

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND
PRACTICES AMONG JAIN COMMUNITY A STUDY BASED
ON WAYANAD DISTRICT**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology*

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DECLARATION

I, **Ribna T** hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG JAIN COMMUNITY: A STUDY BASED ON WAYANAD DISTRICT**” is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the University of Kerala during the year 2022-2024 towards partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Sociology Degree Examination. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG JAIN COMMUNITY: A STUDY BASED ON WAYANAD DISTRICT” is a record of genuine work done by RIBNA T, a fourth semester, Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that is hereby approved for submission.

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ABSTRACT

Jainism, an Indian origin belief system, is considered a micro-minority in India, with its followers adhering to a distinct set of rules and regulations. India being a very diverse society with multiple religions of varying orientations, the sustenance and safeguarding of ritual and religious purity or identity of any one category can of course be a serious challenge for any religious or cultural group. This is particularly so for a minority cultural or religious group, as religious and cultural assimilation and acculturation is a widespread reality everywhere. How far the Jains in India have coexisted with other religious and cultural groups, and how far they have succumbed themselves to the processes of acculturation or assimilation are all pertinent issues to be probed into. While there are numerous historical studies on Jainism, there is a lack of sociological research particularly concerning the continuity and changes in religious rituals and practices among Jains in Kerala. This study addressed this gap by exploring these aspects from a sociological perspective, using a qualitative research strategy. The research made use of the design of micro-ethnography and derived the data using unstructured interviews and non-participant observation methods, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within this community

Wayanad district, which has a comparatively higher concentration of Jains than other districts in Kerala, serves as the focus of this study. This research explored the continuity and changes in the religious rituals and practices of the Jain community in Wayanad, particularly in the context of modernization and related socio-cultural transformations.

. The findings reveal that, like all belief systems, Jainism has undergone significant alterations influenced by the dominant religions, demands of modern life, such as education and employment. Despite these changes, there remains a segment of the Jain community that continues to uphold traditional religious beliefs, rituals and practices. This study highlights the continuity and alterations within the life and culture of Jain community in Wayanad.

Keywords: Jainism, religious rituals, practices, continuity, change, modernization.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

India stands as a vibrant mosaic of religions, where Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism coexist harmoniously. Among these, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent. Religion is ubiquitous and universal, understood as a set of institutionalized beliefs and practices that address the ultimate meaning of life. In “The Interpretation of Cultures,” Geertz presents religion as a cultural system. He argues that rituals are symbolic actions that provide meaning to the lives of individuals and communities. Changes in rituals can reflect broader changes in society. (Geertz 1973)

Jainism, originating in the 6th century BCE, is a religion grounded in the principle of non-violence (Boradia, 1909). Jainism, in particular, stands out for its unwavering commitment to nonviolence and its distinctive way of life, influencing dietary habits, travel practices, attire, and social relationships etc. Despite this, some still perceive Jainism as a subset of Hindu tradition, although it is fundamentally distinct. The roots of Jainism stretch far back in time, predating even significant historical landmarks like the era of Gautama Buddha and the composition of the Vedas. Its origins can be traced to ancient civilizations, gaining prominence during the time of the tirthankaras, notably the final tirthankara, Vardhamana Mahavira. Central to Jainism is the veneration of noble souls, epitomizing the characteristic reverence found in primitive religions (Jain, 1958)

Often labeled an ecological religion or religious ecology, Jainism revolves around three core principles: Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Anekantavada (non-absolutism). Ahimsa, in particular, stands as the supreme virtue, embodying the ethos of “live and let live” at the heart of Jain philosophy. The practice of Jain principles not only fosters psycho-spiritual transformation but also encourages eco-friendly behaviors, aligning with the broader environmental consciousness. Jainism, one of the world’s oldest religions, originated in Northern India and later spread southward. But its precise beginnings are unclear. It is a nontheistic religion, not advocating belief in a creator god but recognizing higher beings (devas) who are mortal. Jainism emphasizes karma as a guiding force for one’s present life and future reincarnations. Individuals are responsible for attaining salvation, release from the cycle of rebirth and death

(samsara), by adhering to a strict ethical and spiritual code of conduct based on the Five Vows articulated in the Tattvartha Sutra: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy), and Aparigraha (non-attachment). These vows guide one's thoughts and actions, as it is believed that one's thoughts shape behavior. Philosophical and religious belief systems emerged in ancient India can be divided into two categories: Astika ("there exists"), accepting the Vedas as the highest spiritual authority, and Nastika ("there does not exist"), rejecting the Vedas and of the Hindu priests. The three Nastika schools that developed were Charvaka, Buddhism, and Jainism. Jain belief holds that Mahavira was not the Jainism's founder but one of many enlightened sages who realized the true nature of reality and the soul. Jainism divides into two primary sects, the Digambara ("sky-clad") and the Svetambara ("white-clad"). The Digambara, more orthodox sect, reject the Svetambara scriptures, believe only men can attain liberation, and practice nakedness to emulate Mahavira and his initial disciples. In contrast, the Svetambara saints wear white seamless clothing, claim to have retained most of Mahavira's original scriptures, and recognize that women can also attain liberation (Mehta, 2018)

Jainism diverges from the authority of the Vedas, focusing instead on the Triratnas / Ratnatraya or Three Jewels: Right knowledge, Right faith, and Right conduct, alongside the principle of Ahimsa or non-violence. This principle profoundly impacted Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy and holds particular relevance in today's world marked by tension and terrorism. Mahavira, the central figure of Jainism, emphasized the existence of a supernatural energy as the highest manifestation of human potential, teaching that life's purpose is to attain Salvation, liberating the soul from worldly bondage. A pivotal aspect of Mahavira's teachings is the paramount importance of Ahimsa, advocating non-violence and abstaining from causing harm to any living being, no matter how small. Jains hold the belief that all objects possess life, animate or inanimate. Severe penances and rigorous bodily discipline are considered essential for achieving Salvation, with Mahavira promoting the virtue of fasting. Jainism also stood in opposition to the caste system and Brahmin dominance. Worship of the 24 Thirthankaras is a fundamental aspect of Jainism, while its simple religious rituals, devoid of unnecessary ceremonies and sacrifices, focusing on moral principles, appealed to the common people. Furthermore, Jain literature played a significant role in encouraging vernacular languages, enriching Indian culture.

This research aims to investigate the persistence and transformation of religious rituals and practices within the Jain community. By adopting a qualitative research design, the study utilizes

a micro-ethnographic approach to conduct a detailed analysis of various dimensions of Jain rituals and practices. The focus is specifically on life cycle rituals, dietary customs, ecological awareness, religious organization and other cultural elements that define the Jain way of life. Data collection was carried out through non-participant observation and unstructured interviews, which were guided by a carefully designed interview guide. This qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain a deep, understanding of the cultural dimensions of Jainism, capturing the rich, intricate details of the participants' lived experiences and perspectives. Through this method, the study provides a comprehensive exploration of how these rituals and practices have been maintained, adapted, or transformed over time, reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics within the Jain community.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The expansion of Jainism into Kerala commenced in the 8th century AD, with Jains being the pioneering group to migrate to Wayanad and other parts of Kerala. Wayanad District was established on November 1st, 1980, marking its inception as the 12th district of Kerala, encompassing Mananthavady, Sulthan Bathery, and Vythiri Taluks. Situated in the northeastern part of Kerala. Originally inhabited by Adivasis, Wayanad saw subsequent waves of migration, with Jains being among the earliest migrants arriving from Karnataka in the 13th century. Agriculture serves as the primary occupation in the district, with pepper and paddy being the principal crops cultivated. Additionally, coffee and tea are major plantation crops in the region. The Jain community plays a pivotal role in the district's economy, having laid the groundwork for present-day Wayanad. Their socio-economic life stands apart from other communities, with Jains actively participating in social life, integrating positive aspects from other communities and offering guiding principles to others (Padmakumar, , 2006)

The Kannada-speaking Jain community in Wayanad, referred to as Gowdas, primarily adhered to the Digambara sect. Key Jain centers in Kerala included Wayanad, Kallil near Perumbavoor, and Palakkad. Tradition holds that Jains migrated to Panamaram along the banks of the Kabani River, from where they dispersed to various parts of Wayanad. The prevalence of Kannada place names in Wayanad posits its historical connection with Karnataka.

Presently, significant Jain settlements in Wayanad are found in Mananthavady, Panamaram, Kaniyambetta, Kalpetta, Varadur, and Anchukunnu. While Jains outside of Kerala steadfastly

adhere to Jain principles, there are noticeable shifts in religious rituals and practices within the community. Understanding these changes within the context of the Wayanad district offers valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of Jainism in contemporary society.

The 2011 Indian Census indicates that Kerala is home to approximately 4,500 Jains, with a significant population residing in the cities of Cochin and Calicut, as well as in the Wayanad district. Several factors contributed to the decline of Jainism in Kerala. The secluded lifestyle of Jain monks, coupled with dietary practices emphasizing vegetarianism, hindered widespread acceptance within the Kerala community. The growth of Christianity and Islam in Kerala further marginalized Jainism, diverting societal attention and diminishing its significance.

This study focuses on the Jain community in Kerala, particularly in Wayanad district, where traditions persist amidst the challenges of modernization and cultural influence. As part of modernization and westernization, there have been many changes in the way of life and beliefs systems. And also, with the advent of secularism, especially as an integral part of Indian economy, polity, science and culture, major changes have taken place on the Indian religious scenario. No matter what religion you look at, you will find many alterations and additions. And many are seen leading a secular life as well. This study focuses on how Jainism, a micro-minority religion, is holding up in such a situation and the changes and continuities that this faith has undergone. The term social change includes changes in attitudes or beliefs, in so far as they sustain institutions and change with them. Social change refers to any significant alteration over time in behavior patterns, cultural values, practices and norms. Change in social values, rituals, practices institutions, property relations, economic pursuits, personnel and role distribution may be cited as examples of social change in modern society.

1.2.1 SOCIAL CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Social change refers to the transformations that occur in human interactions and interrelations and living conditions. Change is an intrinsic law of nature, signifying that what exists today will evolve into something different tomorrow. The transformation of Indian society under the impact of modernization has led to significant changes in religious practices and rituals, reflecting a shift from traditional to more rationalized forms of worship” (Singh, 1973,)The social structure is in a state of constant flux. The process of modernization has resulted in a transformation of the religious

consciousness in India, leading to changes in both the practice and understanding of rituals” (Madan, 1987, p. 56).

Continuity, on the other hand, refers to the persistent or consistent existence of cultural elements in a society over time. It involves maintaining traditions and social structures that provide stability and order to a society. Every cultural system experiences both change and continuity, as seen in religious rituals and practices. Religious rituals encompasses a wide range of activities such as feasts, festivals, intercessions with deities, marriage and funeral ceremonies, music, art, meditation, initiation rites, sacrifice, and service, which are integral aspects of culture. While religion can be highly personal, it is also a social institution that is organized and integrated around basic social needs and values. Social scientists recognize religion as a cultural universal found in all social groups, with religious beliefs being specific ideas held by members of a religious community as true.

Religious rituals are prescribed behaviors or practices, rituals expected of group members. Emile Durkheim defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things,” highlighting how rituals bring order, comfort, and organization through shared symbols and behaviors.(Durkheim, 1995).. Rituals are central to any cultural systems, having the power to effect meaningful transformation through patterned interactions in daily life. These rituals can be prescribed by community traditions, societal norms, or cultural practices, involving gestures, words, symbols, signs, language, actions, and objects performed in designated settings. Rituals and beliefs meet both psychological and social needs common to all individuals, serving as fundamental pillars of any society and culture. They symbolize a community’s ideas and often support traditional social hierarchies and authorities by following historical actions and practices. Religious practice include various observances, such as worship services, wearing religious attire, praying, displaying religious objects, adhering to dietary rules, and proselytizing.

These religious and cultural systems may have evolved or incorporated additions due to modernization. Modernization is a process of social change emphasizing rational, secular, and scientific approaches to life and society. It represents a total transformation from traditional society to one characterized by advanced technology, rationality and associated social organization, as seen in economically prosperous and politically stable nations. According to Moor, modernization as the revolutionary change transforming traditional societies into those resembling

technologically advanced and socially organized Western nations. Smelser posits modernization as a complex set of changes affecting nearly every part of society as it industrializes, involving continuous shifts in economy, politics, education, traditions, and religion.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

By exploring into the religious rituals and practices of the Jain community in Wayanad district, this study aims to fill a gap in existing knowledge. Ritual is considered as a special routine or ceremony that have a symbolic meaning. According to Pierre Bourdieu practices are entities existing in society which we perform routinely, collectively and repeatedly (Bourdieu, 1977). Historical studies related to Jainism exist, but a sociological perspective is lacking, making this research unique and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of Jain traditions. On a social level, the significance is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to disclose the lifestyle of the Jain community in Kerala, an area least explored in existing literature. Secondly, the study addresses the crucial theme of continuity and change in religious practices. Understanding how these customs have evolved over time provides valuable insights into cultural and religious dynamics, aiding in the preservation of the Jain community's cultural heritage.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature is an essential component of research that involves examining existing scholarly work to provide context and support for a study. The review of literature serves multiple purposes: it frames the research problem, identifies gaps or inconsistencies in the existing body of knowledge, and helps the researcher situate their study within the broader academic discourse. Creswell and Poth emphasize that a well-conducted literature review not only demonstrates the researcher's understanding of the topic but also establishes the significance of their research question or problem within the field of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27). In conducting this study, several secondary sources have been reviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and to identify gaps in existing research. These sources include a range of scholarly articles, books, and research studies that offer insights into the relevant concepts and theories.

The Religions of the world differ In their beliefs, faiths, and theories regarding good and evil, happiness and misery, and account with different degrees of satisfaction for the existence of the evil and the misery (Warren, 1930).

Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) is a collection of essays that has become one of the most influential texts in cultural anthropology. Geertz asserts that culture is a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, through which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. Geertz's work has been pivotal in the development of symbolic and interpretive anthropology, inspiring researchers to focus on understanding the meanings people ascribe to their actions and the symbols that shape their social realities. Overall, *The Interpretation of Cultures* offers a rich framework for exploring the complexity of cultural phenomena and has influenced not only anthropology but also disciplines such as sociology, cultural studies, and even literary criticism (Geertz ,1973)

In Jainisam, there are 24 thirthankaras, or prophets; the first prophet was Rishbhdeva, and after him, there are 23 other phrophets. The last prophet, or Jina, was Lord Mahavira, who got nirvana; they considered Vardhamana Mahavira, the last thirthankara, as the founder of this religion. (Boradia, 1909)

Those who followed the path of Mahavira's personality and teachings gave up eating meat and fish and adhered to a vegetarian diet. In this system of thought, to kill or injure any living being is a sin and must always be avoided. According to Jainism desires and greed are the chief causes of the prevalent sufferings and chaos in the world. Jainism is divided into the digambara and svetambara sects. The paintings and tradition indicate that the digambara sect was more prevalent in Kerala than the other two sects. The bulk of Jains in the Wayanad district are digambara. (Jain, 1958)

Anand Singh's work on ecological consciousness in Jainism presents a comprehensive examination of how Jain philosophy and cosmology integrate environmental ethics and interconnectedness of all life forms. This article focuses on Jainism's fundamental principle of ahimsa (non-violence) and its implications for ecological sustainability, emphasizing the deep respect for all forms of life, including plants and microorganisms. This holistic view shows that every element, animate or inanimate, has intrinsic value and is interdependent, forming a foundation for ecological ethics. Jainism's emphasis on non violence , respect for all life, and living in harmony with nature contrasts sharply with modern life driven by technological advancements and consumerism. Anand Singh's exploration of Jain ecological consciousness is thorough and insightful, that advocate for a sustainable and compassionate worldview.

The article "Can Jainism Survive In the 21st Century?" by Sulekh Chand Jain and Yashwant K. Malaiya, published in 2011 and updated in 2017, examines the existential challenges faced by the Jain population in contemporary times. According to them Outside India, significant presence of Jains has risen only during the last century. The first major emigration of Jains took place to Kenya and Uganda and later to USA, Canada and U.K. Jainism has a historical presence across India, with significant populations in states like Maharashtra (1.32%), Rajasthan (1.15%), Madhya Pradesh (0.91%), Gujarat (1.03%), and Karnataka (0.74%). No state has a Jain population exceeding 2%, and only three districts have over 4% Jains. Historically, the Jain population in India has seen fluctuations. Several factors contribute to the decline of the Jain population: The 2011 Census data revealed a concerning gender imbalance in the Jain community. This imbalance threatens the social fabric and continuity of the Jain community. Nowadays modern Jain couples typically have two or fewer children, insufficient for maintaining population levels. The differences between Jainism and Hinduism are increasingly blurred, both in India and overseas.

In Suresh J's the Jain remnants scattered across various locations in South Travancore, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Palakkad, and Wayanad are meticulously documented. The author highlights the transformation of ancient Jain shrines into prominent Hindu temples, exemplified by the Kudal Manikyam temple in Iringalikuda and the Ganavathy Vattom in Sulthan Batherry, which were once significant centers of Jainism in Kerala.

Dr Suresh J establishes a connection between Jainism and Nāga worship in Kerala, elucidating how Jain influence gave rise to significant religious beliefs. The emergence of Kavus, or sacred groves, as places of worship is also attributed to the influence of Jainism across the entire Kerala region.

The literature by Jenee Peter provides a fascinating historical account of the Jain settlements in Kerala. Peter traces the migration of Jains from the banks of Kabani River to Wayanad and highlights the gradual spread of their influence across the region. Early references to Jainism in Kerala appear in the Sangam works like Akananuru and Purananuru. The Silapathikaram by Ilango Adikal, dating back to the 11th century, provides the earliest textual reference specific to Kerala. Inscriptions from neighboring Tamil regions also show the active presence of Jainism in the region. Numerous relics, including images of tirthankaras, sasana devatas, yakshas, and yakshinis, have been discovered. Among the twenty-four tirthankaras, Mahavira's images are predominant, often worshipped either as a Hindu deity or under the same name.

Kerala's Jain community comprises mainly of two sects: Digambara and Svetambara. The Digambara sect was historically more prevalent, particularly in districts like Wayanad. The Svetambara presence also noted in more recent constructions by Gujarati Jain communities in Kozhikode and Mattancherry. Inscriptions provide crucial evidence of Jainism's presence and influence in Kerala region. Notable inscriptions include, Kinaloor Inscription, dated to 894 CE during the reign of Chera Perumal king Vijayaraga, mentions the temple's founding in 705 CE. Pulpalli Inscription, Suggests the flourishing of Jainism in Wayanad for at least two centuries (Peter: 2019).

Jains advocate for a harmonious relationship with nature, guided by the principle of "Parsparopgrahojivanam" which means to 'Live and Let Live'. Through the teachings of Mahavira, Jains accentuate the equal potential for progress among all beings, stressing the importance of preserving the integrity of the natural world for the sustenance of life (Mehta, 2010).

According to the interview with Sunil Kumar C.L., the temple's caretaker, the Jainamedu Jain Temple (Palakkad) was constructed in the 15th century by three Jain brothers from Kanakagiri, Karnataka. The Jainamedu Jain Temple is dedicated to Chandraprabha Tirthankara, the 12th Tirthankara. Rituals performed include jalabhishekam (water ablution), palabhishekam (milk ablution), and gandhabhishekam (sandalwood ablution). The Yakshi-Yakshas, including Jwalamalini and Padmavathi, are also worshipped with kumkumarchana (sprinkling with kumkum). Special offerings like panchamrutha abhishekam (ablution with five substances) and navakalasa abhishekam (special ablution with nine pots) are performed on specific occasions, reflecting the rich ritualistic traditions maintained at the temple. The Jainamedu Jain Temple stands as a historical and religious landmark that provides valuable insights into the spread of Jainism in Kerala (Jaseera, 2019)

Jain temples and sculptures are among India's architectural marvels, showcasing the rich cultural and religious heritage of Jainism. Jain temples, often situated on wooded hilltops with scenic views, are celebrated for their intricate designs and grand sculptures. Jain temple worship shares similarities with Hindu practices but is distinct in its focus on Jain saints. Images, typically of white marble symbolizing purity, depict Jain Tirthankaras. Rituals involve cleansing and adorning these images with saffron, sandalwood paste, and offerings of rice, meticulously washed and arranged in a swastika pattern. Jain laypeople engage in daily prayers, contemplation, and non-violence, reflecting their deep spiritual commitments. Despite being a minority religion, Jainism has significantly influenced Indian culture and maintained a wealthy and devout community. Jain monks lead ascetic lives, avoiding harm to any living being. Practices include sweeping paths to avoid killing insects and wearing mouth cloths to prevent inhaling them. (Parrinder, 1964)

The book Religion and Society In India examines the intricate relationship between religion and social change in India, highlighting how religion has historically influenced and been influenced by societal transformations. The text argues that, although economic development is critical for addressing issues like poverty and ill-health, the interplay between religion and societal values is equally significant for sustainable development.

Religions often emerge in response to the intellectual and ethical needs of society, offering explanations for human experiences and prescribing codes of conduct. For instance, Hinduism,

like other major religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam, has developed doctrines that provide a worldview and moral guidelines for its followers.

Religion's role in society extends beyond personal belief to shaping social institutions and norms. However, during periods of rapid social change, traditional religious frameworks may become inadequate, prompting the emergence of new religious movements or adaptations within existing ones.

Historically, religions have gone through cycles of radical change, establishment, stability, and eventual decline or transformation. This pattern is evident in major world religions, which initially challenge existing norms but later become established authorities. Over time, as societal conditions change, these religions face the challenge of either adapting to new realities or becoming impediments to progress(Shah, 1981).

Geetha Mehta's 2019 article on Jainism explores the religion's deep-seated principles of non-violence and environmental concern, highlighting its relevance to contemporary ecological issues.

Jainism asserts on non-violence (Ahimsa) towards all living beings and the environment. This principle extends to minimal harm in everyday actions, illustrated through the story of six travelers and their different approaches to a fruit-laden tree, with the most virtuous opting to pick up fallen fruits rather than harm the tree. Jain teachings advocate for a lifestyle that minimizes environmental impact through: helping attitude, detachment, and universal friendship, restraint and minimal use of natural resources, carefulness in all activities, daily prayers for universal welfare, satisfaction and toleranc, a non-violent way of life. Mahavira's teachings stress the interconnectedness of all life forms, encapsulated in the doctrine of "Parsparopgrahojivanam," which means all life is bound by mutual support. This principle parallels modern ecological concepts of interdependence and symbiosis, promoting a "live and let live" philosophy. Jainism proposes that non-violence can solve global conflicts and social injustices, emphasizing individual responsibility towards all creatures. This principle influenced figures like Mahatma Gandhi and underpins movements like the Anuvrata Movement, advocating for global disarmament and peaceful coexistence. Jainism's principle of Aparigraha encourages restraint in material consumption, viewing excessive desire and greed as forms of violence against the environment (Mehtha, 2019).

B.R. Dugar's work "Jainism, Gandhi, and Ahimsa" (2005) focuses on the profound influence of Jainism on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, particularly emphasizing the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence). Dugar highlights that within a socio-cultural framework, Ahimsa demands conduct free from any exploitation, which is often driven by the passions of anger, pride, greed, and deceit. Gandhi's admiration for Jainism is evident in his writings, where he notes that no other religion has explained the principle of non-violence as deeply and systematically as Jainism. This principle became the cornerstone of Gandhi's method of political activism, known as Satyagraha, which is grounded in truth and non-violence.

Gandhi's understanding of Ahimsa extended to recognizing two forms of violence: direct and indirect. Direct violence is physical and visible, while indirect violence, or structural violence, is embedded in socio-economic systems and manifests through various forms of exploitation. Gandhi's sensitivity to structural violence led him to identify numerous ways society perpetuates exploitation, such as overwork, inhumane working conditions, denial of basic needs and rights, and gender injustice. He asserted that eliminating both forms of violence was essential to establishing a non-violent world order.

The Malabar Manual (1887) by William Logan is a comprehensive historical and geographical account of the Malabar region of Kerala, India. Logan's work is often cited as an important source for understanding the socio-economic and cultural history of Malabar. In the Malabar Manual, Logan provides a detailed description of Wayanad, a district known for its hilly terrain, dense forests, and diverse communities. Logan examines the social and economic life of Wayanad, noting its significant indigenous population, which includes various tribal communities. One of the unique aspects of Logan's work is his account of the Jain community in Wayanad. He notes that the Jains were among the earliest settlers in the region, having migrated from the north.

Jainism in Kerala by . Padmakumar (2006) is a comprehensive exploration of the history, evolution, and spread of Jainism in Kerala, with a particular focus on the region of Wayanad.

Evolution and Spread of Jainism in Kerala., Padmakumar traces the origins of Jainism in Kerala to the early centuries of the Common Era, highlighting its spread from the northern parts of India. He meticulously examines the historical contexts that facilitated the entry and establishment of Jainism in Kerala, such as trade routes, migration patterns, and cultural exchanges. The author also explores the influence of Jain monks and scholars who traveled to Kerala, contributing to the

propagation of Jain teachings and practices. Dr. Padmakumar's work is a valuable resource for understanding the historical development of Jainism in Kerala, particularly in Wayanad.

Wayanad Rekhakal by O.K. Johny provides a picture of the Jain community in Wayanad. Johny, a notable journalist, documentary filmmaker, and film critic, draws from his journalistic background in this work. The book serves as a rich repository of information on Wayanad, covering its history from prehistoric times to the present. It covers various topics, including prehistoric culture, the Sangam age, Jain cultural artifacts, Muslim influences, and the colonial era. Additionally, it explores local myths, legends, and the tribal socio-cultural life, making it a valuable resource on Wayanad.

The Influence of Jainism in South India, particularly in Wayanad, Kerala, is well-documented in various historical and cultural studies. According to Kumar (2005), Jainism began spreading in South India around the 8th century A.D., reaching its peak between the 11th and mid-13th centuries. This period marked significant socio-economic transformations in the region, influenced by Jain principles and practices.

Kumar (2005) highlights the profound social changes initiated by Jainism, such as the transition from nomadic to settled agriculture. The Jains, known for their strict vegetarianism and eco-friendly practices, initially avoided intensive farming methods. They are credited with introducing advanced agricultural practices in Wayanad, including paddy cultivation and the growth of pepper and coffee. The architectural legacy of Jainism in South India is notable. Jain temple architecture in Wayanad, as described by Kumar (2005), reflects influences from the Vijayanagara, Hoysala, and Ganga dynasties. This is evident in structures such as the Bathery Jain temple, which exemplifies Jain architectural excellence with its stone construction and absence of wooden elements. William Logan's observations on the architectural influence of Jain temples on later Hindu temples further corroborate these findings. Kumar (2005), also emphasizes Wayanad's role as a center of Jain learning and literature. The Chamarajarsagar temple inscription is cited as evidence of Jain intellectual and cultural contributions. The region's Jain temples and their Kannada-derived names, such as Kidangad Basti (now Bathery), indicate the historical and cultural imprint of the Jain community in Wayanad.

Despite constituting a small percentage of the population, Jains have held various public offices, demonstrating their successful integration and societal contributions (Kumar, 2005).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides a foundation for understanding the continuity and change within Jainism. It guides the study by grounding it in established theories and facilitating the analysis of how traditional practices are adapting to contemporary influences. The research problem focuses on the changes and continuity in Jain rituals and practices amidst modern influences and interactions with other religions etc.

Yogendra Singh's "Modernization of Indian Tradition" (1973) is a seminal work that examines the complexities of societal change in India, particularly focusing on how traditional structures and values are transformed under the influence of modernization. Singh addresses the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity, highlighting how these elements are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist in a dynamic and evolving manner.

Singh argues that modernization in India is a multi-dimensional process that involves changes in social structure, cultural norms, and values, and it cannot be understood merely as a linear or homogenizing process. He challenges the simplistic dichotomy between tradition and modernity, suggesting instead that Indian society experiences a unique form of modernization that incorporates traditional elements. This synthesis results in a "modernization of tradition," where traditional values are reinterpreted and adapted to fit contemporary contexts (Singh, 1973).

The book is structured around several key themes. One of the central themes is the differentiation of the Indian social system, which Singh explains through changes in caste dynamics, family structures, and the emergence of new social classes. He discusses how the caste system, while seemingly rigid, has undergone significant transformations, particularly with the rise of new occupational opportunities and the spread of education. These changes have led to a more fluid and flexible caste system, which Singh refers to as the "modernization of caste" (Singh, 1973).

Singh also focuses on the role of education in the modernization process. He argues that education serves as a catalyst for change by promoting new values, aspirations, and social mobility. However, he acknowledges that the educational system itself is influenced by traditional values, thus creating a complex interplay between modernity and tradition. This reflects Singh's broader

thesis that modernization in India does not entail the abandonment of tradition but rather its transformation and adaptation (Singh, 1973).

Additionally, Singh examines the impact of political modernization, particularly in the context of India's democratic framework. He posits that the political system in India, characterized by a democratic structure and secular constitution, plays a crucial role in shaping the modernization process. Singh discusses how political institutions and processes are influenced by traditional values, leading to a unique blend of modern political structures and traditional social norms (Singh, 1973).

T. N. Madan's "Religion In India" (1987) is a comprehensive exploration of the diverse religious landscape of India, provide understanding of how religion permeates various aspects of Indian society. Madan's work is a critical analysis of the complex interplay between religion, culture, and society in India, making a significant contribution to the field of sociology and religious studies.

Madan's book is grounded in the argument that religion in India cannot be understood merely as a set of beliefs or rituals but must be viewed as a fundamental social institution that shapes and is shaped by the cultural, social, and political contexts of the country. He emphasizes the role of religion in everyday life and how it influences social norms, values, and behaviors (Madan, 1987). Madan's approach challenges the secularization thesis, which posits that modernization inevitably leads to a decline in religious influence. Instead, he argues that in the Indian context, religion continues to be a powerful force, deeply embedded in the social fabric.

One of the key themes of Madan's work is the pluralistic nature of religion in India. He meticulously examines the diversity of religious traditions in the country, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Madan highlights how each of these religions has distinct beliefs, practices, and social structures, yet they coexist within a shared social space. He discusses the syncretic practices and mutual influences among these religions, which have resulted in a unique religious pluralism that characterizes Indian society (Madan, 1987).

Madan also explores the concept of "lived religion," focusing on how religion is practiced and experienced in everyday life. He delves into the rituals, festivals, and other religious practices that are integral to the social life of individuals and communities. This perspective emphasizes that religion in India is not just about formal doctrines or theological debates but about the lived

experiences of people and how these experiences shape and are shaped by religious beliefs (Madan, 1987). Madan's work also engages with the concept of secularism in India, exploring its historical development and contemporary relevance. He argues that the Indian model of secularism is distinct from the Western model, as it does not seek to separate religion from the public sphere but rather aims to ensure equal respect for all religions. This form of "positive secularism" recognizes the centrality of religion in Indian life while striving to maintain a pluralistic and inclusive society (Madan, 1987).

In conclusion, "Religion in India" provides a detailed and insightful analysis of the religious dynamics in India, emphasizing the importance of understanding religion as a lived and socially embedded phenomenon. Madan's work challenges simplistic narratives about religion and modernization, offering a nuanced perspective on the complex and evolving role of religion in Indian society. He emphasizes the role of religion in everyday life and how it influences social norms, values, and behaviors (Madan, 1987). Madan's approach challenges the secularization thesis, which posits that modernization inevitably leads to a decline in religious influence. Instead, he argues that in the Indian context, religion continues to be a powerful force, deeply embedded in the social fabric.

The article explores the responses of cultural anthropologists and sociologists of religion to liturgical reforms, particularly focusing on critiques by notable scholars like Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, and David Martin. It highlights the tension between traditional rituals and modern adaptations, illustrating the divergent perspectives on the role and function of rituals in religious practices.

Mary Douglas offers a more historically nuanced critique of liturgical changes. Her work, particularly in *Natural Symbols* (1970), discusses how ritual serves to maintain social structures and continuity. Douglas's analysis aligns with the first of the two major approaches to the study of ritual discussed in the article, which sees ritual primarily as a mechanism for maintaining social cohesion and resisting change. This approach is rooted in the work of W. Robertson Smith, who studied Semitic sacrifice, and has been further developed by scholars like Turner and Douglas. (Catherine M, 1989).

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), offers a profound examination of how social reality is constructed through human

interaction. This influential text provides a foundational framework for understanding the processes through which individuals and societies create and maintain their perceived realities.

At the heart of Berger and Luckmann's theory is the notion that reality is socially constructed. They argue that what we perceive as reality is not an objective truth but a product of social processes and interactions. The authors introduce the concept of "social construction," where reality is shaped by societal norms, language, and institutions. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), this construction process occurs through three key stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization

Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasize that institutions play a crucial role in the social construction of reality. Institutions, such as education, religion, and law, are viewed as products of social interactions that become established norms and structures over time. These institutions not only reflect but also shape the social reality of individuals by providing frameworks within which people understand and interpret their experiences. Their theory challenges the traditional notion of objective reality, highlighting Instead how subjective interpretations and social interactions contribute to the formation of perceived realities.

Each theory offers a perspective on how Jainism is influenced by modernity and interactions with other religions. They help in addressing the research questions related to the continuity and transformation of Jain practices. The theories align with the study's objectives by providing a structured approach to analyzing changes in life cycle rituals, food practices, ecological practices and other aspects of Jainism in response to modernization and external influences. The framework guides the study by offering theoretical perspectives to analyze data. It will guide the analysis by applying theoretical insights to interpret the findings and understand the dynamics of Jain practices.

By employing these theoretical perspectives, the research framework offers a comprehensive basis for analyzing the dynamics of religious rituals and practices in the Jain community. The selected theories not only provide insights into the factors influencing continuity and change but also help to articulate the interplay between cultural adaptation and social construction in shaping religious practices.

2.3 RESEARCH GAP

Despite the rich history and profound philosophical underpinnings of Jainism, there has been a noticeable lack of in-depth studies specifically focusing on the continuity and alterations in Jain rituals and practices, particularly within localized contexts. Existing literature on Jainism tends to emphasize its doctrinal aspects, historical evolution, and ethical principles, but there remains a gap when it comes to examining how these religious tenets are lived out and expressed in everyday rituals and practices, especially in modern times.

Understanding these changes and continuities is essential for several reasons. First, it offers insights into the dynamic nature of Jainism, which, like all religions, is not static but continually evolving in response to both internal and external forces. These forces may include globalization, technological advancements, migration, economic shifts, and interactions with other religious and cultural communities. By studying how Jain rituals have adapted to these changes, we can gain a better understanding of the ways in which religious practices serve as a means of preserving cultural identity while also allowing for flexibility in an ever-changing world.

By focusing on the Jain community in Wayanad district, this study will not only contribute to the broader understanding of Jainism but will also offer a more localized perspective on how religious practices are negotiated within specific cultural contexts.

Further research in this area is essential to explore how Jains adapt their rituals and practices while staying true to their core beliefs, which could provide a deeper understanding of cultural resilience and identity maintenance among micro-minority communities.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 TITLE: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG JAIN COMMUNITY: A STUDY BASED ON WAYANAD DISTRICT

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

General research question:

How have religious rituals and practices among the Jains in Wayanad District evolved over time, and what elements have remained consistent?

Specific research question:

- What is the concept of God in Jainism as understood and practiced by the Jain community?
- What are the changes and continuities in lifecycle rituals and practices among the Jain community?
- Are they opting conversion to other religion?
- What changes have occurred in the food habits of the Jain community, and what factors have influenced these changes?
- What are the ecological practices observed within the Jain community, and how do these practices align with Jain principles?
- What is the role of religious organizations in shaping and maintaining the cultural and religious practices of the Jain community?

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research follows a qualitative approach. This method involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from a specific group, in this case, the Jain community. Willing(2001) says that “Qualitative research is concerned with meaning in context. It involves the interpretation of data. Qualitative research acknowledges a subjective element in the research process. References to creativity and subjectivity can easily invoke romantic notions of artistic endeavor and intuitive insight, which, in turn, are often contrasted with notions of scientific rigors and objectivity”.

Qualitative research, with its focus on obtaining in- depth insights from a smaller sample size, allows for flexibility

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Micro ethnography allows for a focused examination of specific aspects within the broader context of religious rituals and practices, making it suitable for a more indepth exploration within limited time frame. Conducting a comprehensive ethnography for an undergraduate project or master's dissertation can be challenging due to the extensive time investment usually required. Ethnographic research often entails prolonged periods immersed in a specific organization, community, or group setting. However, it may be feasible to conduct a more condensed form, known as micro ethnography. Macro ethnography attempts to describe the entire way of life of a group in contrast to micro ethnography that focuses on particular aspects at particular points in the larger setting, group or institution. Despite these differences they both share the overarching concern for everyday community life from the perspectives of participants (Berg 2001: 136).

This approach enables a detailed analysis of the continuity and change in religious rituals and practices within a manageable scope, ensuring depth and precision in the research findings. Additionally, micro ethnography often involves prolonged engagement, involving in- depth interviews and non- participant observation. This design is well-suited to capture the subtle dynamics and transformations occurring within religious practices over time.

3.5 AREA OF STUDY

The primary focus of this research is the Wayanad district, particularly examining the Jain families in key locations such as Kalpetta, Kaniyampatta, and Panamaram. Wayanad has substantial concentration of jain familes. Totaling 488 familes and comprising a population of 1900 individuals.

3.6 TOOL OF DATA COLLECTION

The choice of unstructured interview as the research method for exploring change and continuity in religious rituals and practices among the Jain community in Wayanad is driven by the need for flexibility and in-depth interactions with the community in large and in capturing participants' experiences and perspectives. Unstructured interviews are more flexible and organic in nature. The

interviewer enters the conversation with flexible questions and probes, or maybe even with just a list of bullet points. This less structured interview guide is meant to stimulate discussion rather than dictate it. (Douglas, 1985).

In this research, the researcher also relied on non-participant observation as a method for data collection. As part of this research, the researcher accompanied the community and participated as a non-participant observer in the field. The researcher interacted specifically with individuals entrusted with various community and religious responsibilities, particularly those connected to lifecycle rituals and socio-economic roles. Additionally, data was collected from 15 individuals through these interactions. The collected data are presented in the analysis section using pseudonyms.

The interview guide serves as the research tool to provide a loose framework for the unstructured interviews. The guide is designed to gently guide the conversation towards key themes related to changes and continuities in religious practices within the Jain community. Open-ended questions in the interview guide encourage participants to share personal narratives and reflections, providing a rich source of qualitative data.

3.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Alan Bryman in *Social Research Methods*, “A theoretical framework provides a structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. It introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists” (Bryman, 2016). This theoretical framework serves as a guide for the research, helping to define the concepts, variables and relationships that are relevant to the study, and providing a coherent basis for interpreting the research findings. The researcher has identified several theories that align with the findings of this study.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

The limitations included having to complete an indepth qualitative study within a relatively short timeframe, which constrained the depth of the research.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Religious rituals and practices are fundamental elements of any community. In the sociological context, these rituals are not merely acts of worship but are imbued with significant social functions. They help maintain continuity in cultural traditions, reinforce community bonds, and provide a sense of belonging and purpose to individuals. These rituals and practices range from daily prayers and temple visits to elaborate ceremonies like Paryushana and Diwali. Each practice is meticulously designed to reflect the core principles of Jainism. This study focuses on the change and continuity in religious rituals and practices among the Jain community, focusing specifically on the Jain population in Wayanad, Kerala. Historically, Jains in this region have been economically prosperous primarily due to their ownership of land and involvement in farming. Over time, while they have branched out into various fields.

In the context of Wayanad district, a region known for its diverse cultural landscape, the Jain community presents a unique case of maintaining religious traditions amidst external influences and changes. Understanding the dynamics of these religious practices in Wayanad offers valuable insights into the broader sociological implications of ritual continuity and transformation. It highlights how communities adapt their traditional practices in response to social, economic, and cultural shifts, ensuring their relevance and sustainability in a rapidly changing world. Through this analysis, we can appreciate the intricate balance between maintaining continuity and embracing change within the Jain community in Wayanad. Wayanad's Jains, including subgroups such as Jain Brahmins, Gowders, and Marwadis. The community has witnessed substantial changes in life style, similar to other societal groups, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations. The data collected for this research encompasses a wide range of topics, including the Jain concept of God, rituals surrounding birth, menstruation, marriage, and death, as well as organizational structures, food habits and ecological practices.

The researcher observed that Jains often begin their day with a pooja, a ritual that is usually conducted by the elder members of the family. However, some do not perform these daily rituals.

Each Jain family has a specific temple associated with them. The temples have priests who are typically from Karnataka and reside near the temples. It is the responsibility of the Jain families to take care of these priests. Daily poojas are not universally observed, and some families choose not to follow these rituals regularly.

During the festival of Mahavir Jayanti, a special ceremony takes place at the temple in Sulthan Bathery. However, not all Jains show interest in participating in this ceremony. The rituals on this day are performed by the priests, and the speeches that follow the pooja are delivered in Kannada.

In one of the Jain households, the researcher found four dogs that were rescued from the streets. This practice highlights the Jain community's respect for all living beings.

Additionally, it was observed that the Jains use Kannada terms to address their family members. For instance, they refer to their father as "Appaji," their brother as "Annan," their sister as "Akkan," their aunt as "Athe," their grandmother as "Aiji," their grandfather as "Thathan," their paternal uncle as "Doddamma," and their paternal aunt as "Doddappaji." This usage of Kannada terminology indicates a cultural integration with their linguistic surroundings.

The researcher collected data from 15 Jains. By utilizing thematic analysis, this research aims to identify key themes that illustrate the interplay between tradition and modernity within the communities.

1 The Concept of God in Jainism

2. Life cycle rituals

Birth Rituals: Continuity and adaptation

- Menstrual Rituals: Investigating traditional practices related to menstruation and changes
- Marriage rituals: continuity and adaptation
- Death Rituals: continuity and adaptation

3 Food and dietary practices

4. Ecological Practices: Understanding the community's approach to environmental sustainability.

5.Role of religious organizations.

6. Celebrations

In this chapter, various elements related to social change and continuity in religious rituals and practices among the Jain community are illustrated. The primary data collected from the community are presented under the following major themes:

4.2 CONCEPT OF GOD

During this ethnographic study, the research endeavor gathered information concerning the concept of God in Jain belief system. This inquiry began with a statement from Mr. Bhavin , one of the respondents, who explained that...

“We worship the 24 Tirthankaras, commonly known as ‘Jineswaran’ or ‘Jinan.’ These spiritual figures each carry a distinct symbol called ‘Lanchana.’ Additionally, we also venerate Yakshas and Yakshinis in our spiritual practices, with Jwalamalini and Padmavathi Devi being particularly popular.”

Mr Bhavin’s statement accentuated the veneration of Tirthankaras, who are seen as enlightened beings rather than supreme deities. He posits that, fundamentally, pure Jainism does not acknowledge the concept of a supreme deity or a definite form of God. However, he added that over time, due to cultural intermingling, particularly with Hinduism, certain adaptations have been integrated into Jain practices. This syncretism includes the incorporation of idol worship, poojas (rituals), and the adoption of Hindu deities into their religious observances.

Mr. Bhavin further elaborated that *“Within our community, there are people who revere Hindu gods. In our daily lives, we perform poojas, which are conducted to express devotion and seek blessings in our homes. These rituals can be performed by both men and women, without any discrimination. However, they are mainly carried out by the elder members of the family and particularly those who adhere strictly to traditional practices. The younger generation, including my own children who are settled in Bangalore, often do not engage in these daily rituals. They argue that such rituals and practices are not feasible in the context of a busy urban lifestyle. If the younger generation does not continue these practices, Jainism may gradually become extinct in Kerala,”*

Another respondent named Abhilash also provided insights on the conceptualization of God in Jainism. He stated,

“In this belief system, God has no form or shape. Jainism believes in the principle of ‘Aham Brahmasmi,’ which means ‘God is within us.’ There is no mandate to believe in a specific God. Originally, Jains did not worship deities but later revered Tirthankaras, who are considered prophets, not gods. Mahavira himself said, ‘I am not God; do not worship me.’ Essentially, God has no form; these forms were created by people.”

From these statements it is clear that over time, and through the gradual influence of other cultures, the reverence of deities and the performance of rituals have become more prevalent among certain segments of the Jain community. Yet, these practices are increasingly fading as social patterns evolve, particularly among the younger generation who are less inclined to adhere strictly to religious practices.

4.3 LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

Life cycle rituals are ceremonies or rituals that mark the various stages or transitions in an individual’s life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. These rituals are culturally significant and serve to facilitate the transition from one stage of life to another, often reaffirming community values, norms, social bonds in the process (Gennep, 1960).

4.3.1 BIRTH RITUALS CONTINUITY AND ADAPTATION

In this tradition, the rituals related with the birth of a child begin from the very moment of pregnancy of the mother. In earlier times, it was customary for pregnant women to observe seclusion for three to four months, refraining from any contact with outsiders, including family members. This period of seclusion was considered crucial for the well-being of both the mother and the unborn child.

Abhilash stated, *“When my wife got pregnant, she observed seclusion and stayed isolated in a room for three to four months. She had special food and clothing, and it was mandatory at that time. However, this practice is no longer commonly followed.”*

In relation to this, several rituals are observed, as articulated by the respondent, Mr. Bhavin, *“As the pregnancy progressed to the ninth month, a ceremony for the normal delivery and the dharma of the upcoming newborn was conducted by priests in our family temples. These ceremonies were conducted with spiritual significance, seeking divine blessings for the health and prosperity of the mother and child. Following this, the pregnant women would often return to her father’s home. On*

the 12th day after delivery, in the presence of relatives, a purification ceremony was performed by the priest, where the priest cleanses the house and performs a pooja to remove any impurities. After this, they were permitted to enter the house, usually, symbolizing a new beginning”

Subsequently, the naming ceremony was also conducted, signifying the formal introduction of the newborn to the family and community.

“For a boy child, a significant ceremony occurred at the age of eight. Where he officially enters into the religion, where they would wear the poonul, a sacred thread symbolizing adherence to key Jain principles such as right belief, right knowledge, and right conduct, known as three ratnas. Upon wearing the sacred thread, the boy committed to upholding the teachings of Jainism throughout his life. Additionally, oaths were taken, pledging to lead a virtuous life as guided by our thirthankaras or prophets. The ceremony involved four steps: deva pooja (worship of deities), Guru seva (service to the spiritual teacher), sadyayam (study of scriptures), and samyavam (self-Control). These four steps emphasized the importance of spiritual practice and moral conduct in leading a fulfilling life. Furthermore, oaths related to dietary habits were taken, emphasizing the Jain principles of non-violence (ahimsa), asteya, Aparigraha, anekantavada. As a result, Jains abstain from consuming meat, honey, and rooted vegetables, aligning their diet with compassion and respect for all living beings”

Mr. Bhavin mentioned that his son did not wear the sacred thread, reflecting a departure from traditional practices. While these rituals have been faithfully followed for generations. But with the influence of inter-caste marriages and Western lifestyle influences, and other factors, which may lead to variations in adherence among the younger generation. Yet, the essence of these rituals continues to resonate deeply within Jain community.

4.3.2 MENSTRUATION : CONTINUITY AND ADAPTATION

In this tradition there have been some beliefs, practices, and rituals associated with menstruation, which were strictly followed in earlier times. However, in contemporary society, adherence to these practices varies. While some individuals continue to observe these customs and practices, others have abandoned them due to modern perspectives and lifestyles. As a result, many no longer maintain these age-old practices.

In association with menstrual practices, Abhilash demonstrates...

“In our tradition , it’s customary for girls and women to be kept in a separate room for up to three to five days during menstruation. This practice isn’t considered as discrimination but rather as a measure of hygiene and cleanliness. In Jain households, there is a separate room where Women can sit during their menstrual period. They use separate plates, glasses, utensils, bedding, and other items to maintain purity and hygiene during this time”

Sundari also elucidates the practices associated with this, *“When my daughter reached puberty, we held a ritual called Rithumathi function. This is a practice observed by every Jain family, and we have several poojas associated with this ceremony. During this ritual the child is required to touch five trees, It’s believed that if these trees later dry up, it indicates that the girl reached puberty not at the right time. Until the ritumathi function, women are traditionally not allowed to enter temples. We also have our own natural remedies for managing menstrual discomfort. Even after marriage, women are expected to continue following these practices . After three to five days, they’re permitted to enter the kitchen”*

She further added, *“ we use cotton cloths instead of sanitary napkins due to environmental concerns, as the latter contains plastic and can harm earth, not everyone follows this practice.”*

Kavitha reflects on her experience with certain rituals: *“I came to know about this ritual after marriage. This practice was entirely strange to us. I am not a Jain; I belong to the Vaishnav sect from Karnataka. At first, these kinds of seclusion during the menstrual cycle made me disappointed. One day, during my menstrual period, I unknowingly touched my husband, and seeing this, my mother-in-law asked my husband to bathe again. I do not support these kinds of discriminatory practices.”*

In response, her husband Abhilash says, *“No, Kavitha, this is not discrimination. This is a part of hygiene and a way of taking care of women because, during this time, they undergo mood swings and other health issues. At that time, they need protein-rich food and have separate food. Do not consider this as discrimination.”*

While these rituals are still followed, modern factors such as education and jobs sometimes make it challenging for women to isolate themselves during menstruation, leading to less strict adherence

to these traditions. Overall, these practices have deep cultural significance but are subject to variations and adaptations in modern times.

4.3.3 MARRIAGE RITUALS: CONTINUITY AND ADAPTATION

When the researcher asked about the changes in marriage rituals within the Jain community, one member, Akash, remarked, “

This observation reveals the fluidity of cultural practices and how Jain rituals have adapted and evolved in response to external religious influences.

In recounting the evolution of Jain wedding traditions, Mr. Bhavin reflects on the substantial changes that have occurred over time. He recalls that, traditionally, Jain wedding ceremonies extended over seven days, filled with numerous rituals and poojas. However, he notes that these ceremonies have been significantly shortened to five or even four days in contemporary times, reflecting a shift in societal norms and lifestyle constraints.

Mr. Bhavin elaborates on the intricate customs of marriage,

“It’s a long process involving many rituals. The process typically begins with the groom’s parents meeting the bride’s family, and they examine horoscopes and hosting engagement feasts. On the seventh day, the groom goes to the temple to seek blessings. as part of the ritual, he wears poonul or sacred thread, symbolizing the three core principles or thri-ratnas of Jainism. This marks the second time he wears sacred thread, which is actually for his wife. However, fewer people are adhering to these rituals today due to life style constraints.”

He observes that the demands of modern life, alongside the rising prevalence of inter-caste and interreligious marriages, contribute to the gradual decline of these rituals. Some individuals even convert to other faiths after marriage, further indicating a shift away from traditional practices.

Detailing the bride’s side of the wedding rituals, Mr. Babu describes a rigorous sequence, *“The bride’s ceremonies start early in the morning, with her relatives arriving at the temple before dawn to begin the poojas. Throughout the wedding day, she has to take bath after each pooja and has to wear new dresses after each bath, a ritual that extends for hours. Following this, the bride and groom are escorted separately to the Kalyana Mandapa, accompanied by music. Before the*

bridegroom enters the platform, a curtain blocks the bride's view of him. She is then brought to stand in front of the groom, then curtain will be removed. And allowing them to see each other for the first time through a mirror. The subsequent wedding ceremonies, such as the exchange of flower chain and the tying of the nuptial thread, follow the typical style of Hindu weddings”.

A unique feature is the tying of both bride and groom with a cotton thread, symbolizing unity. After the marriage, there's a grand feast, and the bride moves to the groom's house. Additionally, we have a unique ritual called grihapravesanam, exclusive to Wayanad Jains. In this faith, certain traditions like cousin marriage and parallel marriage remain prohibited. In our community, marrying outside the faith is a common phenomenon. Even my daughter had love with a Christian guy. They married and then divorced. Later, she married a Brahmin guy”

However, even today, some Jain believers continue to follow these traditions, though there are also deviations from them.

Abhilash explains that interreligious marriages are quite common among Jains. He shares an example of a girl from their community who recently married a Muslim man after being in a relationship with him and she converted to Islam; she now wears parda. He notes that finding a partner within this community can be challenging due to the small number of Jains and the increasing emphasis on higher education and other factors. Abhilash adds that there are also marriages between Jains and Hindus, especially those from the Vaishnava sect, since both groups prioritize vegetarianism. He mentions that both his wife and his brother's wife belong to the Vaishnava sect.

In this faith, marriages with Hindus are common, with the criteria that the Hindu family should be vegetarian.

4.3.4 DEATH RITUALS

Instead, within Jainism, there are practices like Santhara or Sallekhana. Some Jain monks choose to observe this practice. Santhara means accepting death by voluntarily abstaining from food and water for an extended period of time. It has faced criticism from various quarters. However, it's important to understand that within the Jain community, this practice is viewed as a deeply spiritual act of and acceptance of mortality.

Anil, a member of the Jain community says, *“In Jain tradition, after someone passes away, cremation is conducted at the family’s premises. However, it’s important to note that some rituals, like immolation, have been influenced by Hindu traditions, but Jainism does not advocate for this practice”*

4.4 FOOD AND DEITARY PRACTICES

In Jainism, dietary habits are deeply intertwined with spiritual beliefs and principles. One of the key tenets of Jain Dharma is ahimsa, or non-violence, which extends not only to humans but to all living beings.

Abhilash mentions, *“ This belief instruct us to avoid consuming rooted vegetables like onions, tapioca, potatoes, and carrots, as uprooting these plants leads to the destruction of countless microorganisms, thus violating our commitment to non-violence. Additionally, Jains strictly instruct to avoid consuming onions and garlic, as these vegetables are believed to stimulate our senses. Even though we consume onions and potatoes, most people don’t stick to these rules anymore, except for Jain monks. Similarly, we also avoid eating of fish and meat aligns with our aim to maintain inner purity , as these foods are thought to stimulate blood and senses. One feature of our dietary practice that sets us apart is our tradition of eating only during the daytime. However, in today’s world, many of us find it challenging to adhere strictly to this tradition, often due to work schedules or other commitments. For example, I always find myself eating late at night after leaving my shop at 8:30 PM. It is worth noting that while these principles are still following by many in the Jain community, at the same time there are instances of deviation from these guidelines by some individuals”*

Kavitha (Abhilash ‘s wife) shares that her family doesn’t impose any strict restrictions on food consumption. She mentions that they often communicate to their children that they are free to consume chicken or any other meat if they wish. However, the children generally choose not to eat meat. Kavitha also highlights that, the community has its own special dishes, such as puliyogare and thairusadam, which are prepared in the Carnatic style.

While many Jains today may not strictly adhere to traditional dietary practices, In response to the research question about Jain dietary habits,

Ravi said: *“We avoid eating rooted vegetables and strictly follow these food habits. Additionally, we ensure that we eat before 6 o’clock.”*

4.5 ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITIES APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Jain beliefs and practices are deeply intertwined with ecology. A traditional practice of filtering water with cloth to prevent harm to small insects exemplifies their commitment to non violence. Most Jains in Wayanad are engaged in agriculture, and they typically own their own land. Many of their homes are surrounded by acres of land where they cultivate crops such as rice, pepper, and coffee. Most of the crops are grown for their own consumption, and some people choose this method as their primary means of subsistence.

As one respondent mentioned, *“We have almost all the vegetables and fruits we need here, so we don’t need to go to the market to buy vegetables and fruits.”*

They are also opposed to the use of pesticides because they believe these chemicals can harm the soil and many living organisms, which goes against their religious principle of non-violence.

Ravi, an Orthodox member of this community, follows almost all the practices prescribed by his religion. Ravi says *“Agriculture has been central to our lives for generations. Ploughing, considered as destructive to soil organisms, is prohibited in our faith. I am a farmer I do not use any pesticides because they harm many living beings, which is against my beliefs.”*

Mr. Tirthesh shares their beliefs and practices associated with ecology: *“ In this faith , it is customary to seek permission from the specific tree before cutting it down. Additionally, there is a ritual related with this act, emphasizing the reverence and respect accorded to nature and all living beings. These beliefs are predominantly upheld by Jain saints, who dedicate their lives to following the path of dharma. They always drink filtered water and strictly adhere to dietary practices, such as abstaining from eating root vegetables, eating before 6 O’Clock , walking without footwear, and avoiding the use of vehicles. For laypersons, it can be challenging to follow such strict rules in everyday life. The Digambara sect, known for its ascetic practices including nudity, faces varying levels of acceptance across regions and has not yet been widely accepted in Kerala.”*

It Is clear that following all these ecological practices is not feasible for everyone, however , saints strictly adhere to these practices.

4.6 THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Jaina Samajam is a religious organization exclusive to Jains and its president, Mr. Hari (pseudonym), elucidates its functioning and duties

“Currently, our community is divided into nine units, each with its own committee consists of nine members, including Chairman, Convenor and seven members. All dedicated to serving the welfare of our community. The following are the nine units: Anjukunnu, Kalpetta, Kaniyambetta, Karinkutty, Muttill, Neervaram, Poothadi, Puthiyidam and Venniyode. Among these nine units, except for two, all have their own temples. Wayanad is home to 470 jain families and comprising a population of 1850 individuals. Our organization plays a pivotal role in addressing their needs and concerns. Our organization is committed to intervening in various matters affecting Jains, including family issues, and strive to resolve them . If we can’t solve the problem, we will take legal action to find a solution for that particular issue. In the face of changing times, one of our primary focuses is on religious education for children. Therefore, initiatives aimed at imparting religious teachings and instilling Jain values in the younger generation. Additionally, we have established mahila Samaj, akin to Kudumbasree to address the specific needs and concerns of jain women. We also have a dedicated youth organization called Yuvajana Samaj, aimed at engaging and empowering young Jains, through various programs and activities”.

The organization coordinates and conducts various programs.

4.7 CELEBRATIONS

Jains have many celebrations, some of which are similar to Hindu celebrations. For these functions, they have their own special foods.

Mr. Anandan specifies the celebrations of Jains,

“ As a Jain, we celebrate both Paryushana and Diwali . Paryushana, takes eight to ten days, is a period of deep reflection and fasting, during which we recite sacred verses from texts

like the Kalpa sutra and Thatvartha Sutra. Diwali, is equally significant as it marks the auspicious occasion of mahaveer attaining Moksha. While Paryushana involves fasting for varying durations, from one to thirty days, it's essential to note the differences in practices between the digambara and Swethambara sects, particularly regarding food intake. Alongside these, other festivals such as Mahaveera Jayanthi, Yugadi, Navarathri, and Jinarathti are celebrated with equal enthusiasm and Reverence in our community”.

All these factors show the changes and continuity in this religion. Jains in Wayanad are a wealthy community, with no very poor families among them. They give importance to farming and are peaceful people.

4.8 DATA INTERPRETATION

In Jainism, two main sects are recognized: Swethambara and Digambara, each of these sects has its own subsects. In Wayanad, Jains belong to the Digambara sect, where there are three primary groups: Jain Brahmins, who conduct rituals; Jain Marvadis, involved in business; and Jain Gowders, primarily agriculturalists. These groups are considered as castes within the Jain community in Wayanad.

Jainism is a way of life rather than purely a religion . Living according to Jain principles and rules poses challenges for laypersons, although saints find it more feasible. In North India, Jains typically follow the path outlined by their prophets, maintaining a traditional approach. However, in the South, the influence of Hinduism has resulted in numerous interpretations and alterations to Jain practices, leading to modifications in rituals and lifestyle.

Additionally, the influence of modernization has contributed to the younger generation's reluctance to accept religious principles, resulting in a decline in adherence to traditional Jain practices.

This chapter includes data interpretation based on the data in the previous chapter. The analysis here is guided by the specific research questions identified in the earlier stage of the research and it includes

- Concept of God in Jainism

- Changes and continuities in lifecycle rituals and practices among the Jain community.
- Practice of conversion to other religion
- Changes in the food habits of the Jain community, and the factors influencing.
- The ecological practices observed within the Jain community.
- Key celebrations observed by the Jain community.

4.8.1 Concept of God in Jainism

This part deals with the research specific question of what is the concept of God in Jainism. In analyzing the concept of God in Jainism based on the collected data, it is possible to identify three distinct phases in the evolution of Jain beliefs, rituals and practices:

Phase One: Authentic Jainism

This phase represents the original or pure form of Jainism, which is characterized by its core principles and doctrines that strictly adhere to the doctrine of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), non-stealing (asteya), celibacy (brahmacharya), and non-possession (aparigraha). During this phase, Jainism did not emphasize the worship of gods or deities, focusing instead on the pursuit of spiritual liberation or salvation through self-discipline and ascetic practices.

Phase Two: Influence of Other Cultures and Adoption of Deities

The second phase marks a period of transformation in Jainism as it came into contact with other cultures and belief systems. The second phase is characterized by the adoption of various deities, rituals, and practices that were not originally part of Jain teachings. The integration of these elements into Jain worship represents a significant shift from the austere practices of early Jainism, reflecting a syncretic evolution in which Jainism absorbed external influences, and practices while still maintaining its distinct identity.

Phase Three: Modern Jainism

The current form of Jainism reflects an ongoing process of evolution shaped by modernization and a dwindling population. In this phase, Jainism continues to adapt to contemporary contexts, balancing traditional beliefs and customs with the realities of modern life. This includes

reinterpreting practices, and addressing challenges related to sustaining the community and its practices in a rapidly evolving world.

In Jainism, people venerate 24 Tirthankaras, who are spiritual teachers and prophets. Jains also worship Yakshas and Yakshinis, who are guardian deities associated with each Tirthankara.

In Jainism, Yakshas are often referred to as sasana devatas or attendant deities of the Tirthankaras. Indra, the leader of the Yakshas, designates one Yaksha and one Yakshini to each Tirthankara, with these deities positioned on the right and left of the Tirthankara respectively. Over time, Yakshas gained increased reverence from lay devotees, leading to the creation of larger and independent images of them. Idol worship was initially not a norm but began to appear in the early century of Common Era and elaborate rules for performing rituals developed during early medieval times (Singh 1975: 23).

Most Jain lay rituals are imitations of idiosyncratic monastic paradigms. In addition, Jains employ Brahmins for the performance of common Hindu life-cycle rituals. They also worship popular Hindu gods, such as Ganesha, Lakshmi and Sarasvati for good luck and wellbeing. Williams (1963: 216)

It's important to note that pure Jainism doesn't subscribe to the concept of a supreme deity or a defined form for God. However, external influences, particularly from Hinduism, have prompted adaptations within Jainism. These adaptations include the integration of practices such as idol worship, rituals (poojas), and even the incorporation of Hindu deities in Jain worship. Daily poojas are conducted as expressions of piety and for seeking blessings. However, the adherence to these traditional practices among the younger generation may not always be strict.

This analysis provides a comprehensive view of how the concept of God in Jainism

4.8.2 Changes and continuities in lifecycle rituals and practices among the Jain community.

The life cycle rituals encompass birth, puberty, marriage, and death. There have been significant changes in these rituals and practices over time with the influence of external factors. This section addresses the research question regarding the continuity and changes in life cycle rituals and practices within Jainism.

Birth ritul

All the rituals in the Jain tradition have undergone alterations over time. Traditionally, these rituals commenced from the moment of pregnancy, with pregnant women observing seclusion for three to four months. This period was deemed crucial for the well-being of both mother and child. Additionally, rituals were conducted towards the end of the pregnancy, seeking divine blessings for a safe delivery and the welfare of the newborn and mother. After childbirth, purification ceremonies were performed to cleanse the house and sanctify the environment. Afterwards, naming ceremonies were conducted, marking the formal introduction of the newborn into the family and community. For male children, a significant ceremony occurred at the age of eight, where they officially entered into the Jain Dharma by wearing the sacred thread. While these rituals have been followed for generations, changes have emerged with the influence of inter-caste and Interreligious marriages and Western lifestyle influences.

Menstruation

Menstrual practices among women reveal a complex interplay of ritual purity, health, and societal norms. Historically, women during their menstrual periods are typically secluded in a separate room, using distinct utensils, bed and personal items to maintain what is perceived as purity and hygiene. This seclusion is not merely a matter of religious observance but is also justified on the grounds of providing women with the necessary rest during a physically demanding time. Proponents of these practices argue that menstruation involves significant psychological, physiological changes, including hormonal fluctuations that can result in mood swings and physical discomfort. Therefore, they contend that the practice of seclusion is beneficial, allowing women the opportunity to rest and recuperate in a supportive environment. Special dietary provisions are often made for menstruating women, emphasizing nutritious foods that are believed to help and support overall health.

However, these practices are not universally practiced, within the Jain community. There is a divergence of opinion, particularly among women from communities such as the Vaishnavas, who maintain an affinal relationship with the Jains in Wayanad. For many Vaishnava women, the concept of menstrual seclusion is alien and perceived as discriminatory practice. They argue that the practice reinforces gender-based segregation and perpetuates outdated notions of impurity associated with menstrual cycle.

Moreover, younger generations within the Jain community are not following these practices. The constraints of modern life, including education and employment, make it difficult for many women to adhere strictly to the traditional norms of menstrual seclusion. Additionally, there is a growing reluctance among younger girls to follow practices that they perceive as restrictive or unnecessary in the context of modern hygiene and health understanding.

Despite these challenges, certain ceremonies related to menstruation remain deeply embedded within the Jain cultural fabric. For example, the Rithumathi ceremony, which marks a girl's puberty, continues to be a significant rite of passage. This ceremony is elaborate, it is like a mini version of a wedding, and involves rituals similar to those observed by a bride during marriage.

In addition to rituals, there are also traditional practices for managing menstrual discomfort, such as using natural remedies for pain and fatigue. These remedies are often passed down through generations. Furthermore, some Jain women opt to use cotton cloths instead of sanitary napkins, due to environmental concerns and a desire to avoid synthetic materials. This practice highlights a continuity of traditional methods while also intersecting with contemporary environmental awareness.

In conclusion, among the Jains in Wayanad, many traditional practices persist, they are increasingly being questioned and adapted in response to modern life. Education, employment, and evolving attitudes towards gender roles are all contributing to a re-evaluation of these rituals and practices.

Marriage ritual

The institution of marriage in Jainism has evolved over time, reflecting changes influenced by other cultures and modern lifestyle constraints. Infact, marriage was not emphasized in Jainism due to the focus on celibacy for achieving spiritual liberation. However, with the influence of other religions, various marriage rituals have been incorporated into Jain tradition. Traditionally, Jain wedding ceremonies lasted for seven days, but today , they are often shortened to five or four days. The ceremonies begin with the groom's parents meeting the bride's family and examining horoscopes, followed by engagement feasts. On the seventh day, the groom seeks blessings at the temple, wearing the poonul or sacred thread However, fewer people adhere strictly to these rituals today due to lifestyle constraints and inter-caste and interreligious marriages. Bride's ceremonies

commence early in the morning with poojas at the temple, where she take multiple baths and changes attire after each pooja. After these rituals , there is a grand feast, and the bride moves to the groom's house. Certain practices , such as cousin marriage and parallel marriage, remain prohibited in the Jain community. Nowadays , finding Jain brides has become challenging due to declining Jain populations and more girls pursuing higher education or marrying outside the religion . As a result, marriages with Hindus are common, with the criteria that the Hindu family should be vegetarian.

Death ritual

In Jain tradition, cremation is the usually conducted at the house premises. However, it's noteworthy that certain rituals, like immolation, have been influenced by Hindu rituals and practices , though Jainism does not advocate for this practice and rituals .In Jainism Santhara involves embracing death by voluntarily abstaining from food and water for an extended period. While not all Jains follow this practice, some Jain saints choose to observe it. Santhara has faced criticism.

All these life cycle rituals have been incorporated into the Jain faith. Originally, Jainism did not subscribe to such practices.

4.8.3 Practice of conversion to other religion

This section explores the research question concerning the conversion of individuals from Jainism to other religions. Several participants mentioned instances of conversion within the Jain community, It is clear that inter-religious marriages are becoming more common, leading to a tendency for conversion to other religion. It is clear from the responses of a research participant.

“One girl from our community who recently married a Muslim man after being in a relationship with him and she converted to Islam; she now wears parda”

Additionally, there is an affinal relation between the Jain and Vaishnava sects, largely due to the challenges of finding marriage partners within the Jain community. Some individuals are also adopting a purely secular lifestyle, expressing a lack of interest in religious practices altogether.

4.8.4 Changes in the food habits of the Jain community, and the factors influencing.

The dietary practices within Jainism are deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs, particularly the principle of non-violence, which extends to all living beings. Avoiding rooted vegetables like onions, potatoes, and carrots, as well as fish and meat, aligns with the commitment to ahimsa or non-violence and maintaining inner purity. However, adherence to these dietary habits has seen a shift over time. Jain community strictly avoided consuming onions and garlic due to their believed stimulation of the senses, but modern practices show a departure from these rules for many individuals, except for Jain saints .

Some Jains do not strictly conform to traditional food restrictions and rules. They argue that maintaining such dietary restrictions is challenging in contemporary society. This perspective is evident from the responses of the Jain community.

“However, in today’s world, many of us find it challenging to adhere strictly to this tradition, often due to work schedules or other commitments. For example, I always find myself eating late at night after leaving my shop at 8:30 PM. “

Similarly, the tradition of eating only during the daytime is becoming increasingly challenging to adhere in today’s world, with work schedules and other commitments often interfering. While many within the Jain community still adhere to these dietary principles, deviations from these guidelines are increasingly common among new generation .

4.8.5 The ecological practices observed within the Jain community.

This section addresses the specific question related to the ecological practices observed within the Jain community.

Jain rituals and practices are deeply intertwined with ecological principles. In Wayanad, Kerala, where most of the Jains relies on agriculture for their livelihood, these principles manifest in their approach to farming and daily practices. Jainism is often referred to as an “ecological religion” or “religious ecology” due to its strong emphasis on ecological consciousness and the principle of non-violence toward all living beings.(op. cit)

Unlike conventional agricultural practices that often involve the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, Jains in Wayanad abstain from such all these practices. This choice is deeply rooted in the principle of non- violence, which prohibits harm to any living being, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. The use of chemicals in agriculture is believed to harm countless

microorganisms and insects, which is considered a form of violence in this faith. Therefore, Jains opt for organic farming methods, even if it means facing challenges such as lower yields or increased labor.

The Jain approach to nature is not limited to avoidance of harm but also includes active reverence. A notable practice among them is the custom of seeking permission from trees before cutting them down. This practice also reflects a broader ecological consciousness, which is deeply embedded in Jain Philosophy and ethics.

These ecological beliefs and practices are predominantly adhered to by Jain saints. Their lives are marked by strict adherence to non-violence, truth, and other ethical principles.

While Jain saints exemplify the strict observance of Jain ecological and ethical principles, laypersons often face practical difficulties in adhering to such stringent rules in everyday life. However, many still strive to align their practices with these principles as much as possible.

Jainism offers valuable principles for promoting ecological balance through various practices, such as, Non-violent model of life-style, vegetarianism, Friendliness to all and enmity to none, Tolerance and content, Auspicious meditation, Principle of non-consumerism-Aparigraha, Enlightened spirituality-an alternative model of life style which is environment friendly.(ibid. p. 23)

The Digambara sect of Jainism, known for its ascetic practices, including nudity as a symbol of renunciation and complete detachment from worldly possessions, followed by Jain Saints, faces varying levels of acceptance across different regions. Despite their dedication to spiritual principles, they have not gain acceptance in Kerala.

4.8.6 Role of religious organizations in shaping and maintaining the cultural and religious practices of the Jain community.

The Jain Samajam in Wayanad plays a vital role in serving the welfare of the Jain community, which comprises nine units, each with its own committee . With 470 Jain families and a population of 1850 individuals, the organization is committed to intervening in various matters affecting Jains, including family issues, and look to legal action if necessary. In response to changing times, the Jain Samajam focuses on religious education for children, aiming to impart Jain teachings to the younger generation. Initiatives such as the Mahila Samaj and the Yuvajana Samaj stands for

women and youngsters respectively. Overall, the Jain Samajam plays a pivotal role in addressing community concerns, and ensuring the well-being of the Jains in Wayanad. The Jain community has struggled in obtaining governmental support as a religious minority. Through collective advocacy, progress has been made in achieving recognition as a linguistic minority. These efforts highlight the community's struggle for recognition and support as a religious minority.

Key celebrations observed by the Jain community.

This section covers the specific research question regarding the key celebrations observed by the Jain community. The Jain community in Wayanad celebrate key religious festivals such as Paryushana and Diwali. For instance, Paryushana is a period dedicated to intense reflection, fasting, and the recitation of sacred texts like the Kalpa Sutra and Thatvartha Sutra. The observation that younger Jains are not as involved in practices like fasting and recitation of sacred texts. There are variations in practices between the Digambara and Svetambara sects.

The celebration of festivals like Yugadi Navaratri, Diwali, Vishu which are traditionally Hindu festivals, indicates an integration of local and cultural influences into Jain practices. This adaptation reflects a certain level of cultural assimilation and exchange. This combination of preservation and adaptation highlights the community's ability to maintain its religious identity while engaging with the evolving socio-cultural landscape in Wayanad.

From this, it is evident that there are continuities, changes, and additions within the Jain community. Like all other communities, Jainism also embraces changes.

The data collected from the research offers several inferences that fall in line with the theories proposed by scholars such as T. N. Madan, Yogendra Singh, and Berger and Luckmann. For instance, the study of Jain community rituals and practices supports Berger and Luckmann's assertion that reality is socially constructed. Historically, Jainism was known for its minimalistic approach to rituals, emphasizing a philosophy of non-attachment and asceticism. Early Jain teachings and practices were largely free from elaborate ritualistic elements. However, as Jainism encountered other religious traditions and underwent processes of modernization, it began to adopt and adapt various rituals. This observation reinforces the idea that religious practices are not static but are shaped and reshaped by social interactions and external influences, thereby strengthening the inferences drawn from the data collected in this study.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

The general objective of this research is to examine the evolution of religious rituals and practices among the Jain community in Wayanad District, Kerala. This study aims to identify both the transformative aspects and the enduring elements within Jain religious rituals and practices, thereby capturing the dynamic interplay between tradition and change. Through this study, it becomes evident that while certain rituals and practices have undergone significant modifications in response to contemporary influences, others have steadfastly preserved their traditional essence. This duality posits the complex nature of religious adaptation within the Jain community amidst an ever-changing world

Religion plays a significant role in people's lives, especially in a country like India coexist. It's our duty to protect cultural diversity because India is known for its rich cultural diversity, and religion is a key component of this. Protecting these religions is crucial. As T.K. Oommen states, "Cultural diversity must be protected, and it must be understood in the context of globalization and localization simultaneously." In India both Jainism and Buddhism originated in India as reactions to the caste system within Hindu tradition.

There are differing views on the emergence of Jainism, some argue it originated in the time immemorial, while others consider it a possible offshoot of Hinduism. However, these religions differ greatly in their philosophical view points on life. Despite being a minority community ,Jains make a significant contribution to India's GDP (Jain S. C., & Malaiya, Y. K., 2011). Although Jainism retains its unique identity, in southern India, it has been influenced by Hinduism, especially Brahmanism, leading to the adoption of Hindu practices and rituals. Max Weber highlighted the unclear status of the lay rituals as one of the significant drawback of Jainism, which relies on the ritual of the Brahmanical social system, because it has not established stable rituals on its own.

In Wayanad, the sect which is predominantly inhabited by is the Digambara sect of Jains. There are further subdivisions among Jains, such as Jain Brahmins,Jain Gowders and Jain Marvadis,

resembling caste distinctions within the Jain community. Among these, Jain Gowders constitute the majority and are typically engaged in agriculture and related activities, owning considerable land holdings. Through non-participant observation and interaction with the participants, it is evident that there are no economically backward families among Jains. Most of them own land and engage in farming, with some relying on it as their primary source of income. However, the younger generation does not seem to show much interest in this. In contemporary times, Jainism has seen departures from its original principles as instructed by Jain thirthankaras.

Jainism can be understood through three distinct phases. The first phase represents the original or pure form of Jainism, characterized by the absence of elaborate rituals and practices. In the second phase, there was the introduction of practices such as idol worship and various rituals, practices, influenced by the prevailing dominant religions of the time. The third phase is the contemporary period, where there has been a decline in these practices due to the effects of modernization.

The stringent rules of Jainism often clash with modern ways of life and exposure to Western culture, leading individuals to question and challenge these religious conventions. In Jainism, non-violence is a core principle that prohibits harming any living being, whether through speech, thoughts, or gestures. Yet, in today's world, adhering strictly to Jain principles poses a challenge for laypeople and family members alike.

Classical sociologists like Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Spencer, etc. were of the view that traditional religion will become increasingly marginal in the modern world. The disengagement of religious institutions from significant events of life is seen as a sign of the secularization of society. In Jainism, for instance, most youths are not adhering to traditional rules and regulations. Today, all religious institutions are themselves adapting to changing conditions, and Jainism is no exception. Jains have gradually modified their lifestyles to meet the demands of contemporary society. Secularization, in general, is a process that has occurred throughout history, it can be summarized as a process of decreasing involvement of individuals with religious institutions, a reduction in the influence of religious institutions on other material aspects of life, and a decline in the degree to which people hold religious beliefs. These kinds of changes are also evident in Jainism. However, like all other religion, there remains a segment of believers who strive to maintain and uphold their religious traditions.

In authentic Jainism, there is no concept of God, and rituals are minimal or nonexistent. Similar to the concept of “Aham Brahmasmi” , Jains also believe that divinity resides within oneself, emphasizing the intrinsic spiritual nature of humanity. In Jainism, believers venerate 24 Tirthankaras, known as ‘jineswaran’ or ‘jinan’, each symbolized distinctly. Mahavira explicitly stated that he was not a deity and should not be venerated. However, contemporary practices among Jains reveal a divergence from this principle. Devotional activities include the worship of Mahavira and other Tirthankaras, as well as the veneration of idols. Moreover, reverence extends to Yakshas and Yakshinis. It’s important to highlight that authentic Jainism rejects the idea of a supreme deity or specific divine embodiment. However , external influences, particularly from Hinduism, have catalyzed adaptations within Jain practice. These adaptations encompass the assimilation of certain practices such as idol worship, rituals (poojas) and even the inclusion of hindu deities in worship, representing a form of cultural diffusion.

Cultural diffusion theory explains how cultural elements are transmitted from one culture to another (Smith, 2010), leading to the incorporation of new practices, beliefs, and rituals. In the case of Jainism, the adoption of practices such as idol worship and various rituals from Hinduism can be seen as a result of cultural diffusion.

Jainism is more accurately viewed as a way of life rather than purely a religion. Additionally, the impact of Western lifestyle , education, and employment prospects has contributed to the younger generation’s reluctance in embracing religious principles. This shift reflects the concept of secularization, wherein religious traditions lose significance in the face of modernization and exposure to diverse cultural influences.

Traditionally, rituals related to childbirth commenced at the onset of pregnancy, where pregnant women observing seclusion for a duration of three to four months. This practice was perceived as pivotal for the overall well-being of both the mother and the unborn child. Furthermore, rituals were conducted towards the conclusion of the pregnancy, aimed at seeking divine blessings for a safe delivery and the welfare of both the newborn and the mother. Following childbirth, purification ceremonies were undertaken to sanctify the surroundings. Subsequently, naming ceremonies were performed, signifying the formal introduction of the newborn. For male offspring, a significant ceremony occurred at the age of eight, symbolizing their official entry into the Jain Dharma through wearing of the sacred thread. Although these rituals have been

perpetuated through generations, contemporary societal alterations, influenced by inter-caste and interreligious marriages, as well as Western lifestyle influences, have led to their declining observance among newer generations.

Women typically observe seclusion in a specific room in their households, during their menstrual cycle, using separate utensils and items to uphold notions of purity and hygiene. Special rituals, such as the Ritumathi function also conducted. However, contemporary factors such as education and employment pose challenges to the strict observance of these practices, as women may encounter difficulty in isolating themselves during this period. Additionally, natural remedies are employed to manage menstrual discomfort, such as pain and fatigue. Some Jains opt for cotton cloths over sanitary napkins, motivated by environmental concerns, although this practice is not universally adopted.

The Institution of marriage within this tradition has undergone alterations over time. In authentic belief, marriage held lesser significance in Jain doctrine, given the emphasis on celibacy as a means to attain salvation or Moksha. However, with the influence of other belief systems, various marriage customs have been assimilated into Jain tradition. Traditionally, Jain wedding ceremonies extended over a period of seven days, yet in modern times, they are often condensed to four or three days. However, fewer individuals adhere strictly to these rituals today due to lifestyle constraints and the prevalence of inter-caste and interreligious unions. Certain practices, such as cousin marriage and parallel marriage, remain prohibited within the Jain community. In contemporary times, the search for Jain brides has become a difficult task due to dwindling Jain populations and a growing number of girls pursuing higher education and marrying outside the tradition. Consequently, marriage alliances with Hindus have become more common. The dietary practices within Jainism are deeply entrenched in spiritual beliefs, particularly the principle of non-violence. The principle of non-violence, which encompasses all living creatures.

Abstaining from rooted vegetables such as onions, garlic, potatoes, and carrots, as well as fish and meat, reflects a dedication to non-violence and the observation of inner purity. However, adherence to these dietary practices has transformed over time. Historically, the Jain community steadfastly avoided consuming garlic due to perceived stimulation of the senses, yet contemporary life styles indicate a departure from these prohibitions for many individuals. Similarly, the tradition of consuming meals exclusively during daytime hours is becoming increasingly challenging to

follow in today's society, because of demands of work schedules and other commitments. While many within the Jain community still uphold these dietary practices, deviations from these norms are becoming more prevalent among the younger generation.

The Jain Samajam In Wayanad plays a significant role in advocating for the welfare of the Jain community, which consists of nine units. The organization is dedicated to intervening in various issues and problems affecting Jains, including familial matters, and is prepared to pursue legal action if necessary. Adapting to evolving circumstances, the Jain Samajam prioritizes religious education for children, with the goal of imparting Jain teachings in the younger generation. Initiatives such as the Mahila Samaj and the Yuvajana Samaj stands for the needs of women and youth respectively.

In Jain tradition, cremation typically occurs on the premises of the residence. However, it's important to note that certain rituals, such as immolation, have been influenced by Hindu customs, despite Jainism not endorsing such customs. Jain rituals and customs are deeply rooted in ecological principles, emphasizing non-violence and reverence for nature. Traditional customs, such as water filtration to protect small insects, demonstrate the commitment to non-violence in daily activities is still followed by Jain saints. Moreover, the practice of seeking permission from trees before cutting them down highlights their reverence for all living beings. These ecological beliefs are primarily followed by Jain saints, who devote their lives to following the path of dharma. The Digambara sect, known for ascetic practices including nudity, encounters varying levels of acceptance across different regions in India. Despite their dedication to spiritual principles, Jain saints have not gained acceptance in Kerala because of their extreme ascetic practices.

The Jain community has confronted difficulties in securing governmental support as a religious minority. However, through collaborative advocacy, they obtained recognition as a linguistic minority. Jains as a religious minority, have not received a scholarships. Jains celebrate Diwali, Paryushana, Mahaveera Jayanthi, Yugadi, Navarathri, and Jinaraththi with equal enthusiasm and reverence. These are the main celebrations of Jains.

The theory of social construction of reality (Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T, 1966).posits that what we perceive as reality is not an inherent truth but a product of continuous social processes and interactions. This conceptualization is particularly relevant when examining changes and

continuities in religious rituals and practices, as it reveals how these phenomena are dynamically constructed and reconstructed over time.

Research into the Jain community's rituals and practices illustrates Berger and Luckmann's assertion that reality is socially constructed. Historically, Jainism was characterized by a minimalistic approach to rituals, reflecting a core philosophy of non-attachment and asceticism. Early Jain teachings and practices were notably devoid of elaborate ritualistic elements. However, as Jainism interacted with other religious traditions and underwent modernization, the introduction and adaptation of rituals became evident.

The Integration of rituals and practices into Jainism can be attributed to several factors: external influences from other religions, which have more pronounced ritualistic traditions and the broader impact of modernization. These influences prompted the Jain community to develop and incorporate various rituals, such as elaborate poojas and ceremonies, which were not originally part of Jain doctrine. This adaptation reflects Berger and Luckmann's theory that religious realities are constructed through social interaction and adaptation rather than being fixed entities.

Many Jain temples have been converted into Hindu temples. Although Jains have not reacted to this act. According to Jain doctrine, they uphold ascetic life and they do not promote worldly pursuits. Today, the number of Jain followers is dwindling. However, within twenty-five years, the religion is expected to drastically contract in Kerala. Despite this, Jainism maintains high acceptance outside of Kerala.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study of the Jain community in Wayanad, Kerala, reveals a profound transformation in their life styles. Historically a micro minority in Kerala, the Jain population has faced considerable challenges in maintaining the strict tenets of their belief system. Over the years, the number of adherents has dwindled, influenced by various socio-cultural and economic factors.

One significant factor contributing to this decline is the rise of the pervasive influence of dominant religions in the region. The rapid pace of modernization, secularisation and the changing socio-cultural landscape have further accelerated this decline. The stringent principles of Jainism, particularly the principle of non-violence (Ahimsa), present practical difficulties in contemporary society, leading to a reluctance among many to adhere strictly to these practices.

The impact of increased education, migration, western cultural influences, influence of dominant religion like Hinduism, technological advancements, secularism, and inter-caste marriages has also played a crucial role in this shift. These factors have collectively contributed a reluctance in maintaining traditional Jain practices, especially among the youth. As a result, while some continue to observe Jain principles, they often do so in a manner that often deviates from traditional prescriptions. Interestingly, the Wayanad Jain community, predominantly of the Digambara sect, showcases unique dynamics.

The application of micro-ethnography in this research has provided valuable insights into the intricate changes and continuities within the Jain community.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study primarily focused on continuity and change in religious rituals and practices among the Jain community in a specific region, utilizing data collected from a limited number of Jains. Expanding the scope of data collection, including a diverse range of Jain settlements across different regions in the state or the country would help making the more and more valid. Such studies would even facilitate a comparative understanding of the status of Jains residing in Kerala and those living in other parts of India or abroad. Additionally, that would help in exploring the future of Jainism as a religion and also as a culture.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Concept of God in Jainism

- How do you personally understand the concept of God in Jainism?
- How does your belief in God influence your daily life and spiritual practices?
- How do Jain principles differ from other religious views on divinity?
- Do you think the younger generation in your community shares a similar understanding of God?

Changes and Continuities in Lifecycle Rituals

- Can you describe the key lifecycle rituals (birth, marriage, death) observed in your family?
- Have these rituals changed over the years? If yes, what changes have you noticed?
- What elements of the rituals have remained the same despite modern influences?
- How do these rituals influence your identity as a Jain?

Conversion to Other Religions

- Have you encountered anyone in your community converting to other religions?
- What do you think motivates some Jains to convert?
- Do you believe there is pressure on the Jain community to adhere to its traditions? Why or why not?
- How does the community respond to conversions?

Changes in Food Habits

- Can you describe the traditional food habits followed by your family?
- Have there been any significant changes in your food habits recently? If so, what are they?
- What factors (e.g., globalization, personal preferences, health concerns) have influenced these changes?
- How does your food consumption align with traditional Jain principles of non-violence (Ahimsa)?

Ecological Practices

- What ecological practices does your family or community follow?
- How do these practices reflect Jain principles like non-violence and environmental protection?

- Have these practices evolved over time due to environmental concerns or other factors?
- How do you see the relationship between your religious beliefs and ecological responsibility?

Role of Religious Organizations

- How important are religious organizations in your community?
- What role do they play in maintaining traditional Jain practices and rituals?
- Do you think the younger generation is as involved with these organizations as the older generation? Why or why not?
- How do these organizations help in promoting Jain values in a modern context?