

PROPHET EZEKIEL'S VISION: A HOPE FOR THE 'DRY BONES' IN INDIAN/ASIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

Spes non Confundit, "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). This has been a powerful teaching of the Church, drawn from the Scriptures, and it comes to the fore at a time when the world is witnessing the dark and painful realities of chaos, war, displacement, poverty, and loss of life. This reality can lead us to despair or induce passivity and slumber, causing us to give up. But the virtue of hope keeps us moving forward. It has the power to expect restoration and revival when we surrender to God. This paper presents hope through the prophet Ezekiel's vision in Babylon during the Jews' captivity. By presenting the grim reality of India/Asia, it argues that hope can still inspire and motivate us to bounce back for a fuller life through God's intervention and our effort.

Keywords: Dry Bones, Hope, Revival, Restoration, India

Introduction

The Jubilee Year with the theme, '*Pilgrims of Hope*,' inaugurated officially by late Pope Francis on 24th December, 2024 by the performance of the rite of the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's

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Basilica in the Vatican City, marks a great moment in the life of the Catholic Church dedicated for spiritual renewal, mercy, restoration and rekindling hope in Christ amid global uncertainties. The late Pontiff emphasised the Church's mission to bring hope to a world facing war, poverty, separation, displacement, and despair. As we move ahead as *Pilgrims of Hope*, we have the responsibility to be the channels of restoration and renewal. One such great figure was the prophet Ezekiel, who offered unrelenting hope to the people of Israel living in exile in Babylon. It was the most traumatic period in their life. Ezekiel proclaimed their revival through a weird vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ez. 37). Focusing on this vision, this paper argues that hope of restoration is possible for the 'dry bones' in any grim situation of the world, especially in the Asian/Indian context, by placing one's hope in God.

I. Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:1-14 describes a vision in which the hand of God takes Ezekiel to a valley full of dry, dead bones. The prophet is asked to preach to these bones as if they could hear. He is asked to prophesy to them that they would be filled with flesh again and breath would be given to them so that they live again. And that miraculously happens. It is a great message of restoration and hope for the people of Israel who were feeling hopeless in Babylon. The setting of the vision is expressed in v. 1: the Spirit of the Lord brings Ezekiel into the valley (or plain). Basically, the pericope is divided into two parts: in vv. 2-10, the vision proper where Ezekiel recounts what he sees and does; in vv. 11-14, the vision moves to its interpretation.¹ Zimmerli recognises the relationship between vv. 1-10 and 11-14 are like an image and an interpretation.²

It has to be kept in mind that Ezekiel's transportation was in a prophetic vision, not in reality.³ The valley-plain, which was traditionally considered a place where judgment had to be suffered, now becomes the place where Yahweh triumphs over death. It serves as an impressive symbol, marking a great turning point in Ezekiel's

¹ Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel*, EBC, eds., Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 848.

² Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2:25-48*, eds. Paul D. Hanson and Leonard Jay Greenspoon, trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 257.

³ Greenberg Moshe, *Ezekiel 21-37*, AB 22A (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983), 742.

message.⁴ It is clear that this passage is set in the exilic period. The people's view of their condition in v.11 confirms that claim.⁵ The vision symbolises the 'dead' Israel, showing a situation where death thrives and there is no hope for life. Israel's political and religious condition was 'dry', indicating a hopeless and irreparable situation. Yet, in this scenario, the prophet is asked to offer hope to the people of renewal through the breath or life of God. The focus of this vision is therefore, not death but life, not despair but hope. This vision pictures the Lord restoring Israel to be His people once again, bubbling with joy in their ancestral land.

The relevance of Ezekiel's vision indicating the disastrous exilic period that Israel faced in their national life is found and can be applied to the present scenario of our country and for any country for that matter, where people are displaced, having bonded labourers and have slumbered into poverty, who live a hopeless life, resigned to an unfortunate situation that they cannot get over with. It is hoped that this paper will inspire people who are dejected to hope for a revival in their lives or a national awakening, as with the Israelites. This study can be applied to instil hope in any hopeless situation in life, at the personal level and, more so, at the community and national levels.

II. The Concept of Hope

Hope is one of the major and powerful themes of Ezekiel's vision. In the natural realm, hope is an attitude of mind whereby a person feels that s/he has grounds, reasonably good grounds, for desiring some future possession or achievement. It suggests not an idle optimism but a state of mind that is the result of a realistic consideration of the available possibilities. Hope in this sense can be called a 'desire.'⁶ One longs for something that one wants to possess or attain. But one especially yearns and craves those things one considers good for oneself, and it is precisely because they are considered good and lovable that one looks forward to the full enjoyment of them at some future date. Hope is much needed in times of crisis. The world has faced crises at different times in history. The present world is also in a crisis of various kinds.

⁴ Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, trans. Cosslett Quin (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1970), 507.

⁵ Hals, *Ezekiel: The Forms of the Old Testament Literature*, vol. 19, eds. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 270.

⁶ Michael Griffin, "A Theology of Hope," *Spiritual Life* 14.3 (1968): 136-151.

Nevertheless, the situation of despondency, despair, helplessness and powerlessness is not a total disaster but a new avenue for a genuine hope.⁷ This is exactly the message that the prophet Ezekiel hoped would comfort the exiles facing a crisis in Babylon. The people longed for their land in Jerusalem and its lost temple. The prophets powerfully kept their hopes and desires alive for being restored to their land.

It is to be kept in mind that hope is more than mere wishful thinking because, in wishful thinking, we are not really prepared to act. We simply dream of something pleasant happening to us. An example of this is daydreaming. Hope differs from mere wishful thinking in that, in hope, a person decides to act, to work toward the accomplishment of some goal. Hope then we can take it to be dynamic, not static.⁸ In Soskice's view, hope is not a transient, optimistic feeling but a readiness to act, a commitment, a passionate practicality, and a passion that leads to action.⁹ This meant that the Judeans in exile lived according to the precepts of God while they were still in Babylon. The exile was also understood to be a time of purification for the people of Israel and a hope for a new Israel that would emerge as it returned to their land of Canaan.

However, people were being influenced by two great enemies of hope: presumption and despair.¹⁰ Presumption is a confidence and trust in the ability to realise fully one's own spiritual life without the support of others, and this is nothing less than a delusion. The presumptuous say to themselves that they simply cannot fail, even if they do not exert themselves or if they frequently act against sound moral principles. This is nothing but living in a make-believe world and closing one's eyes to the full seriousness and significance of the moral and spiritual life.¹¹ This is evident in the life of the Israelites before they were taken captive by Babylon. Israel had always lived with hope in the promises of God made to the patriarchs, but as time passed by, they slipped into presumption and finally had to face the consequences of captivity.

⁷ J. Susaimanickam, "Message of Hope for a World in Crisis: Biblical Perspective," in *Message of Hope for a World in Crisis: Biblical Perspectives*, eds., Joy P. Kakkanattu and Laurence Culas (Bengaluru: TPI, 2018), 21.

⁸ Griffin, "A Theology of Hope," 139.

⁹ Janet M. Soskice, "The God of Hope," *Doctrine and Life* 44.4, (1994): 195-207.

¹⁰ Susaimanickam, "Message of Hope," 17-38.

¹¹ Soskice, "The God of Hope," 197.

More than presumption, despair is a fatal enemy of hope. Despair gets into our life when we make a decision to give up completely on our striving for something, which could even be to lead a righteous life. In a hopeless situation, we say to ourselves that there is no use trying any further, or that we will not go on fighting any longer, or we admit that we are willing to pay the price because we are afraid that victory cannot be achieved.¹² Despair is like disarming before the inevitable and surrendering to defeat. When we are filled with hope, we keep trying to win even when we do not know the day or time of victory, since we do not see it in the present. It is believed that the three emotions of expectation, that is, anguish, fear and hope, in some measure anticipate the future. Anguish and fear seem to paralyse us. Hope alone is liberating. Hope frees us, without denying the other two, to relativise the burdens we experience, to bear them with patience. By freeing us from the tyranny of remembered diminutions, hope empowers us to move forward in the journey of life and to shape the future.¹³

III. Hope in the Bible

The theme of hope permeates the entire Bible. Christian hope is based on God and God alone (Ps 146:3, 5), who is constantly active throughout the whole universe, at work in human history, and continues to be involved in a torn and shattered world. As a result, our hope depends upon our belief in God. Hope in the Bible is born due to the Covenant of God, which presumes promises which in turn are eventually to be fulfilled.

a. Old Testament

In the OT, hope is closely related to the character of God and is the confident expectation of Yahweh's protection and blessing, as a fulfilment of the covenant promises.¹⁴ According to Bultmann, in the OT usage, hope, as the expectation of what is good, is closely connected with confidence, and the expectation means at the same time being eagerly waiting as well as seeking refuge.¹⁵ Right from the beginning pages of Genesis when humankind failed there has been a hope of salvation. Kakkanattu sees hope not only for humankind but

¹² Griffin, "A Theology of Hope," 140.

¹³ Joseph P. McClain, "Hope: The Disarming of Diminishments," *Chicago Studies* 33.2, (1994), 124-131.

¹⁴ Frederick Gast, "Hope in the Bible," *Spiritual Life* 14.3 (1968), 152-157.

¹⁵ Rudolf Bultmann and Karl H. Rengstorf, *Hope: Bible Key Words* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963), 9.

also for the entire ecology. In the story of the flood, it took one single person, Noah, to find favour in God's eyes, who was like a ray of hope in a dead-end situation.¹⁶ Not only was humankind saved, but also nature. In the person of Noah, we see the powerful role of a human being in bringing hope for a better future.

There has been tremendous hope of the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and successive patriarchs. The people of Israel saw some of the promises fulfilled in their history. When the kings failed there was always a hope of a better successor. When they were finally exiled for their unfaithfulness to the covenant, the prophets offered new hope. Ezekiel, by the vision of the dry bones, preached tremendous hope to the exiles, and this is relevant even today. It keeps instilling hope in the people who have slumbered into despair due to various tragic situations in life. Moreover, the prophets preached a new hope which remained obscure even to them.¹⁷ In order to express it, they took the past wonderful deeds of Yahweh on behalf of his people and spoke of these as multiplied for the future. They spoke of a new Paradise, a new Exodus, a new Covenant, and a new Davidic reign that would be definitive, purged of the failings of the past.

b. New Testament

The hope of Israel was composed of an expectation for future goods, both material and spiritual, temporal and eternal. Jesus would demand a still more radical purification of Israel's hopes. If Israel were to recognise in Jesus the fulfilment of her hopes, she would have to renounce the material aspects of those hopes, because the coming of Jesus announced that the kingdom of God was at hand. But this kingdom turned out to be quite other than what they had anticipated. Their hopes had to be reoriented. Jesus' presence among people was the fulfilment of the hope for God-with-us so often expressed by the prophets. He was the new temple which had superseded the old.¹⁸ Jesus' time was also a time when people faced crises, like poverty, oppression and also a crisis of violence. Jesus had a fundamental option for the poor. This is evident in his teachings on the kingdom. He became a model of hope for both the socially and religiously oppressed, and finally, he gave the hope of a non-violent way of life

¹⁶ Joy P. Kakkanattu, "Message of Hope to a World in Crisis: Reflections based on Pentateuch," In *Message of Hope for a World in Crisis: Biblical Perspectives*, eds., Joy P. Kakkanattu and Laurence Culas (Bengaluru: TPI, 2018), 40.

¹⁷ Gast, "Hope in the Bible," 156.

¹⁸ Gast, "Hope in the Bible," 156.

by his death on the cross.¹⁹ The hope that violence can be nullified by a dialogue of love and reconciliation was the message preached by the early Church and by the Church today.

IV. Hope for the 'Dry Bones' of Asian/Indian Context

a. *The Poor*

From the first day of his papacy, our beloved late Pope Francis had rung out clearly the call to be *for* the poor and to *be* poor after the heart of Jesus. The government's portrayal of the situation of the Indian people is far from reality. In 2025, India stands at number 102 out of 123 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI).²⁰ India's hunger level is serious. Millions of Indians are starving, daily. Thus, nearly two million children under five starve every year in India - one every 15 seconds - the highest number anywhere in the world. 44% of children under the age of 5 are underweight, while 72% of infants and 52% of married women have anaemia. The cry of the poor in India tells the story of unjust structuralism that remains unchallenged and perpetuated.²¹

The recent report of Oxfam gives shocking updates. Within the period of the pandemic, the billionaires have made unimaginable, record-breaking fortunes all over the world, including India. Therefore, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened all the more.²² This shows the stark imbalance in the economy of our country. Poverty is deepest among members of scheduled castes and tribes in rural areas. A major cause of poverty among India's rural people, both individuals and communities, is a lack of access to productive assets and financial resources.

High levels of illiteracy, inadequate health care and extremely limited access to social services are common. The Public Distribution System (PDS) evolved as a system to manage scarcity and to distribute food grains at affordable prices. Over the years, PDS has become an important tool in the government's food security management policy. The Public Distribution System is, however, in a woeful condition. The

¹⁹ George Panthalanickal, "Mythical Culture of Violence and the Gospel's Counter-Culture: Matthew as Gospel of True Hope to the World in Crisis," in *Message of Hope for a World in Crisis: Biblical Perspectives*, eds., Joy P. Kakkanattu and Laurence Culas (Bengaluru: TPI, 2018), 160.

²⁰ <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html>, accessed on 20/10/2025.

²¹ Kakkanattu, "Biblical Theology and Dialogue with the Poor," 343.

²² Himanshu, "India: Extreme Inequality in Numbers," <https://www.oxfam.org/en/india-extreme-inequality-numbers>, accessed on 18-10-2025.

1997 BPL survey lost its validity in 2002, and the last BPL survey was undertaken in the State of Telangana in 2002. Although the survey was conducted at the national level and comprised all the States and Union Territories, the 2002 BPL list has not yet been published although the rules stipulate that the BPL survey has to be conducted every five years.²³

Another setback to the poverty eradication programme in the region has been the erroneous identification of the poor, with corruption playing a big role in the faulty distribution of BPL cards. People who are Above the Poverty Line (APL) such as government schoolteachers, owners of big houses, middle-class traders, big farmers and contractors have obtained BPL cards through manipulation. No one has doubted the utility of the PDS in the supply of food grains to the poor of the country at affordable rates. Procurement and distribution of food grains is a huge task, but the whole system is degraded by corruption. There are more leakages and maladministration. Hence benefits to the poor are low. Inefficiency and corruption have made the PDS weak at several levels. The system lacks transparency, accountability, monitoring and enforcement.²⁴ The poor are the powerless people, like the Israelites in the grip of the powerful Babylonians.

The God who created every one of us, who heard the cry of Abel after his brother murdered him, had also heard the cry of the despondent people in Babylonian exile. And now he hears the cry of the poor. Scripture constantly speaks of God acting on behalf of the poor. Against the despair and darkness of the millions of Indians, nationwide, the Pope and the Church breathe hope by leading us 'back to the basics of the Bible, to reflect upon what Scripture and the Catholic Tradition say about the poor. Deriving strength from Ps 9:19: "the hope of the poor will not perish forever," the Pope invites us to be beacons of hope in the face of injustice, suffering, and uncertainties of life.²⁵

God is the One who 'hears their cry' and comes to their aid through human agency and therefore you are called to be your brother-sister's keeper; you are called to be a prophet of hope as he called Prophet

²³ Ramdas Rupavath, *Democracy of the Oppressed: Adivasi Poverty and Hunger* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 4.

²⁴ Rupavath, *Democracy of the Oppressed*, 5.

²⁵ Francis, "The Hope of the Poor shall not Perish," <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/2015-01-18-2015-01-2025>.

Ezekiel. Before all else, the poor need God and his love, made visible by the 'saints next door,' people who by the simplicity of their lives express clearly the power of Christian love. The poor find solace in religion. Certainly, the poor come to us as well because we give them food, but what they really need is more than a warm meal or a sandwich. The poor need our hands to be lifted, our hearts to feel the warmth of affection, and our presence to overcome loneliness. They need our voice to make their cries heard by governments and authorities.

b. The Children

One of the groups of the dry bones of India that needs liberation is children. As per the 2011 census report, about 82.4 lakhs children - 43.53 lakhs full-time and 38.75 lakhs part-time, in the 5-to-14-year age group in India are involved in child labour. A 2015 report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) put the number of child workers in India aged 5 to 17 at 5.7 million, out of 168 million globally. However, the UNICEF estimates that there are 28 million child labourers in India. More than half of India's child workers are employed in agriculture, and others in *pan-bidi* making, construction, domestic work, spinning and weaving, more than a quarter in manufacturing, embroidering clothes, weaving carpets or making matchsticks. Children also work in restaurants, shops, hotels, and as domestic workers. Many working children in India's big cities come from migrant families, who leave their villages in search of better opportunities.²⁶ Children are most neglected by their families and society. Due to their poverty, they are robbed of their childhood and the opportunity for literacy. Sexual abuse in the family and society, trafficking for forced labour and prostitution, and denial of education to children are the key issues before the law today.

No satisfactory action from the government is seen. Children's rights are not respected and protected. This is shameful for our country.²⁷ The law enforcement agencies are often insensitive and create problems for the victimised children. Children need hope for a bright future and we can, through the power of the word of God as inspired by the message of the vision, give them that hope. Engaging with NGOs, especially COPE (Children's Organisation for Participation and Empowerment), can keep children's hope alive and

²⁶ Joseph A. Gathia, "Small Hands in Slavery," *Indian Current* 28.34 (2016), 27-30.

²⁷ N. Lalitha, "The Legal Rights of Children," *Integral Liberation* 2.4 (2007), 331-333.

foster a better India for the future.²⁸ The programme, like the Children's Parliaments (CPs) at present, is quite successful and can have a great impact on our country towards a better, more dignified life.

c. Dalit Women

The dry bones of India certainly include Dalits who do not enjoy equal human dignity with others, and are still treated as 'untouchables.' Can the Biblical world make a difference in their life? If the Biblical world activates the Dalit world, then the faith vision of the new world order is projected with the possibilities of moving from the present state of enslavement towards salvific fullness.²⁹

Dalits are some of the most exploited and disrespected people in India. They, Dalit women in particular, face discrimination and atrocities to the highest level. Dalit women constitute 47.96% of the total Dalit population and 16.3% of India's total population. So, one out of every twelve Indians is a Dalit woman.³⁰

The power play of patriarchy in Indian society is visible in every aspect of life. Ranging from female foeticide, discrimination against the girl child, dowry-related deaths, rapes, and murders, are only a glimpse of the gender-based violence in the country. The nexus of patriarchy and caste, intensified with poverty, makes the situation of a Dalit woman extremely vulnerable and risky. In India, the higher caste people and sometimes the Dalit men try to establish their authority and humiliate the community by subjecting their women to indecent and inhuman treatment, including sexual assault, parading naked, using filthy language, etc. Dalit women are threatened by rape as part of collective violence by the higher castes.³¹ In the case of a non-Dalit woman rape case, it is a sign of patriarchal domination, but in the case of a Dalit woman, it is a sign of caste domination, and a way of humiliating Dalits and Dalit women.

In the case of caste-related violence, rape is seen as a way of retaliating against Dalit assertion and controlling it. In some cases, after the caste-related violence has occurred, the upper caste men come to attack the lower caste men, and when the latter run away from

²⁸ Joseph Rathinam, "Children's Parliament," *Integral Liberation* 2.4 (2007), 327-330.

²⁹ A. Maria Arul Raja, "The Dalits and the Bible," *VJTR* 73.4 (2009), 241-244.

³⁰ Antony J. Baptist, *Unsung Melodies from Margins* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2014), 67.

³¹ Anuja, "Dalit Women: Culture of Violence, Silence and Impunity," *Women's Link* 22.3 (2016): 3-9.

the house, the former ones rape their women as a sign of revenge. In some cases, because of the power the upper caste men possess, they claim that they have a right to rape the Dalit women.³²

The Devadasi system of temple prostitution is the most extreme form of exploitation of the Dalit women. Dalit girl children are forced into prostitution. The majority of the cases of violence against Dalit women are not registered. The lack of law enforcement leaves many Dalit women unable to approach the legal system to seek compensation. Women are often unaware of the laws, and because of their ignorance, they are exploited by their opponents, the police and the judiciary system.³³ Every person can be a beacon of hope (provided by Ezekiel) in their misery. Training and enabling Dalit (and Tribal) women to become aware of their hidden and dormant potential and energies will revolutionise families, communities, and the country. Women's panchayats, political fronts and parties, as well as parliaments, can unleash women's power and pave the way for political alternatives and people-oriented governments.³⁴ This can transform the face of our country.

d. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally Displaced Persons (like the Israelites displaced from their own land and displaced in Babylon) are the people who have been forced to leave their homes but not their country. Millions of people are uprooted from their homes or places of habitual residence each year in the context of conflict, violence, development projects, natural disasters and climate change. The challenges faced by them are that they live under threat of physical attack and sexual or gender-based violence, and run the risk of being separated from their family members. They are often deprived of adequate shelter, food, health services and even the right to vote in the Assembly Elections. They often lose their property, land, or access to livelihoods. In India, nearly 5 million people were displaced in 2019 – the highest number worldwide to date – according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID 2020).³⁵ The data of 2024 shows India had a total of 5,95,000 new internal displacements in 2023. Historically, the

³² Baptist, *Unsung Melodies from Margins*, 74.

³³ Anuja, "Dalit Women: Culture of Violence, Silence and Impunity," 7.

³⁴ A. X. J. Bosco, "Dalits and Tribals," *Integral Liberation* 2.4 (2007): 268-276.

³⁵ <https://www.drishtiiias.com/.../daily-news-analysis/internal-displacement-2>, accessed on 18/10/2025.

highest number of IDPs caused by ethnic violence in the state of Manipur was 67,000.³⁶

By and large, the disaster IDPs are well looked after. Because of their frequency, many agencies have developed skills for their long-term rehabilitation beginning with trauma, community support, housing and other needs. There are certainly cases of neglect. For example, a study by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, concluded that Muslims and Dalits were neglected after the Gujarat earthquake (2001) and Dalits after the Tsunami (2004) in Tamil Nadu.³⁷

The most neglected group is that of the development-induced IDPs. Their already big number is growing with globalisation. Records on them are scarce because both the state and industry are interested in hiding the facts. The middle class that benefits from globalisation is not interested in the fate of those who pay the price. For the first time, on 26th September 2013, a historic bill, "The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act" (LARR) was adopted by India to deal with the internal displacement due to development. This law was a progressive Act, though not the best. It had its limitations too.³⁸ It particularly focused on industrial and infrastructure development projects, but the dam-displacement policies remain questionable and debatable. In this regard, the tribal people suffer the most. It has been found that the state governments and the Central government paid little attention to the displaced dam-affected people.³⁹

The attitude of the government has been calloused. The authorities have paid only the cash compensation and left the tribals to the mercy of God. The government of India did not implement the Act properly. Once the people lose their land and are displaced, they are deprived of their sources of living. They become homeless, jobless, rendering them poorer and alienating them from their traditional occupations, culture and their social life. They lead a hopeless life, and so, the call

³⁶ Vajiram & Ravi report based on the Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2024. vajiramandravi.com accessed on 20/10/25.

³⁷ Walter Fernandes, "Internally Displaced Persons: Challenge to Human Dignity," *VJTR* 71.c1 (2007): 43-51.

³⁸ Tajamul Maqbool, *Diverse Forms of Conflict-Induced Displacements and United Nations Guiding Principles: A Study of India* (Beau Basin: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019), 35.

³⁹ Sudesh Kumar and Anindya J. Mishra, "Dam Displacement and Land Acquisition Impact on Tribal People of India: An Indigenous Perspective," *Social Action* 69.3 (2019), 260-270.

of the Church to be beacons of hope should sound loud into our ears to take action.

Conclusion

As long as we believe in the God who is faithful to his promises and a God of the poor, afflicted and the oppressed, there is hope for a brighter future as affirmed in the Scripture. God needs the cooperation of human beings to be his messengers of hope, as was the prophet Ezekiel. The theme ' *Pilgrims of Hope*' is yet another effort to instill hope in the present situations of despair and darkness. The situations of despair in India, as discussed in this article, are in some way or the other similar to those faced by the exiles in Babylon, to whom Ezekiel was the prophet of hope for the restoration of their personal dignity and the dignity of their community as a people of God.

The experiences of different kinds of people of India and as well as of Asia, are those of despondency. Some have reached the point of death. In the midst of all the misery and death-like situation, the message from Ezekiel's vision of the Dry Bones inspires and instills hope of a revival and the restoration of life, that everything is not yet over and that God will have the final say. Though the situation of India's "dry bones" is grim, many Indians are hopeful in their faith for a better future. They believe that the God who acted in the restoration of the Israelites because they were incapable of self-deliverance, and who reversed the hopeless condition of the Babylonian exiles through the imagery of the 'Dry Bones,' will also change the fate of the present and future India and its people through you and me.