

Problematize the
exodus-liberation-
settlement motif from
the adivasi
perspective ...



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Prepared: Kyrshanborlang Mawlong. Introduction: In this paper we are trying to discuss the difficulties that the Israelites faced during staying in Egypt and how God responded to their crying by liberating them from the hand of the Egyptian and also how they entered and settled in Canaan. But, this liberation of the Israelite by God created an impact on the indigenous people of the Canaan, we could see there are many problems or difficulties of Canaanite in mix up with Israelites either in culture, religious and social as a whole. We will also see the situation of Adivasi in India how they are suppressed by the oppressors or non- Adivasis/high caste.

The Adivasi are facing many problems in their life just like the Canaanite has met. 1. Exodus Event: Biblical perspective The date of the liberating event of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage is a debated question. Walter C. Kaiser in his book "A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through The Jewish Wars," asserts that the Israelites left Egypt around 1270-1250 B. C.

and entered Canaan around 1230-1220 B. C. The events of Exodus show how God by his grace chose the people of Israel and entered into a deeper relationship with them. The story begins with the family of Jacob, which moved to Egypt to escape the famine.

After Jacob's son Joseph rose from slavery to become Pharaoh's right-hand person, Jacob's family migrated and settled in Egypt. The biblical record affirms that the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Then a new king arose who did not know Joseph. He wanted to get rid of the Israelite because of the fear that they would fight against them and run away from the land.

The method he used was that the king made them forced labourers and put taskmasters over them. The Egyptians thus oppressed them ruthlessly and imposed heavy task on them and made their lives bitter. So the Israelites groaned and cried to their God of the Ancestors to liberate them. In the midst of their suffering, Yahweh was not silent and inactive; He took initiatives and raises up Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage and Joshua to lead the Israelites to enter, conquest and settled in Canaan.

. Liberation: As mention above, Israelites experienced the cruelty and exploitation of the Egyptians and even not paid properly but provide with food supply. In the phase of bondage the Israelites crying out from oppression. Their cry is not a prayer, but one of pain. But it reaches God's ear given His concern for the threat to His creation.

Yahweh through Moses performed many miracles. These miracles affected the economy of the land of Egypt. Water got polluted. Agriculture suffered. They lost their sons and animals. These force the king Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

But, as Pharaoh hearing of the direction in which the Israelites were headed, he know that they would encounter the river Yam Suph, so he change his mind and sent his elite chariot corps after them (Exodus 14: 6-10). But Yahweh took initiative and delivered His people with three distinct miracles, that is, a shift in position of the cloud, opening the water and the closing the water. The number of people who moved out from Egypt was very large. According to Exodus 12: 37, 38: 26; Number 1: 46; 2: 32; 11: 21; 26: 51, the

approximate figure was 600, 000 as the number of men. 3. Settlement: After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of the Israelites.

The biblical accounts of the conquest and settlement cover four main areas: Transjordan, the Central Hill country, the Southern region, and the North. Joshua himself was prepared for conquest. The conquest of Jericho was a sample victory. Israel simply followed the instructions of the Lord.

The Israelites marched around the city seven times, the walls of the city fell and they could enter to take possession (Joshua 6). The Israelites then attempted to conquer the nearby city of Ai, where they met with their first defeat. Assured of success, Joshua renewed his plans to conquer Ai. The enemy forces were lured into the open so that the thirty thousand men who had stationed beyond the city by night were able to attack Ai from the rear and set it afire. The defenders were annihilated, their king was hanged and the site was reduced to rubble.

When Israel makes its second attack, the people of Ai as well as the inhabitants of Bethel vacate their cities to pursue the enemy (Josh. 8: 17). Not all of the Canaanites tried to resist Israel's invasion. One group, the Gibeonites, avoided destruction by deceiving the Israelites into making a covenant of peace with them (Joshua 9: 1). Alarmed by the defection of the Gibeonites to Israel, a group of southern Canaanite kings, led by Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem, formed a coalition against the invading force.

The kings threatened to attack the Gibeonites, causing Joshua to come to the defense of his new allies. Because of supernatural intervention, the Israelites were able to defeat the coalition. Joshua then launched a southern campaign
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which resulted in the capture of numerous Canaanite cities (Joshua 10: 1).

Joshua's third and last military campaign was in northern Canaan.

In that region King Jabin of Hazor formed a coalition of neighbouring kings to battle with the Israelites. Joshua made a surprise attack upon them at the waters of Merom, utterly defeating his foe (Joshua 11: 1-15). The invasion of Canaan met with phenomenal success; large portions of the land fell to the Israelites (Joshua 11: 16-12: 24). However, some areas still remained outside their control, such as the heavily-populated land along the coast and several major Canaanite cities like Jerusalem (Joshua 13: 1-5; Joshua 15: 63; Judges 1: 1).

The Israelites struggled for centuries to control these areas. The Israelite tribes slowly settled Canaan without completely removing the native population. Even though some sections of the land remained to be conquered, God instructed Joshua to distribute Canaan to the tribes which had not yet received territory (Joshua 13: 7). Following the land allotments, Israel began to occupy its territory.

Judges 1: 1 describes the settlement as a slow process whereby individual tribes struggled to remove the Canaanites. In the final analysis the tribes had limited success in driving out the native population (Judges 1: 1). As a result, Israel was plagued for centuries by the infiltration of Canaanite elements into its religion (Judges 2: 1-5). In summary, Thirty-one kings are listed as having been defeated by Joshua, with so many city-states, each having its own king in such a small country. Through this conquest Joshua subdued the

inhabitants to the extent that during the subsequent period of peace the Israelites were able to settle in the Promised Land. 4.

Consequences from the Invasion: The invasion had a great effect on the land of Canaanite, the City wall was destroyed. Displacement takes place, when Israelite invaded the land many Canaanite had to migrate to other place. There was a conflict in culture and religions. The Israelite believed in YHWH, the only one God while the Canaanite believed in many gods.

5. 1. Land Displacement: The Israelite occupation of Canaan led to intermittent fighting over a long period as the quest for new territory extended into the period of the settlement proper. According to Martin Noth, as quoted by Walter C. Kaiser in his book "A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through The Jewish Wars" this process took almost two hundred years, from the second half of the fourteenth century B. C.

This verifies the fact that when Israelite's get inside the promise land, surely there prevails the displacement of the original inhabitants. They were divorced from their own land. 5. 2. Resettlement: When there is displacement and departure, the problem awaiting the indigenous Canaanite is that they have to relocate themselves by any means. This reinstallation will aggravate the chaotic circumstances lying ahead of them.

Searching for a new settlement is not an overnight play. But it is a process that requires several probabilities and also time consuming. 5. 3.

Occupational Alterations: Among these ' indigenous Canaanites' there were formed pastoral nomads from Transjordan.

But, envisages a gradual settlement of various nomadic groups in the course of an occupational shift i. e. transition to agrarian way of life. This is an open impact of the Israelites claimed for the land belonging not to them, but to others. As a matter of fact, there appear occupational alterations during that time. They can hardly adopt the livelihood of the indigenous people in that region which they newly settled.

So, there provoke an alterations from agrarian to pastoral, and reciprocally the same from pastoral to agrarian. 5. 4. Religious Assimilation: Religious opposition belonged to that context.

YHWH, the God of the Israelite was very different from the Canaanite deities. The religion of the Canaanite peoples was a crude and debased form of ritual polytheism. It was associated with sensuous fertility-cult worship of a particularly lewd and orgiastic kind, which proved to be more influential than any other nature religion in the Near East. The principal deity acknowledged by the Canaanites was known as El, who was credited with leadership of the pantheon.

The identification of this God with El of Israel must probably also be understood as taking place only gradually during the military stage. The Canaanites they did not worshipped only one God, but they worshipped many, whom they called Baalim (a Plural word), and they believed that each piece of land had its own baal who helped it to produce good crops. The baal could be worshipped only on his own plot of land, and if a person moved to another district he/she was compelled to offer worship and gifts to the baal of the district to which he had moved. But with the arrival of the Israelites, it

was found that the Canaanites on the west bank were captured with a belief in a new God, Yahweh.

This continues to spread to the other parts as well, it was interesting to see that the Hebrew slaves fought not only for their existence or for their “religion” but for their identity. While achieving this, the victims were the native people of the land whose religion will surely be assimilated under this brand new religious practices and ideas. 4. 5. Cultural Confrontation: In the words of A.

R. Ceresko, concerning the biblical event of the conquest, it is visible that there is cultural confrontation during the conquest, when he said, “The opposition of Israel to Canaan was no mere ‘war of religion’ It was not simply one religion facing another. The conflict was cultural; it implied all the economic, social, political, and religious dimensions of culture. Another civilization faced the city-states.

That political conflict implied a clash of totally opposite conceptions of society, of clan egalitarianism versus a hierarchical establishment, of mutual justice against royal absolutism, of concern for the poor rather than the imperatives of production and the preservation of social stability. ”

Incidentally, there is an alarming cultural confrontation, which ignites during the entrance of the Israelites. This is also very common for the indigenous people as pointed out before, when religion can never be separated from their culture or vice versa. Therefore, if there is any transformation in religion, their culture cannot remain untouched. Interestingly, in the same manner it happens for the Canaanites, their occupations have been shifted,

their religion was under attacked these evidently signify that there can be demolition of existing cultural norms and practises.

5. Adivasi; Understanding the meaning of the term: The word adivasi derive from two Sanskrit words, Adi meaning original or primitive and vasi, meaning dweller or inhabitant. Therefore the word adivasi means the original inhabitants. Adivasis literally means aboriginal, original settler or first settler of the land. In the Indian constitution, they are classified as the Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Adivasis are the citizens of India, and they are exploited or treated badly by other communities.

They live in the forest and live by the forest. They are the forest people or vanavasis. They are economically, politically, and sexually exploited and their labour force is tapped by the dominant. Their habitat is the forest and they survive by the resources from the forests. They look for territorial integrity, but they are forcefully evacuated from their habitat in the name of development.

According to the census 2001, the Adivasis are 8. percent of the total population in India. About 85 percent of them live in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand and west Bengal. The Adivasis live in or around the forests and their life cycle moves around nature. They do not only depend on natural resources for their livelihood, but their culture, identity and autonomy are also based on it.

6. Adivasi; Their Plight: In ancient times, the Adivasis had ownership rights on natural resources and they judiciously used these resources for their survival. Consequently, the Adivasis were living with autonomy, peace and <https://assignbuster.com/problematize-the-exodus-liberation-settlement-motif-from-the-ativasi-perspective-essay/>

prosperity. The situation changed after the Aryan invasion and became worse during the British rule. On the one hand, the Aryans destroyed the Adivasi civilization, denied the indigenous identity and did not accept them as fellow human beings, and on the other the Britishers used violence on the Adivasis by grabbing their land, territory and resources and even named few of them as criminal.

This was continued even at the present time. The following are some of the plight that Adivasi experience

1. Land: Today, the Adivasi are continuously at unrest about landlessness, marginalisation, alienation of land and displacement of development, and also the state's avoidance to initiate implementation of policies (constitutional) to eradicate these issues.

Land is the mainstay of the Adivasis and more than 90% of them are dependent on agriculture and allied activities. Hence, land is the only tangible asset of the Adivasi community, and they are emotionally attached to it. But with the opening up of the Adivasi areas, their land becomes alienated. However, the process of the land alienated varies from state to state.

In certain areas, although the Adivasis are the official owners of the land, non Adivasi have become the virtual owners. Owing to the increasing pressure of population coupled with alienation of land, the size of land-holdings in tribal areas reduces in varying degrees from place to place.

2. Captured forests: The Government of India constantly strengthened its control over the forests by enacting numerous policies in the name of protection, preservation and conservation of forests and wildlife.

The people's access to forests and de-reservation of the reserved forests was completely ceased by the Forest Conservation Act 1980' and access to forests was also denied to the community by the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. After hue and cry, the Government introduced a new policy in 1988 which is called the ' National Forest Policy 1988'. It advocates the protection of rights of Adivasis and concessions to them. But it was seldom practised.

6. 3. Land Alienation: The Adivasis consider land as heritage. The Adivasi legends considered land as their mother and heritage. They fought against the British to protect their lands.

However, the Adivasis were alienated from their heritage by those so-called civilized masses who consider the land merely as property. The state of Jharkhand is one of the best examples to understand the Adivasis' land alienation. The non-Adivasis have used many tricks for acquiring lands possessed by Adivasis. The best way of buying Adivasi land is to marry an Adivasi girl and register the land in her name.

This trick was widely used by the non-Adivasis. Secondly many Adivasis surrendered their land to the money lenders after being trapped by them through loan. Besides, threatening, coercion and illegally prepared documents were also used for acquiring land. Authorizing the Deputy Commissioner for land transfer also caused huge loss o the Adivasis as many non-Adivasi officers justified land transfer to non-Adivasis.

In many cases, the court also defined the laws in favour of non-Adivasis. 6. 4.

Displacement: In the state of Jharkhand, 17, 10, 787 people were displaced while acquiring 24, 15, 698 acres of lands for setting up power plants, <https://assignbuster.com/problematize-the-exodus-liberation-settlement-motif-from-the-ativasi-perspective-essay/>

irrigation projects, mining companies, steel industries and other development projects in Jharkhand.

In every project, approximately 80 to 90 percent Adivasis rehabilitated half-heartedly and no one has any idea about the rest. The benefits of these development projects were highly enjoyed by the landlords, project officers, engineers, contractors, bureaucrats, politicians and outsiders and those who sacrificed everything for the sake of the “ development” are struggling compensation and jobs. The promises were not fulfilled and the jobs were given to outsiders. However, the forced land acquisitions are still going on across the country.

N. C. Saxena, member of National Adivosry Council pointed out that 22. 5 lakhs acres of Adivasi land in Jharkhand alone have been alienated from the people for the mega and minor projects of the government between 1960 and 1990.

Since 1960, as India stepped up its industrialization and allied activities, nearly 8. 5 million Adivasis have been displaced. ” Those people who lost their land migrated to the cities seeking for livelihood. The compensation promised by the government machinery never materialized. 6. 5.

Land-centre culture: The Adivasis had beautiful cultures, each tribe with its distinct traditions and way of life, but change in Adivasi culture came at an accelerated speed with invaders who rushed into in their habitat and brought in an alien education. Adivasi children do not study their own history, geography or culture, but are taught an alien history and culture which has little to do with their experience of day-to-day life. Their precious cultural

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heritage has all but disappeared despite a strong innate value system which Adivasis inherit from their communities. The habitat of the Adivasis has been repeatedly invaded and the cultural practices of the powerful newcomers imposed on them. The result is that it is difficult to safeguard their cultural identity; and their meaning system, their ethos, their rituals and cultural practices are slowly disappearing, their profound meaning lost forever.

The Adivasi community is experiencing a dialectic tension between what is offered by the modern world and their own value system.

6. 6. Land; the Adivasi Identity: For the Adivasi, land is connected to their identity. The loss of the land and the destruction of the Adivasi' environment is an affront to the identities, the loss of the spirituality and the self-determining existence. If the land is lost, the family, clan and village and the entire tribe's identity too will be lost.

According to the Adivasi culture, a person who is not deeply rooted in the land cannot become a good citizen.

6. 7. Religious: The government does not recognize the Adivasi religions; they are just categorized as the Hindus. During marriage, the Adivasi faced problems as they do not get official marriage certificates and their children are seen as illegitimate. The Adivasi religion is still considered as "animism".

Land is the basic economic power hub of the life of the Adivasis. Each family owns a small piece of land for its support and survival. According to some scholars agriculture operations and related occupations carry religious significance, which, in other communities, is not visible. Adivasis believe that land is the gift of God, hallowed and given to the ancestors, whom they

inherit as their personal property; there abide the spirits of their deceased ancestors; hence, it should never be used as a consumer utility. Thus keeping in mind the sacredness of the land, they never like to be displaced from it.

Land belongs not only to the living but also to the dead ancestors. Adivasis believe that God divided the time into different agricultural seasons; He taught them how to till the land, sow seeds and collect the produce. This religious belief, ingrained in their nature, keeps them from undertaking any non-agricultural occupations. They even resist anti-agricultural establishment of industries and fabrics, mega hydro dams and projects. Unfortunately, today the consequent ill effects of urbanization and globalization are inroad to the traditional economic system and organization. Jal (water), Jungle and Jameen (Land), once the traditional sources of livelihood, now seem to give way to modern means of sustenance.

7. Canaanite as the Adivasi: Canaan was a land of city states. There was no central government, but there were many cities, each with its own king. The cities were built to withstand siege for months at a time. These cities, too, could band together against a common enemy.

The religion of the Canaanites was an agricultural religion, with pronounced fertility motifs. They did not worshipped only one God, but they worshipped many, whom they called Baalim. The Canaanites were mostly farmers, settled lives in villages and towns. They were cultivating wheat, olives and grapes. The invasion of the Canaan by Israelite was a time of change, of migration, of destruction and turmoil - a dark age that ended 200 years later

with the emergence of nation-states like Israel. It marked the effective end of the history of the Canaanites.

Hence, looking from the above, one may observe from their cultural, agricultural, especially their closeness to the land and their manner of life, it may be correct to state that the Canaanite by virtue are very much the Adivasis during that time. Reflection and Conclusion: There is no denying the power of the exodus story was a foundational and liberative text. These readings affirm faith in a God who is involved in the lives of God's people. The Bible is used in a positive and liberationist way in the construction of meaning for religious communities.

Nonetheless, even for a text that appears to be liberationist, the construction of meaning must remain particular and not universal. For what is liberationist for one people may not be liberationist for another. For the Adivasis, the exodus story, especially the conquest, is not an appropriate model. For the Adivasi the obvious characters was to identify with the Canaanites—the people who already live in the Promised Land.

Robert Allen Warrior, in his book “ A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” as quoted by Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, finds the exodus story oppressive rather than liberative. In summing up this paper, the Israelite people were bondage slaved in Egypt; they were facing many difficulties through the hard works imposed by Egyptian. But YHWH heard their crying and response by raising Moses and Joshua to be the leaders and to lead the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt till they enter and settled in Canaan. When Israelites reached Canaan we could see there

are many effect to the Canaanites either in land, place, culture, language, religious belief, political, social life, etc.

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