The classic question— "hato ym don ba sneng ba kraw shuh?" (Is there nobody to guide and advise morally?)— is no longer rhetorical but rather disturbing. Many feel that parents are too busy, too fatigued or too wounded by their own troubles to have the ability to intentionally pass on moral lessons. Digital distractions, social constraints and emotional distance have all made conventional mechanisms of moral transmission vulnerable. But it is this very worry that helps bolster the case that jingsneng jingkraw is not becoming irrelevant, but is becoming more and more urgently important.

At the same time, there is a common view that jingsneng jingkraw should not be 'rewritten' in accordance with modernity, but rather re-expressed without losing its philosophical foundation. The problem is not the content of jingsneng, which is still rooted in the basic connections of life – with people, with work, and with God – but the method of its delivery. Elders today speak of the difficulty of reaching young minds already saturated with conflicting voices, but they also realise that ethical formation today must occur by example as much as through instruction.

Moreover, Jingsneng Jingkraw's ongoing influence on Khasi identity adds to its relevance. It is remembered not as a self-contained moral theory but as part of what once constituted visibly 'Khasi' ways of living – an approach to relationships, work, discourse, restraint and dignity. Even those who allow that it no longer defines their identity fully understand that it is still one of the deepest moral layers beneath who they have become. This accords with the theoretical concept of jingsneng jingkraw as taking place at the level of moral habits affecting perception, instinct and reaction long before conscious reasoning kicks in.

Most significantly, ka jingsneng jingkraw is relevant as a moral technology of responsibility. The daily stress on honesty, accountability, work ethic and restraint is exactly what you have philosophically written out through Kant, Aristotle and existentialist philosophy, but here these are not theories, but challenges lived in the regular decisions. Examples of how moral universals descend into concrete life through jingsneng are: not hoarding excess money; not taking unjust shortcuts; not shifting the responsibility to circumstances.

What comes out of these debates at the end of the day is that ka jingsneng jingkraw remains important because it still protects three delicate qualities of contemporary existence, moral memory, human dignity and relational accountability. In a time when responsibility is easily abdicated,

truth is negotiable, and relationships are transactional, jingsneng argues that one must still be held accountable for one's words, labour, and decisions. It stands gently, but fiercely against moral amnesia. Philosophically, these lived reflections reaffirm that jingsneng jingkraw is not a relic of the past but a moral nerve constantly pulsating within Khasi living.

Conclusion

The study started from the idea that Khasi moral life is not to be interpreted as a mere collection of laws nor as scattered sayings but as a living movement between practice and principle. From the perspective of ka jingsneng jingkraw, Khasi ethics does not seem to be a theoretical concept but a woven pattern of instructions, habits, relationships and obligations that connect the individual to family, clan, community and God. Hence jingsneng jingkraw is not just one ingredient among others; it is the ethical grammar through which Khasi moral life learns to speak.

This exploration was conceptually underpinned by three basic principles: ka tip briew tip blei, kamai ia ka hok, and tip kur tip kha. They showed a moral universe in which dignity, morality and kinship are inextricable, and where to know the human other is to know the divine. In this world, ka jingsneng, under the guidance of buit, through the expression of akor, becomes the everyday yet profound approach to teach, remember and embody moral life. It makes the daily – the way we speak, walk, greet, work, and relate – into the site where ethics is always being performed.

Khasi moral theory both resonates with and diverges from Kant's deontology and Aristotle's virtue ethics. Like Kant it maintains the gravity of duty and the necessity of moral commitment. Like Aristotle it recognises the crucial function of habits and character. But Khasi ethics will not stay at the level of abstract universals or purely individual morality. Rather, it finds moral vitality in the web of relations of kur and kha, in the presence of elders, and in the awareness that all activity is seen by humans and by the divine. Thus, the analogy points to the singular philosophical contribution of ka jingsneng jingkraw: an ethics where principle is never detached from practice, and habit never detached from thought.

Further complicating this image are the existential and psychological components of Khasi moral thinking. In the writings of Radhon Sing Berry and H. Onderson Mawrie, there was a great emphasis on honesty and personal responsibility: one should not hide one's misbehaviour, not blame parents, fate or others, but acknowledge one's own role in constructing one's life. This echoes existentialist versions of freedom and responsibility, but is firmly grounded in a spiritual and relational horizon. At the same

time, ideas from cultural psychology, phenomenology and moral psychology helped us to see how ka jingsneng jingkraw silently constructs interior structures of perception, of emotion and of judgement. It is no longer just an external norm, but an internalised way of viewing the world, and of feeling the moral burden of one's acts.

The casual discussions here are not empirical proof of any one claim. Instead, they enrich the ethical texture of ka jingsneng jingkraw by demonstrating how it continues to be remembered, fought over, modified, opposed, and desired for in contemporary life. They demonstrate that moral existence is not a given: it is delicate, contested and continuously developing. ka jingsneng jingkraw, as it surfaces in these voices, is not a closed moral code but an ongoing ethical lineage, demanding renewal via practice, not preservation through nostalgia. They remember how simple lessons like honesty, work and respect continue to shape decisions in adulthood, acting as an internal moral compass even during times of temptation or compromise. They share a worry, at the same time, about the disappearance of ethical teaching in many households and the challenge of reaching the younger generations who are under siege from digital and societal forces. Paradoxically, the sensation of loss only makes jingsneng jingkraw feel more relevant now.

Given with such information, the importance of ka jingsneng jingkraw is at least threefold. It preserves ethical recollection, a living link with the wisdom of the past, so that ethics may not be baseless or purely theoretical. Secondly it safeguards human dignity by asserting that every individual as a carrier of mynsiem should be respected, restrained and revered. Third, it serves to sustain relational accountability, a reminder to the Khasi moral agent that choices have reverberations in family, community, and generations. In a culture where responsibility is so easily deflected, and relationships are at risk of becoming transactional, jingsneng jingkraw continues to hold that one must be held to account for one's words, labour and life.

In the end, ka jingsneng jingkraw demonstrates that Khasi ethics is more than a cultural curiosity; it is a moral philosophy in its own right, with something important to contribute to universal questions: What does it mean to live good? How do we live with each other? What is responsibility? On what premise is moral life? The explanation that arises is simple: morality starts in the mundane, in the family, in the hush of elders' words, in the habits that make ka akor, in the choices taken when no one is watching. In this sense, ka jingsneng jingkraw is the living bridge between practice and principle, making sure that for the Khasi to live is always also to learn what it means to be really briew(human).

References

Arendt, H. (1958). The Human Condition. University of Chicago Press.

Berry, R. S. (1974). Ka Jingsneng Tymmen. Shillong: Ri Khasi Press.

Bacchiarello, J. (1974). Ki Dienjat Ki Longshwa. Shillong: Don Bosco Press.

Frankl, V. E. (1967). Psychotherapy and existentialism. Washington Square Press.

Freud, S. (1930). Civilization and its discontents. Hogarth Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and Time (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927)

Hindery, R. (1978). Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions. New York: University Press of America.

International Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (n.d.). Aristotle: Ethics. Retrieved from https://iep.utm.edu/aristotle-ethics

Kant, I. (1996). Practical Philosophy (M. Gregor, Trans. & Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original works published 1785–1797)

Kraut, R. (2018). Aristotle's Ethics. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/

MacIntyre, A. (1981). After Virtue. University of Notre Dame Press.

Mawrie, H. O. (2023). Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi. Shillong: Vendrame Press.

May, R. (1958). Existence: A new dimension in psychiatry and psychology. Basic Books.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of perception. Routledge.

Miri, S. (1988). Identity and the Moral Life: A Study of the Tribal Worldview. Shillong: NEHU Publications.

Nussbaum, M. (1993). Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach. Midwest Studies in Philosophy.

Plato, R., & Cohen, S. M. (2005). Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Roy, S. C. (1979). Khasi Religion. Delhi: Cosmo Publications.

Sartre, J. P. (2007). Existentialism Is a Humanism (C. Macomber, Trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1946)

Shweder, R. (1991). Thinking through cultures: Expeditions in cultural psychology. Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. (1989). Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thapa, R. (2014). Indigenous Ethics and Communal Life in Northeast India. Guwahati: Eastern Book House.

Tiewsoh, B. M. (2004). Ethics in Tribal Thought: A Khasi Perspective. Shillong: NEHU.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.

Walker, M. (2019). Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Warjri, P. (2001). Ka Niam Khasi: Origin and Principles. Shillong: Ri Khasi Publications.

Williams, B. (1985). Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy. Harvard University Press.