

Speech on Ka Jingduwai Lang/Lord's Prayer and responses
Prepared by Rev. Eva Cameron and Dr. Khlur Muhkim
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I am here today dressed as someone from the Khasi Hills of India, but I am obviously not a Khasi. For one thing, if I was, you would hardly be able to see me over this podium—the Khasis are a very short people. I wear these clothes today in honor of the 5 months time I spent on my sabbatical with cousins the Khasi Unitarians. I was given these traditional clothes for when I spoke before thousands at their annual Youth Conference. It was a very special time in my life, and I am here to honor the love they shared. And because they asked me to come back and share what I could about them with you. It is an honor to represent the Khasi Unitarians at this service.

I begin my remarks today with this prayer that you would find when you opened up the very front of the Khasi Hymnal. And is recited at the beginning of every Unitarian service. It is the Hajom Kissor Singh Nongbri translation of the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer (Khasi)

Ko Kpa jong ngi Uba ha bneng,
Long bakhuid ka kyrteng jong Phi
Wan ka hima jong Phi.
Long ka mon jong Phi,
hangne ha ngi kumba ha bneng.
Ai ia ngi mynta ka jingbam kaba ha la ka sngi.
To map ia ngi, ia ki ryngkang jong ngi.
Pynlong ruh ia ngi kiba map ia kiba leh sniew ia ngi.
Pynlait ia ngi na ki jingpynshoi ka pop.
Bad sumar ruh ia ngi na kaba sniew.
Naba ka jong PHI long ka hima, bad ka bor,
bad ka burom ruh, mynta bad junom la junom, Amen.

(English which shows what it actually says in Khasi)

Hi (calling) Father of ours in heaven
May your name be holy
May your kingdom come
May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us today our daily food.

Please forgive us and the wrongs we have done
Make us forgive the wrongs others have done to us.
Free us from the temptations of sin.
For yours is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory too, now and forever.
Amen.

Responses:—

Leader: O God, open our eyes.

Resp: So that we may see your holy religion is more precious than anything else of this world.

Leader: O God, open our mouth.

Resp: So that we may glorify your holy name, here and now, in our homes, in all places and in all times.

Leader: Holy, Holy, Holy, be your name O God, the Lord of all, who is from eternity, who is now and here, and who will ever more be the same without end.

Resp: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill to all people.

Notes:—

More than 100 years ago a young man, raised in the context of a tribal people who loved God deeply, and had many rituals and sacrifices to ask for God's help and blessing. And yet also raised as one of the first generation of literate people from his tribe, by Christian missionaries. They had come into this land of pre-literate people to save souls. And what they needed, after setting the people's language to word, were native speakers to preach for them.

Hajom Kissor Singh Nongbri was a bright and intelligent boy. And he was also fearless when it came to the truth. Midway through his teen years, he finished reading the Bible, and noticed there was no mention of the trinity. He had the nerve, the gall really to ask his teachers about this. Their answers were inadequate, and he was told to pray hard lest he go to hell. After a couple years of attempting to reconcile what he was reading in the Bible, with what he knew about God from his native understandings, and what the missionaries were teaching him, he finally decided to quit and create his own religion.

And in many ways, that is exactly what he did. It's another amazing and fantastic story to tell about how he became connected with the Unitarians

around the world. But to continue with this story . . . he had a vision to knit together the native, tribal teachings with Biblical wisdom and progressive rational thought that in the foundation of the faith.

One of the first things he did was to create his own hymnal, so that people could worship in this new way. The Lord's Prayer--with his caressing touch to the theology--begins each meeting.

One of the most interesting differences, you may have noticed, is the line "Lead us not into temptation" is not there. In Khasi usage, "Lead us not into temptation" implies that "God might lead us into temptation unless we request him otherwise". "Lead us not into temptation" is a very anti-Khasi concept. To Khasis, God is an ever-loving parent who will never ever lead his children into temptation.

In one of the above responses following the prayer it says "see your holy religion is more precious than anything else", HKS was very emphatic about the original Khasi concept that each one of us is a thousand times greater as a spiritual being than this temporal earthly piece of flesh and bones. According to the traditional Khasi concept, this planet is considered as a market place, in the sense that none will stay put in a market place. We come here to trade in righteousness ... to lead a good life full of bliss as children of God. This planet gives us the chance to earn our own righteousness, the only thing that we can proudly take back when we go "home". And we should not forget that there's no escape from going back home.

Our holy religion guides us to go back home with righteousness and clean hands. It reminds us that we cannot take any of our riches, our earthly possessions with us. Our holy religion provides us guidelines of how we should carry out our duties as humans. Our holy religion keeps alive our connectedness with the divine.

It is with this sense of sustaining righteousness, that Khasi Unitarians rise at each worship service and speak this prayer that is so familiar to us all. It is with this sense of sustaining righteousness that the Khasi Unitarians proudly have sustained their own faith, a distinct, unique cousin to each of our Unitarian faith. It is with this sense of sustaining righteousness that Khasi Unitarians labor daily to help others—including setting aside one handful of rice each time they cook a meal, to donate to those in need.

They say, “Long ka mon jong Phi, hangne ha ngi kumba ha bneng.” May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.