

# Reinterpretation of the Story of Lea and Rahel and Its Contribution to Christian Education

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**Reinterpretation of the Story of Lea and Rahel and Its Contribution to Christian Education**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to describe and to analyze a Biblical text, the story of Leah and. In order to find and to answer the statement of the qualitative research methods was used. For the text analysis, the researcher used investigative feminist hermeneutic approach. In collecting data the techniques of: observation, interviews, and documentation studies were applied. In analyzing data, the techniques performed were reducing data, displaying data and verifying data. Data validation was carried out by credibility checking through triangulation, peer discussion and member checking and then transferability checking, dependability and confirmability checking. The study revealed that: Based on the reinterpretation with hermeneutic feminist investigation of the biblical text, the story of Leah and Rachel, women were abused by the unfair patriarchal culture. It was concluded that the reinterpretation of the biblical text from women perspective was required for the freedom and transformation, so that it could be contribution for transformative christian education.

**Key words:** Reinterpretation, The Story of Leah and Rachel, Transformative Christian Education, Patriarchal Culture

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the order of life in modern Indonesian society, the practice of patriarchal culture still exists and is developing. This can be seen in the relationship between men and women, where women are often subordinated to men, discriminated against, or marginalized. It is very unfortunate that this hegemony, legitimized from the interpretations of the Bible, which in

Christianity in Bible interpretation, androcentric biases in Christianity, can be overcome by using feminist interpretive approaches. It cannot be denied that the Bible is a product of patriarchal culture, so it is not surprising that the stories and rules that exist in the Bible are patriarchal. For this reason, reinterpretation of Bible texts becomes absolutely important from the perspective of women so that there will be no discriminatory treatment against women that is based on the interpretation of the Bible.

Feminist hermeneutics is itself an effort of liberation but at the same time a transformation of the biblical texts of those who struggle with the Bible from a spiritual, emotional and intellectual intelligence. One of the interesting stories in the Bible is the story of Leah and Rachel. The story of Leah and Rachel will be understood according to the investigative feminist hermeneutic method, which uses questions and critical attitudes to find out what is not written and the logical possibilities that are the reasons for the emergence of a text (Abram in Wangkai, et al., 2015). This is due to an "attempt" to silence women's voices in this text. Even though in this story there are humans who are abused and humiliated, humans who are God's creation, namely human women. This also means that there is abuse of human values. The concept of patriarchal culture, which places women as second class citizens, is philosophically unknown in Minahasa culture. The Minahasa community is known for its life as an egalitarian and democratic society.

Egalitarianism and democracy, which are the identity of the Minahasa people, are eroded by the concept of patriarchy, which is not the culture of the Minahasa people. It is true that in Minahasa, women are not prevented from taking leadership in the public sphere but the fact that, centered on men, and male dominated, is a fact that is in sight. Indications of the erosion of the egalitarian identity of the Minahasa people and from democracy to patriarchy that discriminate against the existence of women also occurred in Kaneyan Village. For this reason, an effort is needed to criticize the patriarchal culture that is built by the community for the sake of reforming the structure of society in order to create and experience shalom in life. This is the task of the church. This is of course a challenge in church services, including the Evangelical Church in Minahasa. The GMIM Efrata Kaneyan congregation, which is an integral part of the GMIM, is in this responsibility, upholding human values, including those that harass the existence of women.

Efforts to restore the egalitarian and democratic life of the Minahasa people can be made through the Christian education process. In connection with this research, the approach model to be used is the transformation approach, as stated by Daniel Schipani. For this reason, transformative Christian education that emphasizes aspects of social transformation is believed to be able to pioneer and even restore an egalitarian and democratic Minahasa culture, which was eroded by a patriarchal culture that was unfair, discriminatory, and oppressive to women in the GMIM "Efrata" Kaneyan congregation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Patriarchal Cultural**

struggle for liberation and transformation from a confining patriarchal culture is an effort to humanize from injustice and oppression. Patriarchy comes from the word patriarchate, which means a structure that places the role of men as the sole, central and everything ruler. Men have a role as the main control in society while women have little influence or can be said to have no rights in general areas of society, be it economic, social, political, psychological or even the institution of marriage (Romansyah, 2016).

Rosemary Radford Ruether (1966), describes 6 (six) characteristics of a patriarchal society: first; lineage following father, second; the husband has power over the wife including the right to beat and abuse, even selling the wife in slavery, third; boys are preferred over girls, fourth; the role of women is generally limited to household skills, fifth; as a wife, the woman's body,

sexuality and reproductive capacity are owned by her husband, sixth; the right to inherit as widows and daughters is severely restricted.

Patriarchal culture also colors Bible texts. The Bible lists the Jewish family tree in a more male-centered way. Wijaya, Rahayu (2019), explains that patriarchal culture strongly influences the thinking of Israeli society in behaving and treating women. In the Jewish family, patriarchy implies that the father, who is the head of the family is addressed as "ba'al", the master, who has priority over the household, is responsible for supporting and protecting his wife and children. For descent and inheritance that is recognized is based on the lineage of the father and not the mother. These strong patriarchal ties bind families together as in Psalm 128: 3, "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your house, your children are like olive shoots around your table" (King and Stager, 2012).

Observing the description above, it can be concluded that patriarchal culture places men in a "superior" position, while women in an "inferior" position. As a social system, patriarchal culture has been internalized in people's lives, both in the past, such as in the life of the Jewish community, and in the present, by following the flow of accelerated changes. If this entity exists in the life of society, there will be domination of men and submission of women. This cannot be tolerated or sustained, because the ones who will be harmed and experience injustice are women who are human beings created by Allah.

### **The Nature of Christian Education**

In order to improve the quality of human life, education is needed. Education itself is a process to humanize humans. Richardus Pranoto, (in Djokopranoto, 2011) argues that education is a process of elevating young people to their height as humans and cultivating themselves. In other words, education is a maturation process, namely the ability to direct oneself independently and responsibly. This means that education is something fundamental for humans. Paulo Freire, a figure of Brazilian education, (in Rantung, 2017) believes that with public education, people will be able to free themselves from oppression. Education has a function; educational, social and spiritual. These three functions will complement each other to help individuals and groups attain enlightenment and perfect knowledge of truth. According to Freire (1993), the education of the oppressed must be humanizing and transformative and permanent so that the goal of education for Fraire is humanization. Carter V. Good (in Djumberansjah Indar, 1994). Seeing that education is a process of developing individual skills in societal attitudes and behavior; a social process in which a person is influenced by an organized environment, such as a home or school so that he can achieve self-development and social skills.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method. To study the biblical text, the hermeneutic approach was used, the hermeneutic approach model chosen was investigative feminist hermeneutics, by the originator Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (in Marsiana, 2013), called "hermeneutics of suspicion and critical analysis", but because of "suspicion" in Bahasa Indonesia, with a negative viewpoint, in several workshops it was proposed and agreed to use the word "investigation", which is the core of the theory. After conducting research on the biblical text on the story of Lea and Rahel, with investigative feminist hermeneutics, the researcher will then carry out research to get a general and specific picture of the Kaneyan village and the Efrata Kaneyan GMIM Congregation, of the patriarchal culture that exists and occurs there. The method to be used in this field research is a qualitative method, with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach by Cresswell (2012) is divided into two forms, namely: realist ethnography and critical ethnography. Critical ethnography is research that responds to ongoing social issues, for example: gender issues, inequality of rights, status

quo, and others. This research uses a critical ethnographic approach, which is carried out by observing, interviewing informants in the GMIM "Efrata" Kaneyan congregation about their behavior patterns, their beliefs related to existing cultural backgrounds.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Reinterpretation of Bible Texts of the Story of Lea and Rachel, for liberation and transformation through investigative feminist hermeneutics in the GMIM Efrata Kaneyan**

Congregation. a very sad and heartbreaking choice. Incidents of violence against women are the result of an unjust patriarchal culture. For this reason, there are several things that can be used as a foundation for liberation and transformation of patriarchal culture:

1) Bible Foundation: Trinity God and the Chosen People

God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit is God over the field of human history. This is one such thing when He "intervened and intervened" in the story of the Israelite ancestral family in the story of Leah and Rachel. In the deviation of God's will by humans, God's plan (God's saving work) continues regardless of human deviation and rebellion. This was seen when God saw and paid attention to the suffering of Leah and Rachel, which they delivered in "silence" to the Lord God. That when humans are in weakness can no longer speak, then the Holy Spirit will reveal it. The Lord heard the quiet voices of Leah and Rachel.

This also applies in the field of human life, until now God has never left humans, in whatever struggles humans experience, including when someone is hurt, persecuted, marginalized.

2) Psychological Foundation: The Intimacy of Marriage

In married life, the marriage that God wants is a marriage that is monogamous. This deviation from God's will (the occurrence of polygamy) will result in humans being hurt, and this will not be allowed by Allah. Intimacy in marriage can only occur when there is an interpersonal relationship, namely husband and wife based on a sincere love, not habit or culture. In the story of Leah and Rachel, the family building of Jacob and Leah was built out of culture and not out of love. This is what then causes pain and heartache, which is a manifestation of "violence" in the family and society. The Lord Allah does not want violence of any kind. Is it verbal, physical, psychological violence committed against women or to men, husbands to wives, parents to children (in the family).

3) Philosophical Foundations: Ideals of One Time

On the existing culture we must be critical. If the existing culture is not in accordance with God's will, then as a believer / church must be brave to reject the culture or social construction that makes people oppressed, including community violence against community members through culture or in the name of culture. In short, the imposition of violence in human relations with each other is something that God hates. It is understood that as humans we are created by God to be equal and equal. What in the philosophy of the Minahasa people are known as "ideals of waya esa", we are all one / equal / the same.

4) Theological Foundations: Egalitarian Theology and Liberation Theology from Patriarchal Culture

Since creation there has been no subordination between men and women. This must be kept, because this is what God wants. Until now, the subordination of men and women is still visible, even in the practice of church and community life, such as the social facts that occurred in the GMIM "Efrata" Kaneyan congregation, which are very heartbreaking. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary to reconstruct the identity of the Minahasa tou in the spirit of presenting the Kingdom of God to the world, which is egalitarian and democratic

which frees women from the oppressive social construction of society and makes them "mute".

5) Socio-Cultural Foundation: Democratization of education and economy

Home (read: family) is the first place for family members to get affection, love and happiness from all family members. In the home / family education begins. This is in line with the basis and purpose of Christian education according to Deuteronomy 6: 4-9. For this reason, the house must be the safest place of refuge for family members. Whose opinions from all family members are heard and discussed together. Nothing is more special or higher in rank and all love each other as one family. All family members (father, mother, children, both male / female) are equally responsible for the continuity and welfare of family life. It is in the family that democratic education begins, with parents as the first educators. With egalitarian education in the family, no one will be subordinated, including women. So that women can present themselves not only as an additional breadwinner but together with men / husbands who are responsible for the welfare of family life.

The story of Leah and Rachel teaches women to be able to voice their conscience. No matter how hard the problems faced by women, they must have the courage to speak out, including pouring out their hearts to God. Pouring your heart's content to God, family life can be manifested in family fellowships that worship together. A family full of love and warmth will make each family member open to each other through dialogical worship. In dialogical worship there will be sharing of experiences based on the Bible.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Reinterpretation of Lea and Rachel's Story Through Feminist Hermeneutics Investigations for Transformation and Liberation in the Kaneyan GMIM "Efrata" Congregation**

Male and female humans are the image of the Creator. God created man, woman and man in an equal position. However, in its development, at a different time, period and place, the position of women was placed under men, or not on the same level as men. In the Bible there are various cases of violence experienced by women, but they often go unnoticed and from the church's preaching. The Bible written from the perspective of an androcentric patriarchal society in ancient Israel resulted in the validation of the status of women as inferior to men. Injustice and violence against women often occur because of the strong patriarchal culture that grips humans. A patriarchal culture is even used as an excuse to legitimize the occurrence of injustice and violence against women. For this reason, a reinterpretation of the biblical text is absolutely necessary, because in essence the contents of the Bible's message are a source for transformation and liberation. One of the narratives in the Bible that tells of violence against women is the story of Leah and Rachel. Leah and Rahel became victims of injustice and violence because of the patriarchal culture at that time. The violence experienced by Lea and Rahel occurred in their closest environment, namely at their father's house, "bet'ab". The word "bet'ab" is also often translated as "family". This means that the injustice and violence that happened to Leah and Rachel occurred in the family environment. For Leah, it also happened at her husband's house. Why is the story of Leah and Rachel important to reinterpret? This happens because this story is usually only understood as a story about the formation of the 12 tribes of Israel. Whereas there is the sad story of two women, Lea and Rahel, whose humanity is humiliated and humiliated, and by the culture of the people they are forced to be "silent". By reinterpreting the story of Leah and Rachel through an investigative feminist hermeneutic approach, it was found that for the injustice and violence that occurred in the lives of Leah and Rachel, in the midst of "silence and silence" they voiced to God, and God heard their hearts screams and paid attention to their sorrows. Even God lifted them from adversity. For Leah,

from the lineage of Judah, her son was born the Deliverer who is truly Jesus Christ, while Rachel was disgraced as a woman with dignity by the birth of her children. In addition, the story of Leah and Rachel teaches a lesson about the deviation of God's will (polygamous marriage), where this deviation gives birth to oppression, injustice and violence. That the family should be the safest place for every member of the family, upon which love and affection are built.

### **CONCLUSION**

reinterpretation of the biblical text, the story of Leah and Rachel, begins in the "awareness" of an attempt to mute the voices of oppressed women in this text. However, after being reinterpreted with an investigative feminist hermeneutic approach, this text provides inspiration for liberation and transformation.

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