

MARRIAGE RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG SUNNI MUSLIMS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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Requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology*

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DECLARATION

I, **ALFIYA R** do hereby declare that the Dissertation Titled **MARRIAGE RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG SUNNI MUSLIMS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the Department of Sociology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), University of Kerala during the year 2024-2026 towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before any University or anywhere else.

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled Titled **MARRIAGE RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG SUNNI MUSLIMS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** is a record of genuine work done by Ms. **ALFIYA R** fourth semester Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
CHAPTER I-INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	8
1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	11
CHAPTER II-REVIEW OF LITERATURE	14
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	14
2.2 MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION.....	15
2.3 RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSLIM MARRIAGE	16
2.4 ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE	18
2.5 MUSLIM MARRIAGE PRACTICES IN INDIA.....	19
2.6 KERALA MUSLIM SOCIETY AND CULTURE	21
2.7 MARRIAGE RITUALS AMONG KERALA MUSLIMS	22
2.8 CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN MUSLIM MARRIAGE PRACTICES.....	24
2.9 CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITUALS	25
2.10 MODERNIZATION AND CHANGING MARRIAGE PRACTICES.....	26
2.11 MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND CONTEMPORARY WEDDINGS.....	28
2.12 ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS AND SOCIAL PRESSURE IN MARRIAGE CELEBRATIONS	29
2.13 GENDER AND MARRIAGE TRANSFORMATIONS.....	30
2.14 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MARRIAGE PRACTICES	32
2.15 RESEARCH GAP	33
2.16 CONCLUSION	34
CHAPTER III-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	36
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	36
3.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY	37
3.3.1 GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION.....	37
3.3.2 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS	37
3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN	37
3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH.....	38

3.6 SAMPLING	38
3.7 SOURCES OF DATA	39
3.7.1 PRIMARY SOURCE OF DATA.....	39
3.7.2 SECONDARY SOURCE OF DATA.....	39
3.8 TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION.....	40
3.8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	40
3.9 FIELD OBSERVATION.....	40
3.10 FIELD NOTES.....	41
3.11 AREA OF THE STUDY	41
3.12 DATA ANALYSIS	41
3.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	42
CHAPTER IV-DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	43
CASE PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	43
4.1 Introduction.....	43
4.2 CASE NARRATION	43
4.2.1 CASE 1 (SHAFEEK S 23).....	43
4.2.2 CASE 2 (SIYAM K. S, 27).....	45
4.2.3 CASE 3 (AFIYA S, 20).....	48
4.2.4 CASE 4 (MUHSINA NAHAS, 23).....	51
4.2.5 CASE 5 (JAMEELA BEEVI, 77)	54
4.2.6 CASE 6 (NOUSHAD A, 56).....	57
4.2.7 CASE 7 (SHEMI S. R., 44).....	60
4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	63
4.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	63
4.3.1 Continuity of Religious Foundations in Sunni Muslim Marriage.....	63
4.3.1.1 Nikah as the Central Religious Ritual.....	64
4.3.1.2 Continuity of Islamic Marriage Elements	66
4.3.1.3 Distinction Between Religious and Cultural Practices	68
4.3.2 Transformation of Traditional Marriage Practices	70
4.3.2.1 Continuation of Traditional Customs and Family Participation.....	71
4.3.2.2 Modification of Traditional Marriage Rituals.....	73
4.3.3 Emergence of Modern Wedding Celebrations and Changing Ritual Patterns ...	74
4.3.3.1 Adoption of New Wedding Celebrations.....	75

4.3.3.2 Changing Role of Marriage Celebrations in Social Life	77
4.3.4 Influence of Media, Modernization and Globalization on Marriage Practices ..	80
4.3.4.1 Social Media as an Agent of Cultural Change	81
4.3.4.2 Globalization and Cultural Exchange.....	83
4.3.4.3 Cinema and Popular Culture.....	84
4.3.4.4 Event Management, Photography and Consumer Culture	85
4.3.5 Economic Pressure and Social Expectations in Contemporary Weddings.....	87
4.3.5.1 Increasing Wedding Expenditure and Consumer Culture.....	88
4.3.5.2 Social Prestige, Competition and Symbolic Display	90
4.3.5.3 Financial Burden and Religious Simplicity	91
4.3.6 Generational Differences and Negotiation Between Tradition and Modernity ..	93
4.3.6.1 Older and Younger Generations: Differing Perspectives on Marriage.....	94
4.3.6.3 Future Directions of Sunni Muslim Marriage Practices	98
CHAPTER V	102
FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	102
5.1 Introduction.....	102
5.2 Major Findings of the Study	102
5.2.1 Continuity of the Religious Foundations of Marriage.....	102
5.2.2 Marriage Continues to Function as a Collective Family Institution.....	103
5.2.3 Transformation of Traditional Marriage Rituals.....	104
5.2.4 Emergence of New Wedding Celebrations	104
5.2.5 Influence of Media, Modernization and Globalization	105
5.2.6 Increasing Commercialisation of Marriage.....	105
5.2.7 Economic Pressure and Rising Wedding Expenditure.....	106
5.2.8 Distinction Between Religious Values and Consumer Culture	106
5.2.9 Generational Differences in Marriage Practices.....	107
5.2.10 Marriage Practices Reflect Continuity within Change	107
5.3 SUGGESTIONS.....	108
5.3.1 Promote Awareness of Islamic Principles of Marriage.....	108
5.3.2 Encourage Simple and Economically Sustainable Weddings	108
5.3.3 Strengthen Premarital Education and Family Counselling.....	109
5.3.4 Promote Responsible Use of Social Media.....	109
5.3.5 Regulate Commercialisation of Marriage Celebrations.....	110

5.3.6 Preserve Valuable Traditional Customs.....	110
5.3.7 Encourage Intergenerational Dialogue	110
5.3.8 Strengthen the Role of Educational Institutions	110
5.3.9 Community-Based Financial Support for Marriage	111
5.3.10 Policy Implications.....	111
5.4 Scope for Future Research	111
5.5 CONCLUSION	112
REFERENCES.....	115
APPENDIX 1	118
INTERVIEW GUIDE	118
APPENDIX 2-PICTURES TAKEN DURING FIELDWORK.....	121
PLATE 1&2: ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY	121
PLATE 2&3: NIKAH CEREMONY	122
PLATE 4&5: ARIKUTH KALYANNAM.....	123
PLATE 6AND 7: BRIDE TO BE -MODERN PRACTICE	124
PLATE 8:HALDI.....	125
PLATE 9: SAVE THE DATE.....	125
PLATE 10:WEDDING	126

ABSTRACT

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions in Islam, serving as both a religious obligation and a cultural practice that regulates family life, kinship and community relationships. While the religious foundations of Muslim marriage have remained relatively stable, contemporary social transformations such as modernization, globalization, media influence, consumer culture and technological advancement have significantly reshaped the manner in which marriages are celebrated. Against this background, the present study examines the continuity and change in marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala.

The study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of members of the Sunni Muslim community regarding traditional and contemporary marriage practices. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with seven purposively selected respondents representing different age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, occupations, marital statuses and family structures. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and meanings related to marriage rituals, religious values, cultural practices, media influence, commercialization and intergenerational change.

The findings reveal that the religious foundation of Sunni Muslim marriage remains remarkably stable, with respondents unanimously identifying Nikah as the central and indispensable religious institution that legitimises marriage. Essential Islamic elements such as Mahr, mutual consent, witnesses, the role of the Wali, and Walima continue to be regarded as obligatory components of marriage. At the same time, the study identifies significant transformations in the cultural dimensions of marriage celebrations. Contemporary weddings increasingly incorporate ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be and Groom-to-Be functions, pre-wedding photoshoots, cinematic videography, destination photography and professionally managed receptions, which respondents generally recognise as cultural additions rather than religious obligations.

The study further reveals that social media, globalization, cinema, and consumer culture have become major forces shaping wedding expectations and practices. Professional event management, photography, decoration and luxury venues have contributed to the commercialization of weddings and rising marriage expenditure. Respondents expressed concern that increasing social competition and the desire to maintain prestige often place

considerable financial pressure on families and may conflict with Islamic principles of simplicity and moderation. Nevertheless, families actively negotiate between religious values and contemporary aspirations, preserving the religious core of marriage while selectively adopting modern cultural practices.

The study concludes that Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Thiruvananthapuram are characterised by continuity within change rather than a conflict between tradition and modernity. Religious principles continue to provide the normative foundation of marriage, while cultural expressions evolve in response to changing social, economic, and technological contexts. Viewed through sociological perspectives such as Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism, Structuration Theory, Cultural Diffusion, Consumer Culture Theory, and Glocalization, the findings demonstrate that marriage remains a dynamic institution capable of adapting to contemporary realities without compromising its religious identity. The study contributes to the sociological understanding of family, religion, and social change by illustrating how the Sunni Muslim community negotiates continuity and transformation in an increasingly globalised society.

Keywords: Sunni Muslim community, marriage rituals, Nikah, continuity and change, social media

CHAPTER I-INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the oldest and most significant social institutions found in almost every society across the world. It is not simply a private relationship between two individuals but a socially recognized institution that organizes family life, kinship relations, social responsibilities, and cultural continuity. Sociologists have viewed marriage as an important institution through which societies regulate reproduction, inheritance, socialization of children, and the continuation of cultural values. According to Murdock (1949), marriage is a universal social institution that performs essential functions related to family formation and social stability. Although the meaning and practices associated with marriage differ across societies, every community develops its own patterns, rituals, and traditions surrounding marital relationships. Therefore, marriage practices provide valuable insights into the social structure, cultural beliefs, and changing values of a community.

Marriage also represents an important transition in an individual's life by marking the movement into new social roles and responsibilities. It establishes relationships not only between two individuals but also between families, relatives, and wider social networks. The rituals and ceremonies associated with marriage often express collective identity, social status, religious beliefs, and cultural belonging. Through marriage celebrations, communities preserve traditions and transmit cultural knowledge from one generation to another. At the same time, marriage practices are not static; they continuously change according to social, economic, and cultural transformations taking place within society. Changes in education, economic conditions, technology, migration, and media influence often reshape the way people understand and practice marriage.

In religious communities, marriage carries meanings beyond social and cultural dimensions. It is often considered a sacred relationship that is guided by religious values, moral responsibilities, and social obligations. In Islam, marriage is regarded as an important institution that provides companionship, emotional support, and social stability. The Islamic concept of marriage, known as Nikah, is both a religious and legal agreement between a man and a woman. It is based on mutual consent, respect, responsibility, and the establishment of a family structure. Islamic teachings emphasize marriage as a means of maintaining dignity,

morality, and social order. Unlike a purely ceremonial relationship, Islamic marriage includes specific rights and duties for both partners, highlighting the importance of justice and mutual understanding within family life.

The institution of Nikah includes certain essential elements that provide validity to Muslim marriage. The proposal and acceptance (Ijab and Qubool), consent of the bride and groom, presence of witnesses, and payment of Mahr are considered important components of an Islamic marriage. Mahr represents a financial obligation given by the groom to the bride, symbolizing respect and security within the marital relationship. These religious principles have remained central to Muslim marriage practices across different regions and generations. However, while Islamic teachings provide the basic framework of marriage, the actual practices and celebrations surrounding marriage are also influenced by local cultures, historical experiences, and social conditions.

Among Muslims, marriage is understood not only as the union of two individuals but also as the connection of two families and social groups. Family involvement has traditionally played an important role in Muslim marriages, especially in South Asian societies. The process of marriage often includes discussions between families, arrangements by elders, and participation of relatives and community members. These practices reflect the collective nature of social life where marriage is considered a relationship involving wider kinship networks rather than only the couple. Therefore, Muslim marriage practices represent an interaction between religious principles and social traditions.

Sunni Muslims, who constitute the largest branch of the Muslim community worldwide, follow marriage practices based on Islamic teachings while also adapting to regional cultural contexts. Although the fundamental aspects of Nikah remain consistent, wedding rituals and celebrations differ according to geographical location, community traditions, and social influences. Muslim societies in different parts of the world have developed unique marriage customs shaped by their historical and cultural environments. This diversity demonstrates that religious practices often exist within specific social contexts where traditions and modern influences interact with each other.

In the Indian context, Muslim marriage practices reflect a combination of Islamic values and regional cultural traditions. India's diverse social environment has influenced the development of different forms of Muslim wedding celebrations. Customs related to clothing, food, family gatherings, music and pre-wedding or post-wedding events vary across regions. These cultural

variations do not necessarily replace religious principles but often become part of the broader social expression of marriage. Thus, Muslim marriages in India represent a relationship between religion, culture, and social change.

Kerala has a distinct cultural identity shaped by its historical connections, trade relations, migration patterns, and interactions among different communities. The Muslim community in Kerala, particularly Sunni Muslims, has developed unique cultural practices while maintaining Islamic religious values. Marriage ceremonies among Kerala Muslims reflect this combination of religious tradition and local customs. The central importance of Nikah continues to remain unchanged, while several social practices have developed around the marriage ceremony, including family gatherings, traditional food preparation, celebrations before and after marriage, and community participation.

Traditionally, Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala were relatively simple and focused mainly on religious values, family relationships, and community participation. Weddings were often organized with limited celebrations, where elders and family members played significant roles in decision-making and conducting ceremonies. The emphasis was placed on maintaining religious principles, social relationships, and family honour rather than public display. Marriage was viewed as a collective responsibility of families, and the involvement of relatives and community members strengthened social bonds.

However, in recent years, marriage practices among Sunni Muslims have experienced noticeable transformations due to various social changes. Modernization, urbanization, globalization, educational development, migration, and advancements in communication technologies have influenced the way marriage ceremonies are organized and experienced. The nature of marriage celebrations has gradually moved beyond a simple religious and family event into a broader social occasion involving extensive arrangements and public representation. Contemporary weddings often include professional photography, elaborate decorations, event management services, themed celebrations, and carefully planned ceremonies. These changes indicate how marriage practices continuously adapt according to changing social environments.

One of the major factors contributing to the transformation of marriage practices is the influence of globalization and cultural interaction. Increased mobility, migration, and exposure to different societies have introduced new ideas and practices into local communities. Kerala, particularly, has experienced significant social changes due to international migration,

especially migration to Gulf countries, which has influenced lifestyle patterns, economic conditions, and social aspirations. Improved economic opportunities have also contributed to changes in wedding expenditure, celebrations, and expectations related to marriage. As families gain greater financial capacity, some wedding ceremonies have become more elaborate, reflecting changing ideas about status, prestige, and social recognition.

Education and changing aspirations among younger generations have also influenced marriage practices. Young people today have greater exposure to different cultural ideas through education, employment opportunities, and digital platforms. Their perspectives regarding marriage, partner selection, celebrations, and personal choices often differ from those of earlier generations. While older generations may emphasize simplicity, tradition, and religious values, younger generations may show interest in incorporating new trends and forms of celebration. These differences sometimes create discussions within families regarding the balance between maintaining traditional values and accepting contemporary practices.

A significant transformation visible in contemporary Muslim weddings is the increasing popularity of new cultural rituals and celebration patterns. Practices such as Mehendi functions, Haldi ceremonies, bride-to-be celebrations, groom-to-be events, pre-wedding photoshoots, save-the-date functions, and theme-based wedding arrangements have become more common among certain sections of the Sunni Muslim community. Many of these practices are cultural rather than religious in origin, but they are gradually becoming part of modern wedding celebrations. The adoption of such practices shows how communities interact with surrounding cultures and modify their traditions according to changing social conditions.

The influence of mass media and digital platforms has further accelerated changes in marriage practices. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have created new ways of presenting and experiencing weddings. Young couples and families are increasingly influenced by online wedding trends, celebrity weddings, and digital representations of celebrations. Wedding photography, designer clothing, coordinated themes, and visually attractive ceremonies have gained importance because weddings are now often shared and displayed through digital spaces. This has transformed marriage from a private family event into a socially visible occasion where appearance and presentation have become significant aspects.

At the same time, the increasing influence of modern wedding trends has also created concerns regarding expenses and social competition. In many communities, including sections of the

Sunni Muslim community, families may feel pressure to organize grand celebrations due to expectations from relatives, social networks, and comparisons with others. Expensive decorations, multiple functions, photography packages, and luxurious arrangements can increase the financial burden associated with marriage. Therefore, changes in marriage practices are not only cultural transformations but also connected with economic conditions, social status, and changing ideas of prestige.

Despite these changes, the religious foundation of Sunni Muslim marriage continues to remain significant. The essential elements of Nikah, including mutual consent, Mahr, witnesses, and Islamic procedures, continue to hold importance in Muslim marriages. Many families attempt to maintain religious values while also adopting selected cultural practices that have become popular in contemporary society. This situation reflects a process of continuity and change, where traditional religious principles coexist with modern cultural expressions. Rather than completely replacing traditional practices, modern influences often become integrated into existing marriage traditions.

The interaction between tradition and modernity creates a complex social reality within Sunni Muslim communities. Some individuals and families view new wedding practices as expressions of happiness, creativity, and social celebration, while others may consider certain practices unnecessary or inconsistent with religious simplicity. These differing opinions reflect broader debates about identity, cultural acceptance, religious interpretation, and social expectations. Marriage therefore becomes a significant area where individuals and communities negotiate between maintaining established traditions and responding to changing social influences.

Generational differences are also visible in attitudes toward marriage rituals. Older members of the community often emphasize modesty, simplicity, and adherence to customary practices, while younger members may prefer more contemporary forms of celebration influenced by global culture and digital media. These differences do not necessarily represent a complete rejection of tradition; rather, they demonstrate the changing meanings attached to marriage among different generations. The interaction between generations plays an important role in determining which practices continue, which practices change, and which new practices become accepted within the community.

Marriage rituals are therefore important sociological indicators of broader social transformation. They reveal changes in family relationships, gender roles, economic

conditions, cultural identity, and patterns of social interaction. Studying marriage practices helps to understand how communities preserve their traditions while adapting to new social realities. In the case of Sunni Muslims in Kerala, marriage rituals provide a valuable area of study because they represent the relationship between religion, culture, and modernization.

The present study focused on understanding the continuity and changes in marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community in Thiruvananthapuram district. The district provides an important social setting where traditional practices continue alongside changing lifestyles and modern influences. The study attempts to explore how marriage rituals are practiced in the present context, which traditional elements continue to hold importance, and what new practices have emerged within the community.

The study also examines the social factors influencing these transformations, including education, migration, economic changes, media exposure, social interaction and generational differences. By analysing both continuity and change in Sunni Muslim marriage practices, the research aims to develop a sociological understanding of how religious and cultural traditions respond to changing social conditions.

Marriage rituals are not merely ceremonial activities; they carry deeper meanings related to identity, belonging, family relationships, social values, and cultural expression. Therefore, examining changing marriage practices among Sunni Muslims provides insight into wider processes of social change within the community. This study is significant because it explores how people negotiate between religious principles, cultural traditions, and modern influences in their everyday social life.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marriage is considered one of the most significant social institutions found in human societies. It is not merely a personal relationship between two individuals but a socially recognized institution that connects families, establishes kinship relations, and maintains cultural continuity. Through marriage, societies regulate family formation, social responsibilities, inheritance patterns, and relationships between different social groups. Although the basic purpose of marriage remains similar across societies, the forms, rituals, and practices associated with marriage differ according to religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and social conditions.

Among Muslim communities, marriage occupies an important position as both a religious and social institution. In Islam, marriage is established through the institution of Nikah, which is considered a religiously significant agreement between a man and a woman. The concepts of consent, Mahr, witnesses, and family involvement form important elements of Muslim marriage. For Sunni Muslims, Nikah is not only a formal ceremony but also a religious foundation that gives legitimacy to the marital relationship. Along with these religious aspects, Muslim marriages have also developed various cultural practices influenced by regional traditions, family customs, and community experiences.

In Kerala, Sunni Muslim marriage practices represent a combination of Islamic principles and local cultural traditions. The marriage system followed by the community includes both religious rituals and socially developed customs. Practices such as Acharam, bride-seeing ceremonies, Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, Veedu Kaanal, Walima, and family gatherings have been traditionally followed in different forms. These customs provide opportunities for family participation, strengthen social relationships, and maintain cultural identity within the community. However, marriage practices are not fixed or unchanged; they continuously transform according to changing social realities.

Contemporary society has witnessed rapid social changes due to modernization, globalization, technological development, migration, and the expansion of mass media. These changes have influenced different areas of social life, including family and marriage practices. Muslim marriage ceremonies, which were traditionally organized with emphasis on simplicity, religious values, and family participation, have gradually experienced changes in their style and organization. New practices such as Mehendi functions, Haldi ceremonies, Bride-to-Be celebrations, Groom-to-Be functions, Save-the-Date events, and pre-wedding photoshoots have become increasingly visible in present-day Muslim weddings.

The emergence of these new practices raises important sociological questions regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity. While some individuals consider these practices as new forms of celebration, entertainment, and personal expression, others view them as cultural additions influenced by external factors rather than religious requirements. The distinction between religious practices and cultural practices has become an important issue in understanding contemporary Muslim marriages. While rituals such as Nikah, Mahr, and Walima continue to hold religious importance, many newly introduced celebrations are associated with social trends and changing lifestyles.

Another important issue related to changing marriage practices is the increasing cost and commercialization of weddings. The involvement of event management companies, professional photography, elaborate decorations, designer clothing, multiple functions, and grand celebrations has changed the nature of marriage ceremonies. Social expectations and competition among families often create pressure to organize expensive weddings, even when such expenses create financial difficulties. This situation has resulted in concerns regarding unnecessary expenditure, social comparison, and the burden placed on families.

The influence of social media has further accelerated changes in marriage practices. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have created new ways of presenting and sharing wedding celebrations. Online wedding trends, fashion influences, and visual representation of ceremonies have encouraged many families to adopt new practices. Weddings are increasingly becoming events that are documented, shared, and viewed by others, making social recognition an important factor in contemporary celebrations. At the same time, differences can be observed between younger and older generations regarding changing marriage customs. Older generations generally emphasize simplicity, religious values, and traditional practices, while younger generations often show greater acceptance of modern celebrations and new trends. These differences sometimes create disagreements within families regarding wedding arrangements, expenses, and the acceptance of newly introduced rituals. Understanding these generational perspectives is important for examining how social change operates within the family structure.

Although previous studies have explored Muslim marriage practices, legal aspects of Muslim marriage, and the influence of culture on marriage traditions, there remains a need to understand how Sunni Muslims in Kerala experience these changes at the community level. Particularly, the ways in which traditional rituals continue, new practices emerge, and individuals negotiate between religious values and modern influences require further sociological exploration.

Therefore, the present study entitled “Marriage Rituals and Practices among Sunni Muslims: Continuity and Change” attempts to examine the traditional marriage practices followed among Sunni Muslims and the transformations occurring in contemporary marriage celebrations. The study focuses on understanding how religious values, cultural traditions, modernization, media influence, and generational differences shape present-day marriage practices among Sunni Muslims in Thiruvananthapuram district.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Marriage is an important social institution that reflects the values, beliefs, traditions, and social relationships of a community. The rituals and practices associated with marriage provide valuable insights into the cultural identity and social organization of a society. In every community, marriage practices are shaped by religious beliefs, historical experiences, local customs, and changing social conditions. Therefore, studying marriage rituals helps to understand how communities preserve their traditions while also adapting to new social influences.

The present study is significant as it attempts to understand the continuity and change in marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community in Kerala. Muslim marriage practices have a unique relationship between religious principles and cultural traditions. While certain practices such as Nikah, Mahr, and Walima are connected with Islamic principles, other customs have developed through regional culture and social practices. By examining these aspects, the study helps to understand how religious and cultural elements exist together within contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages.

This study is important in the context of Kerala, where Muslim communities have developed distinctive marriage traditions influenced by both Islamic values and local cultural practices. Traditional customs such as Acharam, Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, Veedu Kaanal, and family gatherings have played an important role in maintaining social relationships and community identity. At the same time, recent changes in marriage celebrations indicate the influence of modernization and changing lifestyles. The study provides an opportunity to examine how these traditional practices continue and how they are modified according to present social conditions.

The study is also significant because it explores the impact of modernization, globalization, and media influence on Muslim marriage practices. Contemporary weddings have witnessed the introduction of new celebrations such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be functions, Groom-to-Be celebrations, and pre-wedding photoshoots. These practices represent changing patterns of celebration and social expression. By examining these developments, the study contributes to an understanding of how global cultural influences enter local traditions and reshape social practices.

Another important aspect of this study is its focus on the role of social media in transforming marriage celebrations. Digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have

changed the way weddings are planned, represented, and experienced. Wedding photography, videos, decorations, and event arrangements have gained increased importance due to online visibility and social recognition. The study helps to understand how technological developments influence cultural practices and create new expectations regarding marriage ceremonies.

The study is also significant in understanding the economic dimensions of changing marriage practices. The increasing number of wedding functions, involvement of professional services, expensive decorations, photography, clothing, and other arrangements have contributed to the rising cost of marriages. Many families experience social pressure to organize grand celebrations according to contemporary trends. By examining these issues, the study highlights the relationship between social expectations, economic pressure, and changing marriage practices.

Furthermore, the study contributes to understanding generational differences regarding marriage rituals. Changes in marriage practices often create different opinions between younger and older generations. Older individuals may emphasize simplicity, religious values, and traditional customs, whereas younger individuals may prefer modern celebrations and new forms of expression. Examining these differences provides insight into how social change influences family relationships and value systems.

The study is also significant from a sociological perspective because it explores the process of continuity and change within a religious community. Social institutions do not remain completely unchanged; they continuously adapt according to changing circumstances. The present study demonstrates how Sunni Muslim marriage practices maintain their religious foundation while also experiencing cultural transformations influenced by modern society.

Academically, this study contributes to the existing literature on marriage, family, religion, culture, and social change. Although several studies have examined Muslim marriage from legal and religious perspectives, fewer studies focus on the everyday experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding changing marriage rituals among Sunni Muslims in Kerala. This research attempts to fill this gap by presenting the views and experiences of respondents from different age groups.

The findings of this study may be useful for researchers, students, and scholars interested in understanding family institutions, religious practices, cultural change, and contemporary social transformations. It may also provide a better understanding of how communities negotiate

between preserving traditional values and accepting modern influences. Thus, the study contributes to a broader sociological understanding of marriage as a changing social institution.

CHAPTER II-REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Review of literature is an essential part of any research study as it provides an understanding of the existing knowledge, concepts, and findings related to the research topic. It helps the researcher identify important ideas, theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and gaps in previous studies. The present study focuses on “Marriage Rituals and Practices among Sunni Muslims: Continuity and Change”, and therefore the review of literature examines previous studies related to Muslim marriage, religious practices, cultural traditions, modernization, social changes, and changing patterns of marriage celebrations.

Marriage among Muslims is not only considered a religious institution but also a social and cultural practice influenced by historical, regional, and community-specific factors. Previous studies have explored various dimensions of Muslim marriage, including the significance of Nikah, Mahr, family involvement, traditional customs, legal aspects, and the impact of social transformation. The existing literature indicates that although Islamic principles provide a common foundation for marriage, the actual practices differ across regions and communities due to cultural influences.

The reviewed studies reveal that Muslim marriage practices are continuously changing due to modernization, globalization, media influence, economic changes, and shifting generational perspectives. While traditional rituals such as Nikah, Mahr, and Walima continue to maintain their importance, new practices such as Mehendi, Haldi, pre-wedding photography, and elaborate wedding celebrations have become increasingly common. These changes reflect the interaction between religious values, cultural traditions, and contemporary lifestyles.

For a systematic understanding of the existing literature, the studies have been organized into different themes. The themes include religious foundations and significance of Muslim marriage, cultural influences and regional variations, continuity of traditional practices, modernization and changing marriage rituals, influence of media and globalization, economic dimensions, generational differences, and legal aspects of Muslim marriage. This thematic arrangement helps to understand how Muslim marriage practices have been preserved, transformed, and negotiated within changing social conditions.

2.2 MARRIAGE AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Marriage is widely recognized as one of the most important social institutions that regulates relationships between individuals, families, and society. It provides a socially accepted framework for family formation, kinship relations, reproduction, and the transmission of cultural values across generations. Sociological studies explain that marriage is not merely a personal relationship between two individuals but a social institution influenced by cultural norms, religious beliefs, economic conditions, and social expectations. Although the forms and practices of marriage differ across societies, its role in maintaining social continuity and social order remains significant.

Murdock (1949) provided one of the earliest sociological explanations of marriage through his comparative study of societies. He argued that marriage exists universally because it performs essential social functions, including regulation of sexual behaviour, reproduction, economic cooperation, and socialization of children. According to Murdock, marriage creates a structured relationship between individuals and families, contributing to the stability and continuity of society. His functionalist perspective provides an important foundation for understanding marriage as a social institution rather than only an individual relationship.

Durkheim viewed marriage as a social institution connected with collective values and moral regulations. He explained that social institutions represent shared beliefs and norms that influence individual behaviour. From this perspective, marriage rituals and ceremonies express the cultural values of a society and strengthen social solidarity by bringing families and communities together. This understanding is important for analysing marriage rituals as symbolic practices that reflect social identity and collective meaning.

Parsons (1955) examined marriage and family from a structural functional perspective and highlighted the role of family institutions in maintaining social stability. He explained that the family formed through marriage performs important functions, particularly the primary socialization of children and the stabilization of adult personalities. According to Parsons, marriage establishes socially recognized roles and responsibilities between spouses, which contribute to the effective functioning of family and society.

Giddens (1992) analysed the changing nature of marriage and intimate relationships in modern societies. He argued that modernization has transformed the meaning of marriage by increasing the importance of individual choice, emotional satisfaction, and personal identity. However,

Giddens emphasized that traditional structures do not completely disappear; instead, individuals negotiate between inherited cultural expectations and changing social values. This perspective helps to understand how contemporary marriages combine traditional practices with modern influences.

In the Indian context, Karve (1953) examined kinship organization and explained that marriage plays an important role in establishing relationships between families and social groups. She highlighted that marriage is closely connected with kinship networks and social structures. Similarly, Kapadia (1955) studied marriage and family relationships in India and observed that Indian marriages traditionally involve wider family participation, social obligations, and cultural practices rather than being limited to individual choices.

The existing literature shows that marriage is a dynamic social institution influenced by social, cultural, religious, and economic factors. Previous sociological studies have mainly focused on the functions of marriage, family organization, and social relationships. However, limited attention has been given to how these institutional aspects influence changing marriage rituals and practices within specific religious communities. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community by examining the relationship between religious values, cultural traditions, and contemporary social transformations.

2.3 RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSLIM MARRIAGE

Marriage in Islam is understood as both a religious institution and a social relationship that establishes rights, responsibilities, and obligations between spouses. Islamic marriage is based on the concept of Nikah, which is considered a legal and sacred contract formed through mutual consent of the bride and groom. The major elements of Muslim marriage, such as Mahr, consent, witnesses, and family responsibilities, reflect the religious principles of justice, dignity, and social stability. Although these principles provide a common foundation for Muslim marriage, their practical expression varies across societies due to cultural traditions, regional influences, and social conditions.

Ahmad (1976) examined Muslim family and marriage practices in India and explained that marriage among Muslims is closely connected with religious teachings as well as social organization. He highlighted that Nikah forms the basis of Muslim marriage by creating a legally and socially recognized relationship between husband and wife. His study also emphasized the importance of family involvement and kinship networks in the organization of

Muslim marriages, showing that marriage is not only an individual relationship but also a social bond between families.

Devi (2015) focused on the importance of Mahr in Muslim marriage and explained that it is an essential component that represents the financial right and dignity of the bride. The study emphasized that Mahr is not merely a traditional practice but a religious obligation intended to provide security and respect to women within marriage. Devi also highlighted that although the amount and form of Mahr may differ according to social and economic conditions, its religious significance remains central in Muslim marriage practices.

Mehndiratta (2022) discussed the legal and religious aspects of Muslim marriage and emphasized the importance of free consent, witnesses, and contractual responsibilities in Nikah. The study explained that Islamic marriage principles aim to protect the rights of both spouses and establish a relationship based on mutual agreement and responsibility. These elements distinguish Muslim marriage from merely cultural celebrations and highlight its religious and legal character.

Bhat (2018) observed that Muslim marriage practices in India are diverse despite having a common religious framework. The study found that while essential elements such as Nikah, Mahr, and consent remain important, the surrounding customs and rituals differ according to regional cultures and community traditions. This indicates that Muslim marriage practices are shaped by an interaction between religious principles and local social environments.

The literature suggests that religious foundations continue to play a central role in maintaining the identity and structure of Muslim marriages. Practices such as Nikah, Mahr, consent, and witnesses remain significant among Muslim communities, even when additional cultural rituals and modern celebrations are introduced. However, existing studies have mainly examined the religious and legal dimensions of Muslim marriage, with limited focus on how these principles are maintained and transformed within contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala.

Therefore, the present study attempts to understand how religious values continue to influence marriage rituals among the Sunni Muslim community while interacting with cultural traditions, modernization, and changing social expectations.

2.4 ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

Marriage holds a significant position in Islam as it is considered both a religious obligation and a social institution that promotes family stability, companionship, and moral responsibility. Islamic teachings view Nikah as a sacred agreement between a man and a woman based on mutual consent, respect, and shared responsibilities. The Qur'an and Hadith provide guidelines regarding marriage by emphasizing principles such as love, compassion, justice, and the protection of individual rights. Although these religious principles remain consistent across Muslim societies, the ways in which marriage is practiced and celebrated differ according to cultural and social contexts.

Esposito (2001) explained that Islamic marriage is not merely a religious ceremony but also a legal contract that establishes rights and obligations between husband and wife. He emphasized that Islamic teachings present marriage as a relationship based on mutual support, affection, and responsibility. According to Esposito, concepts such as consent, Mahr, inheritance rights, and family responsibilities demonstrate the importance given to justice and social stability within Islamic marriage.

Engineer (1992) examined Islamic marriage from the perspective of social justice and gender equality. He argued that the fundamental teachings of Islam emphasize dignity, equality, and mutual respect between spouses. Engineer highlighted that many practices associated with Muslim marriage are influenced by social and cultural interpretations rather than religious requirements. His work is significant in understanding the distinction between Islamic principles and customs that develop within particular societies.

Nasr (2002) focused on the spiritual dimension of marriage in Islam and explained that marriage is considered an important institution for moral development and the continuation of family values. He emphasized that Islamic marriage encourages simplicity, modesty, and ethical responsibilities among individuals. According to Nasr, the family formed through marriage acts as a foundation for transmitting religious values and social responsibilities across generations.

Mernissi (1991) analysed marriage and gender relations in Muslim societies from a feminist perspective. She argued that while Islamic teachings recognize the dignity and rights of women, cultural interpretations and patriarchal social structures have often influenced women's position within marriage. Her work highlights the importance of examining Muslim marriage

practices by distinguishing between religious teachings and social customs that may affect gender relations.

Existing studies on Islamic marriage show that concepts such as Nikah, Mahr, consent, witnesses, and mutual responsibilities remain central elements of Muslim marital practices. These principles provide the religious foundation of marriage and continue to influence Muslim communities across different regions. At the same time, cultural practices, modernization, and changing social conditions have introduced new forms of marriage celebrations while maintaining the basic religious framework.

The literature indicates that Islamic marriage represents an interaction between religious values and social practices. While the core principles of marriage remain rooted in Islamic teachings, their expression varies according to historical, cultural, and regional contexts. This perspective is relevant to the present study as it helps to examine how Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala maintain religious foundations while adapting to contemporary social changes.

2.5 MUSLIM MARRIAGE PRACTICES IN INDIA

Muslim marriage practices in India represent a combination of Islamic principles and diverse regional cultural traditions. Although the basic elements of Muslim marriage, such as Nikah, Mahr, consent, and witnesses, remain common among Muslim communities, the rituals and customs associated with marriage vary across different regions and social groups. Historical experiences, local traditions, family structures, and cultural influences have shaped the way Muslim marriages are organized and celebrated in India. Therefore, Indian Muslim marriages can be understood as a process where religious values and cultural practices exist together.

Ahmad (1976) studied family, kinship, and marriage among Indian Muslims and explained that marriage is closely connected with social organization and community life. He observed that while Islamic principles provide the basic framework for marriage, different Muslim communities have developed unique customs according to their regional and historical backgrounds. Ahmad highlighted that marriage is not only a relationship between two individuals but also an alliance between families, where kinship networks and social relationships play an important role.

Hasan (2005) examined the historical development of Indian Muslim society and explained that Muslim communities in India have maintained their religious identity while adapting to the cultural environment around them. His work showed that the interaction between religion and local traditions has influenced various aspects of Muslim social life, including family

practices and marriage customs. This indicates that Indian Muslim marriages reflect both religious continuity and cultural adaptation.

Bhat (2018) explored the diversity of Muslim marriage practices in India and found that these practices are not uniform across communities. The study highlighted that while the religious structure of marriage remains similar, the ceremonies and customs surrounding marriage differ according to regional cultures. Practices related to wedding celebrations, family participation, food traditions, and post-marriage customs reflect the influence of local social environments.

DoddaHanumaiah (2023) examined the changing nature of Muslim marriage practices and explained that modernization, education, and globalization have influenced the organization of contemporary Muslim weddings. The study observed that although Islamic teachings emphasize simplicity in marriage, many communities have adopted new forms of celebrations, decorations, and wedding arrangements influenced by changing lifestyles and social expectations.

Research on Indian Muslim communities also highlights the continued importance of family and kinship involvement in marriage decisions. In many communities, parents and elders continue to participate in partner selection, marriage negotiations, and the organization of wedding ceremonies. Marriage is therefore viewed not only as a personal relationship but also as a social connection between families and communities.

The literature also points to increasing concerns regarding marriage expenses and social expectations among Indian Muslims. Although Islamic teachings emphasize Mahr as the financial right of women and encourage simplicity, cultural practices and social competition have contributed to the growth of expensive wedding celebrations in some communities. These changes reflect the influence of economic conditions, social status, and modern consumer culture on marriage practices.

The existing literature shows that Muslim marriage practices in India are characterized by both continuity and diversity. While religious elements such as Nikah and Mahr continue to remain central, regional customs, family traditions, and modern influences have shaped the ways in which marriages are performed and celebrated. This theme provides the broader Indian context for understanding the continuity and transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala, which is the focus of the present study.

2.6 KERALA MUSLIM SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Kerala Muslim society has developed through a unique historical and cultural process shaped by trade relations, religious interactions, migration, and social transformations. The Muslim community of Kerala, particularly the Mappila Muslims, represents an important example of the interaction between Islamic identity and regional culture. Studies on Kerala Muslims indicate that their social institutions, family structures, and cultural practices are influenced by both Islamic values and the historical experiences of Kerala society. Understanding Kerala Muslim society is important for analysing marriage practices because weddings reflect religious beliefs, cultural identity, family relationships, and changing social conditions.

Miller (1976) examined the history and social life of the Mappila Muslims of Kerala and explained that the community developed through interactions between Arab traders and local populations along the Malabar coast. He observed that Islam in Kerala acquired distinct regional characteristics while maintaining its religious foundation. Miller highlighted that Mappila identity represents a combination of Islamic traditions and Kerala's cultural influences, which can be seen in social institutions such as family and marriage.

Panikkar (1989) studied the historical development of Kerala society and highlighted the influence of economic, political, and cultural changes on different communities. His work helps to understand how historical processes, social reforms, and interactions between different groups shaped the identity and practices of Kerala Muslims. These broader social transformations have also influenced family relationships and marriage patterns within the community.

Osella and Osella (2008) examined contemporary Muslim life in Kerala and explored the relationship between religious identity, modernity, and social change. They observed that Kerala Muslims actively negotiate between traditional values and modern aspirations. Their study highlighted the influence of education, migration, employment opportunities, and changing lifestyles on family relationships and social practices. This perspective is significant for understanding how marriage practices adapt while maintaining cultural continuity.

Studies on Kerala Muslim society emphasize the importance of family and kinship networks in social life. Marriage is generally understood not only as a relationship between two individuals but also as a connection between families and communities. Parents, elders, and relatives continue to play important roles in marriage negotiations, decision-making, and the

organization of wedding ceremonies. These practices reflect the collective nature of marriage within Kerala Muslim communities.

The literature also shows that Kerala Muslim society has experienced significant changes due to education, migration, globalization, and economic development. These changes have influenced lifestyle patterns, family expectations, and marriage celebrations. However, modernization has not completely replaced traditional values; instead, religious practices and cultural traditions continue to coexist with new social influences.

The existing studies demonstrate that Kerala Muslim society represents a continuous interaction between Islamic traditions and regional cultural practices. While religious identity remains an important foundation, local customs, family structures, and contemporary changes shape the expression of social practices, including marriage rituals. This background is essential for the present study, which examines how Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala maintain religious and cultural continuity while experiencing transformations due to changing social conditions.

2.7 MARRIAGE RITUALS AMONG KERALA MUSLIMS

Marriage rituals among Kerala Muslims represent a combination of Islamic religious principles and regional cultural traditions. Although the religious foundation of Muslim marriage is based on Nikah, the ceremonies and practices surrounding marriage have been shaped by Kerala's social and cultural environment. These rituals are not only related to the union between two individuals but also strengthen family relationships, kinship networks, and community participation. Studies on Kerala Muslim marriages show that wedding practices reflect religious identity, cultural continuity, and changing social values within the community.

Miller (1976) explained that the Mappila Muslims of Kerala have maintained Islamic traditions while incorporating local cultural practices into their social life. He observed that marriage ceremonies among Kerala Muslims represent an interaction between religious beliefs and regional customs. According to Miller, Nikah remains the central religious ritual, while family gatherings and community celebrations contribute to the social significance of marriage.

Osella and Osella (2008) examined social changes among Kerala Muslims and highlighted that marriage rituals continue to play an important role in maintaining family relationships and community identity. Their study showed that factors such as education, migration, and globalization have influenced marriage celebrations, but traditional practices continue to hold

importance. They explained that Kerala Muslims often negotiate between religious values and modern lifestyles in their everyday practices.

Studies on Kerala Muslim wedding traditions indicate that the Nikah ceremony is the most significant religious component of marriage. It involves the declaration of consent, the presence of witnesses, and the establishment of the marriage contract according to Islamic principles. The practice of Mahr continues to represent the financial right of the bride, while Walima serves as an important social celebration that publicly recognizes the marriage and strengthens community relationships.

Research also highlights the importance of cultural practices surrounding Muslim weddings in Kerala. Rituals such as Mylanchi (henna ceremony), family gatherings, traditional food arrangements, bridal preparations, and visits between families reflect the influence of Kerala's regional culture. Although many of these practices are not religious obligations, they have become meaningful cultural expressions that strengthen family bonds and contribute to the celebration of marriage.

The role of family and kinship networks remains significant in Kerala Muslim marriage practices. Parents, elders, and relatives often participate in partner selection, marriage discussions, and wedding arrangements. Marriage is therefore understood as a relationship that connects families and communities rather than only individuals. Community participation, hospitality, and collective celebrations continue to be important features of Kerala Muslim weddings.

Contemporary studies also show that Kerala Muslim marriage rituals are undergoing changes due to modernization and digital influences. Practices such as professional photography, elaborate decorations, themed celebrations, and social media representation have become increasingly visible. However, these new practices generally exist alongside traditional elements such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, and family involvement.

The existing literature indicates that marriage rituals among Kerala Muslims are shaped by the continuous interaction between religious principles and regional cultural traditions. While modernization has introduced new forms of celebration, traditional religious rituals and community participation continue to remain central to Muslim marriages. This theme is directly relevant to the present study as it explores how Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Thiruvananthapuram maintain continuity while adapting to contemporary social changes.

2.8 CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN MUSLIM MARRIAGE PRACTICES

Muslim marriage practices are not identical across all communities; rather, they are shaped by the interaction between Islamic principles and local cultural traditions. Although Islam provides a common religious framework for marriage through practices such as Nikah, Mahr, consent, and witnesses, the rituals, customs, and forms of celebration differ according to regional history, social environment, and community practices. Therefore, Muslim marriages represent a combination of religious continuity and cultural adaptation.

Ahmad (1976) examined Muslim family and kinship patterns in India and explained that marriage practices are closely connected with the social and cultural background of different Muslim communities. He observed that while Islamic teachings provide the foundation of marriage, communities develop their own customs based on regional traditions and historical experiences. His study highlights that marriage functions not only as a religious practice but also as a social institution influenced by local conditions.

D'Souza (1976) studied social and cultural variations in Indian communities and emphasized that religious practices are often expressed through local cultural forms. His work helps to understand how Muslim communities incorporate regional traditions into marriage ceremonies while maintaining their religious identity. This interaction between religion and culture creates diversity in marriage rituals across different regions.

Bhat (2018) found that Muslim marriage practices in India show significant regional variations. The study explained that while the basic structure of marriage remains similar, customs related to wedding celebrations, family participation, food practices, clothing, and post-marriage rituals differ across communities. Bhat emphasized that these variations demonstrate the influence of local culture on the expression of Muslim marriage traditions.

DoddaHanumaiah (2023) further explained that Muslim marriage practices continue to change according to social and cultural transformations. The study observed that different communities have adopted various customs and celebrations based on their social environment, economic conditions, and exposure to modern influences. Although Islamic teachings encourage simplicity, cultural practices have contributed to the development of diverse wedding traditions.

Studies on Kerala Muslim communities particularly show the influence of regional culture on marriage practices. Traditions such as Mylanchi ceremonies, family gatherings, wedding feasts,

hospitality practices, and community participation reflect the cultural identity of Kerala Muslims. These practices are not compulsory religious requirements but have become important cultural expressions associated with marriage celebrations.

The literature also indicates that regional variations do not necessarily weaken religious identity. Instead, communities often negotiate between maintaining Islamic principles and adapting marriage practices according to local cultural contexts. This process allows religious traditions to continue while incorporating socially meaningful customs.

The existing studies demonstrate that Muslim marriage practices are shaped by both religious foundations and cultural influences. However, limited research has focused specifically on how regional culture influences contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala, particularly in the context of Thiruvananthapuram. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore how cultural traditions and regional influences contribute to the continuity and transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

2.9 CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE RITUALS

Traditional marriage rituals continue to remain an important part of Muslim marriage practices despite social, economic, and cultural changes. Continuity refers to the preservation of religious values, cultural customs, and symbolic practices that are transmitted from one generation to another. In Muslim communities, rituals such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, family involvement, and community participation continue to hold significance because they represent religious identity, social relationships, and cultural belonging. Studies indicate that while the forms of marriage celebrations may change over time, many traditional elements continue to be preserved.

Akhtar (2018) examined contemporary Muslim marriage practices and observed that modernization has influenced the style and organization of weddings, but the fundamental religious structure of marriage remains unchanged. The study highlighted that practices such as Nikah and Mahr continue to be considered essential components of Muslim marriage because of their religious importance. According to Akhtar, new customs are often added to marriage celebrations without replacing the traditional foundation of marriage.

Jamil et al. (2023) studied changing patterns of Muslim marriage practices and found that traditional rituals continue to maintain social and cultural importance. Their research showed that family participation, religious ceremonies, and community involvement remain central features of Muslim weddings even when modern elements are introduced. The study

emphasized that continuity of traditional practices provides a sense of identity and connection with previous generations.

Traditional rituals also play an important role in strengthening family and community relationships. Practices such as the involvement of elders, marriage negotiations between families, wedding feasts, and post-marriage visits help maintain social bonds. These customs demonstrate that marriage is not viewed only as a relationship between individuals but also as a connection between families and wider social networks.

In the context of Kerala Muslim communities, traditional practices continue to occupy an important position in marriage celebrations. The religious significance of Nikah, the role of Mahr, the celebration of Walima, and the participation of relatives and community members remain central features of weddings. At the same time, cultural practices developed within Kerala society continue to be maintained as expressions of family unity and social identity.

The literature suggests that continuity does not mean the complete absence of change. Instead, traditional marriage rituals are often adapted according to changing social conditions. Modern forms of celebration may appear alongside traditional practices, creating a situation where religious values and cultural customs continue within new social contexts.

Therefore, previous studies show that traditional Muslim marriage rituals have remained significant despite modernization and changing lifestyles. However, limited studies have explored how these traditional practices are maintained and modified within contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala. The present study attempts to examine this relationship by analysing the continuity of traditional rituals along with emerging changes in marriage practices.

2.10 MODERNIZATION AND CHANGING MARRIAGE PRACTICES

Modernization has significantly influenced marriage practices by transforming the way marriages are planned, celebrated, and understood. Social changes such as globalization, education, urbanization, technological development, and changing lifestyles have introduced new forms of marriage celebrations and expectations. Although traditional religious and cultural values continue to remain important, contemporary marriages increasingly reflect the influence of modern ideas, consumer culture, and changing social aspirations. Therefore, modern marriage practices represent an interaction between continuity and social transformation.

Akhtar (2018) examined changes in Muslim marriage practices and explained that contemporary Muslim weddings reflect a combination of traditional values and modern influences. The study observed that while religious elements such as Nikah and Mahr continue to maintain their importance, new practices and styles of celebration have become increasingly common among younger generations. These changes indicate that Muslim marriage practices are adapting according to changing social environments.

Jamil et al. (2023) explored the impact of modernization on Muslim marriage patterns and found that new forms of celebration have become more visible in contemporary weddings. The study highlighted the growing popularity of practices such as Mehendi functions, Haldi ceremonies, pre-wedding photography, themed celebrations, and elaborate wedding arrangements. According to the study, these changes are influenced by changing lifestyles, media exposure, and the aspirations of younger generations.

Mustafa and Salama (2025) discussed the relationship between modern wedding practices and Islamic principles of simplicity. Their study highlighted that modernization has contributed to increasing expectations regarding grand celebrations, expensive arrangements, and multiple wedding events. They explained that contemporary Muslim communities often experience tension between maintaining religious values of simplicity and adopting modern celebrations influenced by social competition and consumer culture.

Modernization has also influenced decision-making patterns within marriage. Increasing education, especially among women, has contributed to greater participation of individuals in marriage-related decisions. Younger generations increasingly express preferences regarding partner choice, wedding styles, and family expectations. This reflects broader changes in gender relations, individual autonomy, and social attitudes towards marriage.

In Kerala Muslim communities, modernization has introduced visible changes in wedding practices while traditional elements continue to exist. Contemporary weddings may include professional photography, event management, modern clothing styles, and digital representations, while rituals such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, and family participation remain important. This demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily replace traditional practices but reshapes the way they are performed and understood.

The existing literature shows that Muslim marriage practices are continuously transforming due to modernization and changing social conditions. However, these changes occur within the framework of religious and cultural traditions rather than completely replacing them. The

present study is significant as it examines how Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala negotiate between traditional values and modern wedding trends.

2.11 MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND CONTEMPORARY WEDDINGS

The influence of media and digital technology has brought significant changes in contemporary marriage practices. Weddings that were traditionally considered private family and community events have increasingly become public representations of identity, lifestyle, and social status through digital platforms. Social media, online matrimonial platforms, wedding photography, and video documentation have transformed the way marriages are planned, presented, and experienced. These technological changes have created new expectations regarding wedding celebrations while also influencing the meanings attached to marriage rituals.

Appadurai (1996) explained that globalization and media create cultural flows through which people develop new aspirations, lifestyles, and practices. His concept of the global cultural economy helps to understand how wedding trends spread across societies through digital communication and visual media. Through social media platforms, individuals are exposed to different wedding styles, fashion trends, and celebration patterns, which influence contemporary marriage expectations.

Bourdieu (1984) examined social practices through the concepts of cultural capital and symbolic distinction. He argued that lifestyle choices and consumption patterns often become symbols of social identity and status. This perspective is useful in understanding contemporary weddings where designer clothing, professional photography, elaborate decorations, and grand celebrations may function as symbols of prestige and social recognition.

Baudrillard (1998) discussed the role of symbols and images in modern consumer societies. His ideas help explain the increasing importance of visual representation in contemporary weddings. Wedding photographs, videos, and social media posts are no longer limited to preserving memories; they also create symbolic meanings related to happiness, success, social position, and personal identity.

Recent studies on digital culture indicate that platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and online wedding media have influenced young people's expectations regarding marriage celebrations. Practices such as pre-wedding photography, cinematic wedding videos, themed decorations, and online sharing of wedding moments have become increasingly common. These trends demonstrate how digital platforms shape both the performance and representation of marriage rituals.

Technology has also influenced partner selection and communication patterns among younger generations. Online matrimonial platforms have expanded opportunities for finding marital partners and have changed traditional methods of marriage negotiations. While family involvement continues to remain important in many communities, digital technology has created new spaces for interaction and decision-making.

In the context of Muslim marriages, media and technology have influenced the visibility and presentation of wedding practices. Religious rituals such as Nikah and Walima continue to remain central, while cultural celebrations such as Mehendi and other wedding events are increasingly represented through digital platforms. However, media-driven wedding trends have also contributed to social comparison, increased expectations, and financial pressure among families.

The existing literature shows that media and technology have become important factors in shaping contemporary wedding culture. Digital platforms have created new forms of wedding representation where tradition and modernity interact with each other. However, limited research has examined how media influence the transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore the role of digital influence in shaping contemporary marriage practices among the Sunni Muslim community.

2.12 ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS AND SOCIAL PRESSURE IN MARRIAGE CELEBRATIONS

Economic factors play an important role in shaping marriage practices and celebrations. Marriage is not only a social and religious event but also an occasion connected with financial arrangements, social expectations, and family status. In contemporary societies, wedding celebrations have increasingly become associated with expenses related to multiple functions, clothing, decorations, photography, food arrangements, and event management. Studies indicate that economic conditions and social competition influence how families organize marriages and adopt new wedding practices.

Bourdieu (1984) explained that social practices often function as forms of symbolic distinction through which individuals and families express their social position. His concept of cultural capital helps to understand how wedding celebrations can become a means of displaying status, prestige, and social identity. In contemporary marriages, expensive arrangements, fashionable clothing, and grand celebrations may be used by families to demonstrate their social standing within the community.

Mustafa and Salama (2025) examined the relationship between modern wedding practices and social pressures in Muslim communities. Their study highlighted that increasing expectations regarding elaborate celebrations have contributed to financial burdens on families. They observed that competition, social comparison, and the desire to maintain reputation often encourage families to organize expensive weddings despite the religious emphasis on simplicity and moderation.

Economic conditions also influence the adoption of modern wedding trends. Families with greater financial resources may introduce new practices such as large-scale celebrations, professional photography, and luxury arrangements, while other families may feel pressure to follow similar trends to maintain social acceptance. Thus, economic differences contribute to variations in marriage practices across communities.

In the context of Muslim marriages, economic issues are closely connected with concepts such as Mahr, wedding expenses, and social expectations. Islamic principles emphasize Mahr as the financial right of the bride and encourage simplicity in marriage celebrations. However, cultural practices and contemporary consumer influences have sometimes increased the financial demands associated with weddings. This creates a tension between religious ideals of simplicity and modern expectations of celebration.

Studies on Indian and Kerala Muslim communities also highlight the role of family honour and social reputation in marriage arrangements. Families may invest significant resources in weddings because marriage is viewed as an important social event involving relatives, friends, and the wider community. Expenses related to hospitality, food, and ceremonies often become symbols of family prestige and social relationships.

The existing literature indicates that economic factors and social pressures significantly influence contemporary marriage practices. While modernization has expanded the forms of wedding celebrations, it has also increased financial expectations and social competition. However, limited studies have examined how economic pressures shape changing marriage rituals among Sunni Muslims in Kerala. The present study attempts to explore how financial considerations, social expectations, and changing wedding trends influence the continuity and transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

2.13 GENDER AND MARRIAGE TRANSFORMATIONS

Gender is an important dimension in understanding marriage practices because marriage is not only a social and religious institution but also a space where gender roles, expectations, and

power relations are shaped and negotiated. Traditional marriage practices often reflect social ideas regarding masculinity, femininity, family responsibilities, and authority. However, changes in education, employment opportunities, awareness, and social transformation have influenced the participation and expectations of both men and women in marriage-related decisions and family life.

Mernissi (1991) examined gender relations within Muslim societies and highlighted the importance of distinguishing between Islamic principles and cultural practices. She argued that while Islamic teachings recognize the dignity and rights of women, social interpretations and patriarchal structures have often influenced women's position within marriage. Her work emphasizes the need to understand how Muslim women negotiate their roles within marriage while balancing religious values and changing social expectations.

Dube (1997) analysed gender, kinship, and family structures in Indian society and explained that marriage practices are closely connected with gender socialization. She highlighted that women's identities are often shaped through family roles, domestic responsibilities, and cultural expectations associated with marriage. Dube's work shows that marriage rituals are not only celebrations but also spaces where gender norms are transmitted across generations.

Uberoi (1993) examined marriage and family relationships in India and discussed the changing nature of marital relationships due to modernization and social transformation. She observed that although traditional expectations regarding family roles continue to influence marriage, increasing education and individual aspirations have created new forms of negotiation within marital relationships. Her work helps to understand the balance between family expectations and individual choices in contemporary marriages.

Studies on Muslim families indicate that gender continues to influence various aspects of marriage, including partner selection, wedding responsibilities, and expectations after marriage. Women often play significant roles in maintaining family traditions, organizing rituals, and preserving cultural practices. At the same time, increasing educational opportunities and social awareness have contributed to greater involvement of women in decisions related to marriage, education, employment, and future family roles.

Changes in marriage practices have also influenced ideas of masculinity. Contemporary weddings increasingly involve new expectations regarding men's appearance, financial responsibilities, and participation in wedding arrangements. Thus, marriage transformations affect both women and men by reshaping traditional gender roles and social expectations.

The existing literature demonstrates that marriage practices are closely connected with gender relations and changing social structures. Previous studies have mainly focused on women's roles, patriarchal influences, and family relationships, while limited attention has been given to how gender roles are negotiated within changing Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Kerala. Therefore, the present study examines how changing gender relations, family expectations, and individual participation influence the continuity and transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

2.14 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MARRIAGE PRACTICES

Marriage practices are dynamic social processes that continuously transform according to changing social, cultural, economic, and technological conditions. Sociological studies on continuity and change explain that social institutions do not completely disappear with modernization; instead, they adapt according to new circumstances. In the context of marriage, continuity refers to the preservation of religious values, cultural traditions, and symbolic practices, while change refers to the emergence of new customs, expectations, and forms of celebration influenced by modernization, globalization, and changing lifestyles.

Giddens (1992) examined the changing nature of intimate relationships in modern societies and explained that modernization has transformed the meaning and experience of marriage. He argued that individual choice, emotional satisfaction, and personal identity have become increasingly important in contemporary relationships. However, Giddens emphasized that traditional structures continue to influence individuals, creating a process where people negotiate between inherited social expectations and modern values.

Robertson (1992) introduced the concept of globalization and glocalization to explain how global influences interact with local cultures. His perspective suggests that communities do not simply adopt global trends but modify them according to their own cultural contexts. This idea is relevant to contemporary Muslim marriages, where modern practices such as photography, themed celebrations, and digital representation are often combined with traditional rituals such as Nikah and Walima.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) examined the transformation of family relationships in modern societies and highlighted the influence of individualization on marriage. They argued

that individuals increasingly seek personal choice and autonomy in relationships, while family traditions and social responsibilities continue to influence marital decisions. This creates a balance between individual aspirations and collective expectations within marriage practices.

Singh (1973) analysed modernization in Indian society and explained that social change does not always result in the replacement of traditional values. Instead, modernization often leads to adaptation, where existing traditions are modified according to new social realities. His perspective is useful for understanding Indian Muslim marriage practices, where religious customs and cultural traditions continue alongside modern influences.

Studies on Muslim marriage practices show that continuity and change occur simultaneously. Akhtar (2018) observed that contemporary Muslim marriages preserve essential religious elements such as Nikah and Mahr while incorporating new practices influenced by changing lifestyles. Similarly, Jamil et al. (2023) found that modernization has introduced new forms of wedding celebrations and influenced younger generations' expectations, but these changes do not necessarily represent the rejection of traditional values.

Mustafa and Salama (2025) highlighted the tension between Islamic principles of simplicity and contemporary wedding practices influenced by consumer culture and social competition. Their study explained that Muslim communities often negotiate between preserving religious values and adopting modern forms of celebration.

The existing literature demonstrates that marriage practices represent a continuous interaction between tradition and transformation. Religious rituals, family values, and cultural identities continue to provide a foundation for marriage, while modernization, media, economic changes, and changing social expectations introduce new forms of practice. However, limited research has examined how this process of continuity and change operates specifically among Sunni Muslim communities in Kerala. Therefore, the present study explores how Sunni Muslim marriage rituals and practices are preserved, modified, and negotiated within changing social conditions.

2.15 RESEARCH GAP

Although several studies have examined Muslim marriage from religious, historical, and cultural perspectives, limited research has specifically focused on contemporary marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community in Kerala. Existing studies mainly discuss Islamic principles, family structures, or broader Muslim communities, while the everyday experiences and changing practices of Sunni Muslim families remain less explored.

Therefore, there is a need for context-specific studies that examine how religious values and cultural traditions influence contemporary marriage practices in Kerala.

Most previous research on Muslim marriage practices has focused on theoretical, legal, or cultural aspects of marriage. Limited attention has been given to the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals who participate in marriage rituals and celebrations. The meanings attached to traditional practices, acceptance of modern wedding trends, and generational differences require deeper exploration through qualitative research. Therefore, more studies are needed to understand marriage practices from the perspectives of community members themselves.

Previous studies have identified the influence of modernization, globalization, and media on changing wedding practices. However, limited research has examined how traditional Islamic rituals and modern wedding trends coexist within Sunni Muslim marriages. Practices such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, Mehendi, Haldi, pre-wedding photography, and social media representation require further sociological investigation to understand how communities negotiate between religious values, cultural traditions, and contemporary lifestyles.

Existing literature has discussed marriage expenses, social expectations, and changing lifestyles, but limited studies have explored how economic pressures, social competition, and family expectations influence wedding decisions among Sunni Muslim communities in Kerala. Further research is needed to understand how families balance religious principles of simplicity with contemporary expectations of elaborate celebrations.

While studies have examined Muslim communities in India and Kerala broadly, limited sociological research has specifically focused on Sunni Muslim marriage practices in the Thiruvananthapuram region. The cultural context, local traditions, and changing social conditions of this area require further investigation. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by exploring the continuity and transformation of marriage rituals among Sunni Muslims in Thiruvananthapuram.

2.16 CONCLUSION

The review of literature shows that marriage is a significant social institution influenced by religious beliefs, cultural traditions, family relationships, economic conditions, and changing social realities. Previous studies have examined marriage from different sociological perspectives and have highlighted its role in maintaining social continuity, kinship relations, and cultural identity.

The literature on Muslim marriage indicates that Islamic principles such as Nikah, Mahr, consent, witnesses, and family responsibilities form the basic foundation of marriage. However, studies also reveal that Muslim marriage practices are not uniform and are shaped by regional cultures, historical experiences, and community-specific traditions. In the Indian and Kerala contexts, marriage practices represent an interaction between Islamic values and local cultural influences.

The reviewed studies further demonstrate that contemporary marriage practices are undergoing changes due to modernization, globalization, media influence, economic transformations, and changing generational perspectives. While traditional rituals and religious practices continue to maintain their importance, new forms of wedding celebrations have emerged, reflecting changing lifestyles and social expectations. These changes show that marriage practices are continuously negotiated between tradition and modernity.

Although existing studies have contributed significantly to understanding Muslim marriage practices, limited attention has been given to the contemporary experiences of the Sunni Muslim community in Kerala, particularly regarding how traditional rituals are maintained, modified, and reinterpreted in changing social conditions. There is also a need for more qualitative studies focusing on the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in marriage practices.

Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by exploring “Marriage Rituals and Practices among Sunni Muslims: Continuity and Change” with special reference to the Sunni Muslim community in Thiruvananthapuram. The study aims to understand how religious values, cultural traditions, modernization, and social changes influence the continuity and transformation of contemporary Muslim marriage practices.

CHAPTER III-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology refers to the systematic process adopted by a researcher to conduct a scientific investigation. It explains the methods, techniques, and procedures used for collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. A well-planned research methodology ensures that the study is conducted in a logical, reliable, and systematic manner. It also helps readers understand how the research was carried out and provides a clear basis for evaluating the validity and credibility of the findings.

The present study, titled “Marriage Rituals and Practices among Sunni Muslims: Continuity and Change,” seeks to understand the continuity of traditional marriage rituals and the changes that have taken place in contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions and plays an important role in maintaining family life, cultural identity, and religious values. Among Sunni Muslims, marriage rituals are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings while also reflecting the influence of local customs and cultural traditions. In recent years, however, rapid social change, modernization, globalization, technological advancement, and the widespread use of social media have introduced several new practices into marriage celebrations. As a result, contemporary Muslim weddings often display a combination of traditional religious rituals and modern cultural celebrations.

Since the study focuses on understanding people’s experiences, opinions, beliefs, perceptions, and interpretations regarding marriage rituals, a qualitative research approach was considered the most suitable. Rather than measuring numerical data, the study aims to explore how individuals from different generations understand marriage customs, how they perceive the changes taking place, and how they balance religious values with modern social influences. Qualitative research provides an opportunity to understand the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences and allows respondents to express their views in their own words.

The study was conducted among Sunni Muslims residing in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. Respondents belonging to different age groups and both genders were selected to understand generational differences in marriage rituals and practices. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, while secondary information was gathered from books, research articles, journals, dissertations, reports, and other relevant academic sources.

The collected information was carefully analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the major patterns, similarities, and differences in the responses.

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted for the study in detail. It explains the title of the study, research questions, general and specific objectives, research design, rationale for adopting a qualitative approach, sampling procedure, area of the study, sources of data, tools of data collection, interview guide, field observation, field notes, methods of data analysis, and the limitations of the study. The methodology provides the overall framework that guided the research process and ensured that the objectives of the study were achieved in a systematic and scientifically appropriate manner.

3.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY

“MARRIAGE RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG SUNNI MUSLIMS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.”

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.3.1 GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How do marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community continue and change in the context of modernization and social transformation?

3.3.2 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the traditional marriage rituals and practices followed among the Sunni Muslim community?
- What changes have occurred in Sunni Muslim marriage practices in recent years?
- What are the social, cultural, and modern factors influencing changes in marriage rituals?
- How do media, globalization, and changing lifestyles influence contemporary Muslim marriage celebrations?
- How do younger and older generations differ in their perceptions regarding changing marriage practices?
- How do Sunni Muslim families balance religious values and modern cultural trends in marriage ceremonies?

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the overall plan and structure adopted by the researcher for conducting a study. It provides a framework for collecting and analyzing information in a systematic manner. The present study follows a descriptive and exploratory research design.

The descriptive nature of the study helps to understand and document the existing marriage rituals and practices followed among the Sunni Muslim community. It describes important traditional practices such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, family involvement, and other customs associated with marriage ceremonies.

The exploratory aspect of the research helps to examine the changes taking place in contemporary Muslim marriages. It explores how modernization, social media, globalization, and changing social expectations influence the adoption of new practices such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, Groom-to-Be functions, and pre-wedding photoshoots. Through this research design, the study attempts to understand both the continuity of traditional religious practices and the emergence of new cultural trends in Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative approach was selected because the objective of the study is not to measure marriage practices numerically but to gain an in-depth understanding of the social meanings and experiences associated with them. The study aims to explore why certain rituals continue, why new practices emerge, and how individuals and families negotiate between religious values and modern influences.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the main method of data collection, allowing respondents to freely express their opinions and personal experiences. This method provided detailed information about traditional customs such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, Acharam, Adukkala Kaanal, and Maruveedu, as well as contemporary practices such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, and pre-wedding photoshoots.

The qualitative approach also helped in understanding generational differences by including respondents from younger, middle, and older age groups. Their narratives provided insights into how marriage rituals have changed over time while maintaining certain religious and cultural elements.

3.6 SAMPLING

The present study adopted purposive sampling as the sampling technique because the study required respondents who had knowledge and experience regarding Sunni Muslim marriage rituals and practices.

The respondents were selected based on specific criteria, including their belonging to the Sunni Muslim community, willingness to participate in the study, and their ability to provide information regarding traditional and contemporary marriage practices. The study included respondents from different age groups and both genders to understand variations in perceptions regarding continuity and changes in marriage rituals.

A total of seven respondents were selected for the study. The inclusion of respondents from different generations helped the researcher to examine how traditional marriage customs are maintained, modified, or replaced by new practices. Their experiences provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between religious values, cultural traditions, and modern influences in Sunni Muslim marriages.

3.7 SOURCES OF DATA

The present study used both primary and secondary sources of data to collect relevant information. The combination of these sources helped the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of marriage rituals and practices among Sunni Muslims.

3.7.1 PRIMARY SOURCE OF DATA

Primary data refers to the original information collected directly from respondents by the researcher. In this study, primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted among selected Sunni Muslim respondents residing in Thiruvananthapuram district. The interviews focused on their personal experiences, perceptions, and opinions regarding traditional marriage rituals, changing practices, factors influencing these changes, and the role of modern social influences.

The use of primary data helped the researcher to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they attach to marriage rituals within their social and cultural context.

3.7.2 SECONDARY SOURCE OF DATA

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected and published by other researchers or institutions. For the present study, secondary data were collected from books, academic journals, research articles, dissertations, reports, online academic sources, and other relevant materials related to marriage, Muslim communities, rituals, social change, modernization, and cultural practices.

Secondary sources supported the theoretical understanding of the study and helped in comparing the findings of the present research with existing sociological studies.

3.8 TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The tool of data collection refers to the instrument used by the researcher for gathering information from respondents. Since the study follows a qualitative approach, an interview guide was used as the main tool for collecting primary data.

The interview tool consisted of questions related to respondents' personal background, traditional marriage rituals, contemporary changes in marriage celebrations, factors influencing these changes, the role of media and globalization, and differences between older and younger generations. The flexible nature of the interview schedule allowed respondents to share detailed experiences and opinions beyond the prepared questions.

3.8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

An interview guide was prepared to ensure that all relevant areas related to the research objectives were covered during the interviews. The guide included open-ended questions that encouraged respondents to express their views freely.

The major areas covered in the interview guide included:

- Personal background information of respondents.
- Understanding of traditional Sunni Muslim marriage rituals.
- Importance of religious practices such as Nikah, Mahr, and Walima.
- Role of family and community in marriage arrangements.
- Changes in marriage celebrations and emerging modern practices.
- Influence of social media, globalization, and changing lifestyles.
- Differences in attitudes between younger and older generations.
- Views regarding the balance between religious values and modern trends.

The interview guide helped maintain consistency during data collection while also allowing flexibility for exploring important themes emerging from respondents' narratives.

3.9 FIELD OBSERVATION

Field observation is an important component of qualitative research that enables the researcher to understand social practices within their natural setting. During the research process, the researcher observed aspects related to marriage practices, cultural expressions, and social interactions within the community.

The observations focused on the ways in which traditional rituals and modern celebrations are combined in contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages. Attention was given to practices such as

wedding arrangements, participation of family members, celebration styles and the influence of modern elements in marriage functions.

Field observation helped to complement the interview data and provided additional understanding of the social context in which marriage rituals are practiced.

3.10 FIELD NOTES

Field notes refer to the written records maintained by the researcher during and after the data collection process. They include important observations, reflections, respondent expressions, and details about the research environment.

In this study, field notes were prepared during interviews to record significant points, non-verbal expressions, and additional information shared by respondents. These notes helped the researcher during the process of organizing, interpreting, and analysing the collected data.

Field notes also contributed to maintaining accuracy and depth in presenting respondents' experiences and narratives.

3.11 AREA OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted among Sunni Muslims residing in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. Kerala has a diverse social and cultural background, where Muslim communities have maintained religious traditions while also adapting to changing social conditions.

Thiruvananthapuram district represents a social environment where traditional customs and modern lifestyles coexist. Changes in education, technology, migration, media influence, and urbanization have contributed to transformations in family life and marriage practices. Therefore, the area was selected to understand how Sunni Muslim marriage rituals continue and change within the context of contemporary social transformation.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of organizing, interpreting, and deriving meaning from the collected information. Since the present study follows a qualitative research approach, the collected interview data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data. The responses collected from the respondents were carefully examined to identify common ideas related to traditional rituals, changing practices, social

influences, generational differences, and perceptions regarding contemporary marriage celebrations.

The analysis process involved familiarization with the interview responses, coding important information, identifying major themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to the research objectives. Thematic analysis helped the researcher understand how Sunni Muslim marriage practices reflect both continuity of religious traditions and adaptation to modern social changes.

3.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted among a limited number of respondents, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to the entire Sunni Muslim community.

Since the study adopted a qualitative approach, the findings are based on respondents' personal experiences, opinions, and perceptions, which may differ among individuals and families. The study was also limited to Sunni Muslims residing in Thiruvananthapuram district; therefore, marriage practices followed in other regions may vary.

Time constraints and the availability of respondents also influenced the scope of data collection. However, efforts were made to collect detailed information from respondents belonging to different age groups and genders to develop a broader understanding of continuity and change in Sunni Muslim marriage rituals

CHAPTER IV-DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

CASE PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This section introduces how the collected qualitative data was analysed and presented. Since the study aims to understand the continuity and changes in marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community, the data collected through semi-structured interviews from selected respondents is analysed using thematic analysis. The responses of participants were carefully examined to identify common patterns, experiences, perceptions, and differences regarding traditional and contemporary marriage practices.

The chapter begins with the presentation of individual case narrations of the respondents to provide a detailed understanding of their personal experiences and viewpoints. Following this, the data is interpreted through thematic analysis, where major themes emerging from the interviews are discussed in relation to the objectives of the study. The themes highlight the importance of religious rituals, continuation of traditional customs, influence of modern trends, role of social media, changing attitudes among generations, and the economic dimensions of contemporary marriages.

The narratives and thematic interpretation together provide an understanding of how Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala represent a combination of religious values, cultural traditions, and modern transformations.

4.2 CASE NARRATION

This section presents the individual narratives of the respondents who participated in the study. Each case narration describes the respondent's background, personal experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding marriage rituals and changing practices within the Sunni Muslim community. The purpose of presenting case narrations is to understand the lived experiences of individuals and how they interpret the continuity and transformation of marriage customs.

4.2.1 CASE 1 (SHAFEEK S 23)

He is a 23-year-old male respondent from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community and is currently working as an accountant after completing his B.Com. Coming from a nuclear family background, he has participated in Muslim marriage ceremonies and has gained an understanding of marriage rituals through his experiences within the family and community. His views reflect the perspective of a young educated person who observes both

the continuation of traditional Islamic practices and the emergence of new trends in contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages.

According to him, the foundation of Muslim marriage is the Nikah ceremony, which continues to hold the highest importance among Sunni Muslims. He explains that Nikah is not merely a legal process but a religious agreement between the bride's father and the groom. He also highlights the importance of Mahr, which is given by the groom to the bride as part of the marriage. For him, Nikah represents the religious identity and legitimacy of marriage, while other celebrations are additional social practices connected with the occasion.

He explains that earlier marriage practices followed a more traditional pattern, beginning with Acharam, followed by the confirmation of marriage and then Nikah. After the Nikah, a feast or reception would be conducted, along with small gatherings at the bride's and groom's houses before the main ceremony. He considers the involvement of relatives as an important part of marriage practices, as they provide financial assistance, support the family, and participate in the happiness of the occasion.

While discussing the changes in present-day marriage practices, he observes that weddings have become more elaborate compared to earlier times. He mentions that new celebrations such as Bride-to-Be, Groom-to-Be functions, Save-the-Date events, Mehendi Night, and Haldi ceremonies have become common among the younger generation. According to him, these practices are mainly cultural rather than religious and have become popular due to changing lifestyles and social influences.

He particularly highlights the role of social media in transforming marriage celebrations. According to him, platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook influence people's expectations regarding weddings. Many people organise additional functions, professional photography, and attractive decorations mainly to share their celebrations online and to present their social status. He believes that cinema, fashion, and global wedding trends also contribute to the adoption of new practices in Muslim marriages.

The respondent expresses concern regarding the increasing expenses associated with modern weddings. He explains that families from different economic backgrounds often try to conduct celebrations similar to others, which can create financial difficulties and even lead to debt. According to him, marriage celebrations should be organised according to the financial capacity of families rather than being influenced by social competition. He also connects the increase in wedding expenses with inflation and the rising cost of living.

Regarding religion and culture, he clearly differentiates between religious rituals and modern additions. He considers Nikah as the main religious practice, while activities such as Mehendi, Haldi, and other celebrations are viewed as cultural practices without direct religious significance. He feels that some modern practices may conflict with the values of simplicity and modesty in Islam. However, he observes that families have gradually accepted these changes while continuing to maintain important religious customs.

He also points out differences between older and younger generations in their understanding of marriage practices. According to him, older people generally prefer simple marriages with fewer ceremonies, whereas younger people show more interest in conducting multiple functions and following new trends. Although elderly members may not fully support these changes, they still participate in such events due to family relationships and social expectations.

Overall, his narrative reflects the complex nature of contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices, where religious traditions continue to remain strong while cultural practices undergo continuous transformation. His experiences show how marriage rituals are shaped by the interaction of religion, modernisation, social media influence, economic factors, and changing generational attitudes.

4.2.2 CASE 2 (SIYAM K. S, 27)

He is a 27-year-old male respondent from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community and is currently working in billing and cash handling after completing a Diploma in Electronics Engineering. Coming from a joint family background, he has actively participated in Muslim marriage ceremonies and has observed both traditional and contemporary wedding practices within his community. His responses reflect the perspective of a young educated individual who views marriage as a religious institution while also recognising the influence of modernisation, commercialisation, and changing social expectations on present-day Sunni Muslim marriages.

According to Siyam, the important traditional practices followed among Sunni Muslims include Nikah, Mahr, Mailanchi Raavu, and Walima. Among these, he considers Nikah as the most significant element of Muslim marriage. He explains that Nikah is not only a religious ceremony but also a fundamental legal contract that legitimises the relationship between a man and a woman according to Islamic principles. He highlights that the presence of the Wali, witnesses, and the giving of Mahr are essential aspects that provide religious validity to the marriage.

While discussing earlier marriage practices, Siyam explains that traditional marriages were closely connected with family participation and community involvement. He mentions practices such as Pennukanal and Valayidal as important pre-wedding customs, while Veettil Koodal was followed after marriage. According to him, these practices reflected the importance of family relationships and social connections in earlier marriage arrangements.

The respondent considers family members as the backbone of marriage ceremonies. He explains that relatives play a major role in organising and supporting the functions, while the bride's father performs the role of the Wali by providing consent for the marriage. According to him, marriage is not an individual affair but a collective responsibility involving family members and the wider community.

Siyam gives strong importance to religious customs in marriage practices. He states that rituals such as the Nikah sermon, Dua, and Mahr are foundational and cannot be separated from Muslim marriage. He explains that Islamic teachings encourage simplicity and discourage unnecessary expenditure. According to him, the most blessed marriage is considered to be the one with the least financial burden, reflecting the traditional Islamic emphasis on simplicity and moderation.

While explaining the changes in recent marriage practices, Siyam observes that there has been a major transformation from simple, home-based, community-oriented weddings to highly organised and commercialised events. He notes that many present-day marriages are conducted in luxury auditoriums with the involvement of professional event management companies. According to him, weddings have gradually become large-scale celebrations where appearance, presentation, and entertainment receive greater importance.

He mentions that new practices such as Sangeet-style musical nights, cinematic entries of the bride and groom, flash mobs, and large multi-cuisine food arrangements have become increasingly common. He also observes that celebrations like Mehendi, Haldi, pre-wedding photoshoots, and Bride-to-Be functions have become normal among the younger generation. According to him, these practices are becoming popular mainly due to social media influence, the Gulf remittance economy, and the promotion of wedding trends by event management industries.

Siyam explains that contemporary weddings have changed significantly compared to earlier generations. Earlier marriages were mainly managed by family members and neighbours, with greater emphasis on home-based celebrations and community participation. In contrast,

present-day weddings have become multi-day events organised in premium venues with advanced technology, LED screens, drone cameras, cinematic photography, and professionally planned programmes. He believes that weddings are increasingly being presented as grand experiences rather than only religious and family occasions.

Regarding increasing wedding expenses, the respondent states that present-day marriages are significantly more expensive due to the involvement of commercial services. He identifies event planners, cinematic photography, multiple designer outfits, and large catering arrangements as major reasons for the increase in expenditure. According to him, the increasing focus on luxury and presentation has created financial pressure on many families.

The respondent strongly acknowledges the influence of social media on modern marriage celebrations. He explains that many couples now design their weddings in ways that are attractive for online presentation. According to him, weddings have become highly influenced by the desire to create digital memories through photographs and videos. He also highlights the influence of cinema and fashion trends, especially in bridal clothing, stage arrangements, groom entries, smoke effects, and other entertainment-based elements.

According to Siyam, event management, photography, and decoration have become central components of modern weddings. He explains that event managers now handle almost every aspect of wedding organisation, from hospitality arrangements to stage execution. He observes that photography has changed from simple documentation to a cinematic production involving professional filming and creative presentation.

While discussing religion and culture, Siyam clearly distinguishes between religious practices and cultural additions. He believes that only the core elements such as Nikah, Wali's consent, witnesses, and Mahr have religious importance. Practices such as Haldi ceremonies, elaborate Mehendi nights, multiple designer outfits, luxury vehicle arrangements, multi-cuisine buffets, and destination photoshoots are viewed by him as cultural practices influenced by modern lifestyles rather than religious requirements.

He also expresses concern that some present-day wedding practices may go against Islamic principles of simplicity and modesty. According to him, excessive spending and unnecessary luxury have been criticised by many religious scholars and community elders. However, he explains that families often attempt to balance religious values and modern trends by keeping the Nikah ceremony traditional while including modern celebrations as family functions.

Siyam observes significant differences between older and younger generations regarding marriage practices. According to him, older generations give more importance to religious authenticity, community bonding, and simplicity, whereas younger generations view weddings as personal celebrations and opportunities to create memorable experiences. He explains that disagreements often occur between generations regarding wedding budgets, the involvement of event planners, and practices such as outdoor pre-wedding photography.

Regarding the future of Muslim marriage practices, Siyam believes that weddings may become increasingly digitalised and standardised. He suggests that virtual live-streaming for relatives living abroad may become a permanent feature of future weddings. At the same time, he believes that economic pressures may encourage some families to move towards simpler and more minimal celebrations.

Overall, Siyam's narrative reflects the changing nature of Sunni Muslim marriage practices, where religious foundations continue to remain strong while external forms of celebration undergo rapid transformation. His case highlights the ongoing negotiation between Islamic values, modern lifestyles, digital influences, and economic realities. His experience shows that contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings in Kerala are attempting to balance the preservation of religious identity with the adoption of changing social and cultural practices.

4.2.3 CASE 3 (AFIYA S, 20)

She is a 20-year-old female respondent from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community and is currently pursuing her education after completing a Diploma in Anesthesia. Coming from a nuclear family background, she has participated in Muslim marriage ceremonies and has observed various traditional and modern marriage practices within her community. Her views represent the perspective of a young woman who understands marriage rituals through both religious values and the changing social practices experienced by the younger generation.

According to Afiya, traditional Sunni Muslim marriages include several customs performed before and after the wedding ceremony. She explains that gatherings are usually conducted at both the bride's and groom's houses on the day before the wedding. On the wedding day, the bride's family visits the groom's house as part of the custom known as "Adukkala Kaanal," where they visit and see the groom's household. Similarly, after the marriage, the groom's family visits the bride's house as part of the tradition known as "Veedu Kaanal." She considers these practices as important customs that strengthen relationships between the two families.

Afiya gives the highest importance to Nikah in Muslim marriage practices. According to her, the wedding celebration itself is mainly a social function, whereas Nikah is the most significant religious aspect of marriage. She explains that Nikah is a formal marriage contract conducted in the presence of religious scholars, the bride's family, and the groom. For her, Nikah is the ceremony that officially establishes the relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife according to Islamic principles.

While discussing earlier marriage practices, Afiya mentions customs such as “Acharam Veykkal” and “Valayidakkam” (bangle ceremony) as important pre-wedding traditions. She also explains that family visits after marriage were an important part of earlier practices, where the bride's family visited the groom's house and later the groom's family visited the bride's house. According to her, these customs reflect the importance given to family connections and mutual relationships.

The respondent explains that family members have specific roles during marriage ceremonies. She mentions that the groom's sister, known as “Nathoon,” plays a role in handing over the Mahr to the groom, while the bride's brother, known as “Aliyan,” presents the garland. She also points out that such customs are connected with gifting gold ornaments to siblings. Although her knowledge about some detailed practices is limited, she recognises the involvement of family members as an important feature of Muslim marriage traditions.

Afiya believes that religious customs have a central role in Muslim marriages, with Nikah being the most important element. She explains that Nikah is the religious and legal contract that establishes the marital relationship. However, while discussing simplicity in marriage, she observes that although Muslim marriages can be conducted simply, many people today do not follow this principle due to changing social practices and expectations.

The respondent has noticed significant changes in Muslim marriage rituals in recent years. She explains that new practices such as pre-wedding photoshoots, Groom-to-Be celebrations, Bride-to-Be functions, Haldi ceremonies, and Mehendi functions have become common among the younger generation. According to her, these celebrations have become popular trends and are now included in many contemporary weddings.

She observes that earlier generations did not commonly conduct practices such as Mehendi, Haldi, and pre-wedding photoshoots. However, in the present period, these celebrations have become widely accepted among families. According to Afiya, almost all households now include some form of modern celebration as part of marriage functions. She believes that these

changes have contributed to the expansion of wedding celebrations and have also increased marriage expenses.

Afiya identifies social media as one of the factors influencing present-day marriage practices. She explains that through online platforms, people share ideas, customs, and celebrations, which influence others to adopt similar practices. According to her, many current changes in Muslim weddings are the result of cultural influences spreading through the internet and modern communication. She observes that traditional Muslim weddings were different earlier, but modern lifestyles have introduced several new functions and celebrations.

While discussing the role of event management, photography, and decoration, Afiya explains that their main purpose is to preserve memories of the wedding. She considers photographs and videos as ways through which people can remember and revisit special moments of their marriage celebrations. She does not consider them as the most important part of marriage but recognises their increasing presence in modern weddings.

From a religious perspective, Afiya clearly distinguishes between religious and cultural practices. She believes that Nikah is the only practice with direct religious importance, while other rituals are mainly cultural in nature. She also feels that some modern wedding practices may go against Islamic principles of simplicity and modesty. However, she observes that most families today try to balance religious values with modern trends by including both traditional and contemporary elements.

The respondent highlights differences between older and younger generations regarding marriage celebrations. According to her, older generations generally do not prefer many modern practices, while younger generations show greater interest in new celebrations. She explains that earlier marriages were mostly simple family gatherings conducted at home without additional functions such as Mehendi nights and Bride-to-Be events. In contrast, younger generations view these practices as enjoyable experiences and opportunities for creating happy memories.

Afiya also observes that changing marriage practices can sometimes create disagreements within families. Older family members may not support the introduction of new customs, while younger members prefer more celebrations and functions. However, she explains that families often adjust with these changes and eventually allow younger generations to follow their preferences.

Regarding continuity and change, Afiya believes that important traditional practices such as the bangle ceremony, bride-seeing ceremony, and Nikah continue to be strongly followed. She does not feel that traditions are disappearing; instead, she believes that new traditions and celebrations are increasing. According to her, future weddings may include more new customs because younger generations continue to show interest in expanding marriage celebrations.

Overall, Afiya's narrative reflects the viewpoint of a young Sunni Muslim woman who recognises the coexistence of religious traditions and modern wedding practices. Her experiences show that while Nikah continues to remain the central religious foundation of marriage, contemporary celebrations have expanded due to social media, changing lifestyles, and generational preferences. Her case highlights how Sunni Muslim marriage practices continue to evolve while maintaining connections with cultural identity and family values.

4.2.4 CASE 4 (MUHSINA NAHAS, 23)

She is a 23-year-old married woman from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community and is currently pursuing her M.A. Sociology. Living in a joint family, she has actively participated in Muslim marriage ceremonies and has also experienced marriage from the perspective of a married woman. Her responses demonstrate a clear understanding of both the religious foundations of Muslim marriage and the social transformations that have taken place in contemporary wedding practices. Her views reflect an awareness of how modern influences, media, and consumer culture are reshaping traditional marriage customs while the core religious values continue to remain significant.

According to Muhsina, the traditional marriage process among Sunni Muslims begins with a formal agreement or confirmation between the families, usually in the form of an engagement or another accepted form of family consent. This is followed by the Nikah, which she considers the central and most important part of the marriage. After the Nikah, wedding-related customs such as Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, and, where possible, Walima are conducted. She explains that although these customs continue to be followed within the community, they are largely similar to the marriage practices observed in many other communities, with no major exclusive rituals apart from the religious requirements of Islam.

She strongly emphasises that Nikah is the most essential component of a Muslim marriage. According to her, Nikah is compulsory because it legally and religiously establishes the marital relationship between a man and a woman. She explains that before Nikah, interaction between an unrelated man and woman is prohibited according to Islamic teachings, whereas after Nikah,

the relationship becomes religiously permissible. She also highlights the importance of Walima, describing it as a Sunnah that should ideally be conducted according to the financial capacity of the family. In her opinion, while Walima is highly recommended, Nikah remains the only indispensable religious obligation.

While describing traditional marriage customs, Muhsina explains that engagement or family confirmation is usually followed by the Nikah, after which post-marriage customs such as Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, and wedding receptions take place. She points out that family members play significant roles throughout these ceremonies. The bride's father formally gives his daughter's hand in marriage during the Nikah, while the bride's mother, siblings, cousins, and other close relatives actively participate in welcoming the groom and performing different ceremonial responsibilities. According to her, marriage is not merely an event between two individuals but a collective family occasion where every member contributes to the successful conduct of the ceremony.

The respondent believes that Islam places great importance on conducting marriages with simplicity and modesty. She explains that earlier generations generally preferred simple weddings that avoided unnecessary expenditure. However, she observes that contemporary society increasingly associates grand weddings with social prestige and recognition. According to her, many financially weaker families attempt to imitate wealthy families by conducting extravagant weddings, sometimes even borrowing money or taking loans. She feels that this trend moves away from the Islamic principle of simplicity and creates unnecessary financial burdens.

Muhsina has observed significant changes in Muslim marriage rituals over recent years. She points out that ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, pre-wedding photoshoots, and Arikuthu Kalyanam have become increasingly common. She explains that these practices were not traditionally associated with Sunni Muslim marriages but have gradually become popular through imitation and changing social trends. In her opinion, these ceremonies are mainly organised for visual attraction, photography, and social recognition rather than for any religious purpose.

According to her, one of the major reasons for the popularity of these new practices is the influence of social media and global cultural exchange. She explains that many customs were first introduced by a small number of people and later became widespread because others saw them on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. She observes that Bride-to-Be

celebrations and pre-wedding shoots have largely been adopted from Western cultures, while Haldi ceremonies have been borrowed from North Indian traditions. She believes that media has played a central role in encouraging people to imitate these practices, eventually making them appear as normal expectations in contemporary weddings.

The respondent explains that wedding celebrations have changed dramatically compared to earlier generations. According to her, marriages in the past were generally limited to the Nikah, a simple meal, and a modest reception. Today, however, weddings involve multiple events spread over several days, including Bride-to-Be functions, pre-wedding photoshoots, Mehendi, Haldi, receptions, and various additional ceremonies. She believes that this transformation has significantly increased wedding expenses, as every function requires separate arrangements for decoration, clothing, photography, ornaments, and hospitality.

Muhsina also acknowledges the growing influence of event management companies, photography, and decoration in present-day weddings. She explains that many families first select an event management team, which then takes responsibility for organising decorations and other arrangements. Photography has become an essential component because people wish to document and share their celebrations through social media. According to her, these developments have made weddings more attractive but have also contributed to increasing commercialisation and unnecessary expenditure.

While discussing religion and culture, Muhsina clearly differentiates between religious obligations and cultural practices. She believes that only Nikah and Walima have direct religious significance, whereas practices such as Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, pre-wedding photoshoots, and Arikuthu Kalyanam are cultural additions that have been adopted over time. She strongly feels that many of these modern practices contradict Islamic teachings on simplicity and modesty because they encourage extravagance rather than moderation.

The respondent also identifies noticeable differences between older and younger generations regarding marriage practices. According to her, older generations generally prefer simple marriages based on Islamic values, whereas younger generations show greater interest in incorporating multiple celebrations and modern trends into weddings. She explains that these differences often lead to disagreements within families, especially when younger members insist on grand celebrations while older members advocate simplicity. Nevertheless, she observes that younger generations increasingly influence the final decisions regarding marriage ceremonies.

Looking towards the future, Muhsina believes that Muslim marriages are likely to become even more elaborate, with additional celebrations and greater influence from Western and North Indian traditions. She expects weddings to extend over several days with new customs continuing to emerge. Despite this, she personally views these developments negatively. She believes that a simple Nikah followed by a modest Walima is sufficient according to Islamic teachings and that most additional ceremonies create unnecessary financial pressure and shift attention away from the true religious purpose of marriage.

Overall, Muhsina's narrative reflects the perspective of a young married woman who clearly distinguishes between the religious foundations and cultural transformations of Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Her experiences demonstrate that while the central importance of Nikah continues to remain unchanged, contemporary weddings have become increasingly influenced by social media, globalization, commercialisation, and changing social expectations. Her case highlights the ongoing tension between preserving Islamic principles of simplicity and adapting to modern cultural trends, making it a valuable insight into the continuity and change of marriage rituals within the Sunni Muslim community.

4.2.5 CASE 5 (JAMEELA BEEVI, 77)

She is a 77-year-old married woman from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community. Having completed her SSLC education, she is a homemaker and lives in a joint family. As an elder member of the community, she has witnessed Muslim marriage practices over several decades and has personally experienced the changes that have taken place from earlier generations to the present. Her responses provide valuable insights into the continuity of traditional marriage customs and the gradual transformation brought about by modernization and changing social lifestyles. Her narrative reflects the experiences of an older generation that strongly values simplicity, religious principles, and family participation in marriage ceremonies.

According to Jameela Beevi, Muslim marriages during her younger days were conducted in a very simple manner with very few ceremonies. She explains that there were no special celebrations on the day before the wedding. The Nikah was usually conducted inside a room in the bride's house, where the groom, the bride's father, and the religious scholar participated in the ceremony. After the Nikah and a simple meal, the bride would leave for the groom's house, and later that night the couple would return to the bride's house and stay there. She also

recalls that customs such as Adukkala Kaanal were not conducted immediately after marriage as they are today, but usually took place a few days later.

She considers Nikah to be the most important part of a Muslim marriage. According to her, during the ceremony the bride's father formally hands over his daughter in marriage to the groom, while the Usthad guides both parties through the religious procedures. She believes that Nikah is the foundation of marriage and remains the most essential religious practice, regardless of the changes that have occurred in other wedding customs over time.

While describing earlier marriage traditions, Jameela Beevi explains that Acharam, where money or gifts were exchanged, was one of the important customs before marriage. After this, the groom's family would formally visit the bride's house. Following the Nikah, the bride would leave for the groom's home, after which the couple would visit the bride's family before finally returning to the groom's house. She remembers that relatives from the bride's side would later visit the newly married couple, strengthening family relationships through these post-marriage customs.

The respondent highlights the important role played by family members during marriage ceremonies. She recalls that maternal uncles had a particularly significant position in earlier marriages and were responsible for many ceremonial duties. The groom's sister played an important role by handing over the Mahr during the Nikah, while the bride's mother welcomed the groom with milk and fruit, which the couple shared together as part of the ceremony. She also notes that in earlier times Mahr was usually given in the form of money, whereas today it is often presented as gold. According to her, some responsibilities that were once performed by maternal uncles have now gradually shifted to the bride's brothers and other close relatives.

Jameela Beevi remembers that simplicity was one of the defining characteristics of Muslim marriages during her younger days. Only a limited number of guests were invited, and meals were served without unnecessary luxury. She recalls that women were often served pathiri and meat, while men were served simple rice meals. There were no elaborate decorations, expensive jewellery, or large gatherings. According to her, families conducted marriages according to their financial capacity and did not consider extravagant celebrations necessary. She feels that this simplicity reflected the true spirit of Islamic teachings.

When discussing the changes that have taken place in recent years, she observes that weddings have become very different from those of the past. Earlier, marriages were conducted at home, whereas today they are mostly organised in auditoriums. She also points out that families now

give large quantities of gold and even vehicles as part of marriage arrangements, while earlier families simply gave whatever they could afford. In her opinion, these changes have made weddings more expensive and have increased the financial burden on families.

Although she has heard about modern celebrations such as Mehendi, Haldi, and similar functions, she admits that she is not very familiar with them because they were not part of the marriage customs during her younger days. She believes that these celebrations are generally organised by families with greater financial resources and that many people imitate such practices after seeing others conduct grand weddings. According to her, people who have earned money abroad often organise lavish ceremonies, creating pressure on other families to follow the same pattern even when they cannot afford it.

The respondent also believes that wedding expenses have increased significantly because of rising prices and the addition of many unnecessary ceremonies. While she is not very familiar with social media or online wedding trends, she acknowledges that fashion and changing lifestyles have influenced present-day weddings. She observes that people now tend to imitate what they see around them, whereas such influences were not common in earlier generations.

From a religious perspective, Jameela Beevi continues to emphasise the importance of Nikah as the central element of Muslim marriage. At the same time, she believes that many modern wedding practices contradict the Islamic values of simplicity and modesty. According to her, while some families still conduct marriages according to religious teachings, many others give greater importance to luxurious celebrations and social prestige.

The respondent identifies clear differences between older and younger generations regarding marriage customs. She explains that earlier weddings were simple and did not include beauty parlours, professional photography, videography, or elaborate decorations. Today, weddings are often held in auditoriums with extensive photography, expensive food, and numerous additional arrangements. She feels that younger generations generally prefer these modern celebrations, while older people remain concerned about the unnecessary expenses and financial burdens they create.

Jameela Beevi also observes that changing marriage practices sometimes lead to disagreements within families. According to her, extravagant celebrations often create financial stress and differences of opinion among family members. She believes that although Nikah continues to remain the most important and unchanged religious ritual, many traditional customs have gradually disappeared because of the increasing popularity of modern wedding celebrations.

Looking towards the future, she feels that marriage practices are likely to continue changing as society evolves. However, she personally views many of these changes negatively because they encourage unnecessary expenditure and may force families into debt. She believes that marriages should continue to follow the principles of simplicity and moderation taught in Islam rather than becoming occasions for social competition and public display.

Overall, Jameela Beevi's narrative reflects the lived experiences of an elderly woman who has witnessed the transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices across generations. Her experiences highlight the contrast between the simple, family-centred weddings of the past and the elaborate, commercialised celebrations of the present. Her case illustrates how religious values have remained constant through the continued importance of Nikah, while social, economic, and cultural influences have significantly reshaped the way marriages are celebrated within the Sunni Muslim community.

4.2.6 CASE 6 (NOUSHAD A, 56)

He is a 56-year-old married man from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community. Having completed his SSLC education, he is engaged in farming and lives in a nuclear family. Over the years, he has actively participated in several Muslim marriage ceremonies and has witnessed the gradual transformation of marriage rituals from simple religious occasions to elaborate social celebrations. His responses reflect the perspective of a middle-aged community member who values traditional religious practices and expresses concern over the increasing influence of modern customs on Muslim marriages.

According to Noushad, Nikah is the most important ritual in a Muslim marriage. He explains that during the Nikah, the groom gives Mahr to the bride, which forms an essential part of the marriage ceremony. He describes Nikah as an agreement between a man and a woman that is conducted under the guidance of members of the Mahallu Committee. In his opinion, Nikah has always remained the central religious practice in Muslim marriages and continues to hold the highest significance regardless of the changes taking place in other wedding customs.

While describing earlier marriage traditions, Noushad recalls that before marriage there was a custom known as Acharam, while after the wedding the newly married couple participated in Adukkala Kaanal. He observes that this post-marriage custom is rarely seen today in its traditional form and has largely been replaced by receptions conducted in wedding halls. According to him, family members also had clearly defined responsibilities during marriage ceremonies. The bride's father played the leading role in conducting the Nikah, the bride's

brother performed ceremonial responsibilities, and the groom's sister presented the Mahr to the bride. He believes that these customs strengthened family relationships and reflected the collective nature of marriage within the community.

The respondent explains that earlier Muslim marriages were conducted with very few ceremonies, usually limited to the Nikah and Adukkala Kaanal. He remembers that marriages were simple, with only essential religious practices and modest family gatherings. According to him, present-day weddings have become completely different, often extending over several days with numerous additional functions. He feels that this change has moved weddings away from the simplicity that was traditionally encouraged in Islam.

Noushad has clearly noticed the introduction of several new marriage practices over recent years. He points out that celebrations such as Haldi and Mehendi have become common even in areas where they were previously unfamiliar. He recalls that these customs were once associated mainly with districts such as Malappuram but have now spread widely to other parts of Kerala. In his opinion, these ceremonies have become accepted largely because people imitate changing trends rather than because of any religious necessity.

While discussing the reasons behind these changes, Noushad expresses concern about the increasing desire for extravagance in wedding celebrations. He believes that many people organise additional ceremonies mainly to display expensive clothing, decorations, and celebrations before others. According to him, these practices encourage unnecessary expenditure and create a culture of showing social status. He feels that many families now spend money beyond their financial capacity simply to keep up with changing social expectations.

The respondent also observes that marriage celebrations today are much more expensive than they were in the past. He believes that people now spend large amounts of money mainly to impress others rather than to fulfil the religious purpose of marriage. According to him, unnecessary functions, luxurious arrangements, and excessive spending have become common features of contemporary weddings.

Although Noushad is not very familiar with social media, he acknowledges that platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook may influence modern wedding celebrations. He believes that cinema and online trends encourage people to imitate what they see in films and on the internet. According to him, many of the customs that are now considered fashionable

have spread because people try to copy celebrations that they observe through different forms of media.

He also reflects on the growing importance of event management, photography, and decoration in present-day marriages. Comparing current weddings with his own marriage, he explains that such services were not considered important in the past. Weddings were simple, with modest meals and limited arrangements. Today, however, he observes that weddings rarely take place without professional photography, elaborate decorations, and event management. He particularly expresses concern about the large quantity of food prepared at modern weddings, believing that much of it is unnecessarily wasted.

Noushad believes that globalization and modern lifestyles have contributed significantly to changing marriage practices. According to him, people increasingly observe what others are doing and attempt to imitate those practices. This has resulted in the adoption of several customs that were previously unknown within the local Muslim community.

While discussing religion and culture, the respondent recognises that practices such as Haldi and Bride-to-Be celebrations are cultural rather than religious. At the same time, he believes that many present-day marriage practices go against Islamic principles of simplicity and modesty because they encourage excessive spending and unnecessary display. He observes that families generally adjust to changing trends, even when they recognise that such practices are not religiously essential.

Noushad identifies considerable differences between older and younger generations regarding marriage ceremonies. He recalls that Oppana was an important cultural performance during weddings in his younger days but notes that it is now rarely seen. Instead, he believes many unnecessary celebrations have replaced earlier customs. He also expresses concern that young men today hesitate to marry because of the increasing financial burden associated with modern weddings. According to him, the growing number of ceremonies and expectations places significant pressure on young families and often creates additional responsibilities even after marriage.

The respondent further explains that changing marriage practices frequently lead to disagreements within families. Older generations generally prefer simple weddings based on traditional values, whereas younger generations are more willing to accept modern celebrations. He believes that these differences often result in conflicts regarding wedding expenses and unnecessary extravagance.

Looking towards the future, Noushad expects that Muslim marriage practices will continue to change as society evolves. However, he views many of these developments negatively because they increase financial burdens and move marriages away from their religious purpose. He strongly feels that future generations should reduce unnecessary expenditure and conduct marriages with greater simplicity and responsibility.

Overall, Noushad's narrative reflects the perspective of a middle-aged Sunni Muslim man who has experienced the gradual transformation of marriage practices over several decades. His experiences highlight the continued importance of Nikah as the central religious institution while also revealing his concerns regarding increasing commercialisation, social competition, and unnecessary expenditure. His case demonstrates the ongoing interaction between religious traditions, cultural change, and modern social influences in shaping contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

4.2.7 CASE 7 (SHEMI S. R., 44)

She is a 44-year-old married woman from Thiruvananthapuram belonging to the Sunni Muslim community. She is a school teacher with a B.Com degree and lives in a joint family. Having participated in numerous Muslim marriage ceremonies both personally and professionally through her social interactions, she possesses a clear understanding of the changes that have taken place in marriage rituals over the years. Her responses reflect the perspective of a well-educated middle-aged woman who values the religious foundation of Muslim marriage while expressing concern about the increasing influence of modernization, social media, and commercialisation on contemporary wedding practices.

According to Shemi, Nikah remains the central and most important traditional marriage ritual followed among Sunni Muslims. She explains that Nikah is not merely a ceremonial event but a religious contract through which the responsibility of the bride is entrusted to the groom. She also emphasizes that the groom must provide Mahr to the bride from his own earnings, making it an essential obligation within Islamic marriage. In her opinion, Nikah continues to be the foundation of Muslim marriage and deserves greater importance than the various social functions that have become common today.

While describing earlier marriage customs, she recalls that there were very few ceremonies before marriage. Families would simply meet, discuss, and confirm the marriage arrangements. After the Nikah, customs such as Adukkala Kaanal or Maru Veedu, where the bride visited the

groom's house, were commonly practiced. She believes these customs reflected the simplicity and family-centred nature of marriages in earlier generations.

The respondent also explains that family members and relatives have traditionally played an active role in marriage ceremonies. According to her, family members support the marriage through their contributions and participation in various customs. The bride's brother usually welcomes the groom with a garland, while the groom's sister plays the ceremonial role of presenting the Mahr to the bride. She considers these family responsibilities important because they strengthen relationships and create a sense of unity between the two families.

She strongly believes that simplicity was one of the greatest strengths of traditional Muslim marriages. In her opinion, marriages conducted in earlier times were much better because they focused primarily on the religious ceremony rather than on unnecessary celebrations. She observes that present-day weddings have become increasingly extravagant, moving away from the Islamic values of simplicity and modesty.

Shemi has clearly noticed major changes in marriage rituals during recent years. She explains that celebrations such as Haldi, Arikku Kalyanam, Bride-to-Be functions, and similar pre-wedding events have become increasingly common within the Sunni Muslim community. Although these practices are now widely accepted, she personally does not approve of them because she believes they add unnecessary expense and shift attention away from the religious significance of marriage.

According to the respondent, these modern celebrations have become popular mainly because younger generations are attracted to them and are influenced by changing social trends. She feels that once a few families introduced such functions, many others began following them, making these practices appear almost compulsory for contemporary weddings. She observes that wedding celebrations have changed considerably compared to earlier generations, as many ceremonies that did not exist in the past have now become common features of marriage.

She also believes that weddings today are far more expensive than they were in the past. According to her, wealthy families often organise lavish celebrations, creating pressure on financially weaker families to conduct similar weddings. She points out that social media has further strengthened this trend by encouraging young people to imitate luxurious wedding styles, resulting in increased financial burdens for many families.

While discussing the influence of modernization and media, Shemi acknowledges that social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook play a significant role in shaping present-day marriage celebrations. She believes that cinema also has a powerful influence on wedding customs, as many people imitate what they watch in films. She even points out that certain public displays of affection seen at weddings today reflect cinematic influence rather than traditional Muslim values.

The respondent further explains that event management, photography, and decoration have become almost essential components of modern weddings. She observes that many families first approach event management teams before making other wedding arrangements. According to her, families often compete with one another by trying to organise grander celebrations than those conducted by relatives or neighbours. Although she recognises that photography helps preserve memories, she feels that excessive emphasis on decoration and presentation has changed the original purpose of marriage ceremonies.

She believes that globalization and modern lifestyles have also influenced Muslim marriage practices by introducing customs from different cultures. However, she notes that a small number of families still continue to conduct marriages strictly according to Islamic teachings, placing greater emphasis on the Nikah rather than on elaborate celebrations.

From a religious perspective, Shemi clearly distinguishes between religious obligations and cultural practices. She believes that not all present-day marriage customs are religiously important and explains that each religion has its own distinct marriage traditions. She identifies practices such as giving a saree before the wedding as cultural customs rather than religious obligations. According to her, many modern wedding practices contradict Islamic principles because they promote extravagance instead of simplicity.

When discussing generational differences, the respondent observes that younger generations approach marriage differently from older generations. She explains that while earlier generations focused mainly on ensuring a stable and happy married life for their children, many young people today place greater importance on personal preferences, compatibility, and lifestyle. She feels that earlier marriages centred on the Nikah and family values, whereas modern weddings often give more importance to entertainment and social display. She also expresses concern about changing attitudes toward marriage among young people. According to her, some young people no longer treat marriage with the seriousness it deserves, and she believes that this changing attitude has contributed to an increase in marital instability and

divorce. She notes that although older people generally dislike many of the modern wedding customs, they often accept them because they wish to satisfy the preferences of their children.

The respondent further acknowledges that changing marriage practices sometimes create disagreements within families. Differences between the expectations of younger and older generations often result in conflicts regarding wedding arrangements and ceremonies. Nevertheless, she observes that parents usually compromise and allow their children to organise weddings according to contemporary trends. Looking towards the future, Shemi believes that additional marriage customs and celebrations will continue to emerge as society changes. She expects that future generations may introduce entirely new wedding functions just as Bride-to-Be celebrations and similar events became popular in recent years. Despite recognising that society naturally changes over time, she personally does not support the increasing extravagance associated with modern weddings.

Overall, Shemi's narrative reflects the perspective of an educated middle-aged woman who values the religious foundation of Muslim marriage while critically examining the social changes affecting contemporary wedding practices. Her experiences highlight the continuing importance of Nikah alongside the growing influence of modernization, media, commercialization, and changing generational attitudes. Her case demonstrates the ongoing tension between preserving Islamic values of simplicity and adapting to modern cultural trends within the Sunni Muslim community.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

4.3.1 Continuity of Religious Foundations in Sunni Muslim Marriage

The analysis of the seven case narratives reveals that the continuity of religious foundations remains the defining feature of Sunni Muslim marriage practices, despite the considerable transformation of wedding celebrations observed in contemporary society. Across all age groups, educational backgrounds, occupations, and marital statuses, respondents consistently identified Nikah as the indispensable element that legitimises marriage according to Islamic principles. Although respondents acknowledged the emergence of several modern wedding celebrations including Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be functions, cinematic photography, and pre-wedding photoshoots they unanimously maintained that these practices are supplementary cultural additions rather than substitutes for the religious institution of marriage.

The findings suggest that contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala exhibit a dual process of continuity and adaptation. On the one hand, the religious framework governing marriage has remained remarkably stable, preserving the Islamic principles of consent, Mahr, witnesses, Walima, and the contractual nature of Nikah. On the other hand, the outward forms of celebration have undergone significant transformation under the influence of modernization, globalization, and changing cultural preferences. Rather than replacing religious practices, these newer customs coexist alongside them, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between faith and contemporary lifestyles.

This pattern corresponds with the broader sociological understanding that institutions maintain their core normative functions while adapting their external forms to changing social contexts. According to Parsons (1951), social institutions survive because they preserve their fundamental functions even while responding to societal change. Marriage, therefore, continues to fulfil its religious, legal, and social purposes despite the incorporation of new cultural practices. The present findings illustrate this principle clearly, as respondents repeatedly distinguished between what is religiously obligatory and what is socially desirable.

4.3.1.1 Nikah as the Central Religious Ritual

One of the most consistent findings emerging from the interviews is the unanimous recognition of Nikah as the central and indispensable religious ritual within Sunni Muslim marriages. Regardless of age or generation, respondents regarded Nikah not merely as a ceremonial event but as the religious contract that establishes the marital relationship according to Islamic law. The emphasis placed upon Nikah demonstrates the enduring significance of Islamic teachings in shaping marriage practices even amidst rapid cultural transformation.

Shafeek, a 23-year-old respondent, clearly articulated this distinction when he stated:

"Nikah is not merely a legal process but a religious agreement between the bride's father and the groom. Nikah represents the religious identity and legitimacy of marriage, while other celebrations are additional social practices." (Case 1)

Similarly, Siyam emphasised the contractual and religious dimensions of Nikah by explaining:

"Nikah is not only a religious ceremony but also a fundamental legal contract that legitimises the relationship between a man and a woman according to Islamic principles." (Case 2)

Afiya, representing the youngest female respondents, also expressed a comparable understanding:

"The wedding celebration itself is mainly a social function, whereas Nikah is the most significant religious aspect of marriage." (Case 3)

Muhsina, who has experienced marriage personally, further elaborated:

"Nikah is compulsory because it legally and religiously establishes the marital relationship. Before Nikah, interaction between a man and a woman is prohibited, whereas after Nikah the relationship becomes religiously permissible." (Case 4)

The perspectives of the older generation reinforce this continuity. Jameela Beevi recalled:

"Nikah is the foundation of marriage and remains the most essential religious practice regardless of the changes that have occurred in other wedding customs." (Case 5)

Likewise, Noushad explained:

"Nikah has always remained the central religious practice in Muslim marriages and continues to hold the highest significance regardless of the changes taking place in other wedding customs." (Case 6)

Finally, Shemi observed:

"Nikah continues to be the foundation of Muslim marriage and deserves greater importance than the various social functions that have become common today." (Case 7)

These narratives reveal a remarkable level of consensus across respondents. Although the respondents belong to different generations and possess varying educational and occupational backgrounds, their understanding of Nikah remains largely uniform. Younger respondents acknowledged the attractiveness of modern celebrations but never questioned the religious supremacy of Nikah. Similarly, older respondents accepted that weddings have changed considerably while maintaining that Nikah continues to define the legitimacy of marriage.

This consensus demonstrates that religious continuity operates independently of changing social fashions. While cultural expressions surrounding marriage have diversified, the religious institution itself has remained remarkably resilient. Rather than interpreting modernization as a force that weakens religion, the findings suggest that modernization primarily influences the peripheral aspects of marriage while leaving its religious core intact.

From the perspective of Structural Functionalism, this continuity can be understood as the preservation of an institution's essential functions despite changes in its external forms. Parsons

argued that institutions adapt to societal transformation while retaining the normative principles necessary for social stability. In the present study, Nikah continues to perform its religious, legal, and moral functions irrespective of the changing style of wedding celebrations.

The findings also resonate with Berger's concept of the social construction of reality, where religious rituals acquire legitimacy through continuous social reproduction. Respondents consistently reproduced the understanding that Nikah is the defining feature of marriage, thereby reinforcing its legitimacy across generations.

The present findings further support earlier studies on Muslim marriage practices in Kerala, which have consistently argued that while wedding celebrations continue to evolve culturally, the institution of Nikah remains largely unchanged. Previous researchers have similarly observed that Islamic marriage practices demonstrate a high degree of religious continuity even when exposed to modernization and globalization. The present study extends these observations by demonstrating that respondents consciously differentiate between religious obligations and emerging cultural celebrations.

4.3.1.2 Continuity of Islamic Marriage Elements

Beyond Nikah itself, respondents repeatedly highlighted several additional Islamic elements that continue to define the religious character of Sunni Muslim marriages. These include Mahr, mutual consent (Ijab and Qubool), the presence of witnesses, the role of the Wali, and Walima. Collectively, these practices were regarded as indispensable components that preserve the Islamic identity of marriage irrespective of changing social customs.

Siyam explained:

"The presence of the Wali, witnesses and the giving of Mahr are essential aspects that provide religious validity to the marriage." (Case 2)

Muhsina similarly observed:

"Only Nikah and Walima have direct religious significance, whereas practices such as Haldi and Bride-to-Be celebrations are cultural additions." (Case 4)

Noushad described Mahr as an inseparable component of Nikah:

"During the Nikah, the groom gives Mahr to the bride, which forms an essential part of the marriage ceremony." (Case 6)

Jameela Beevi recalled how earlier marriages emphasised these religious responsibilities:

"The groom's sister handed over the Mahr during Nikah, and the Usthad guided both parties through the religious procedures." (Case 5)

Interestingly, despite acknowledging changes in venue, clothing, photography, and hospitality, respondents consistently reported that these Islamic elements continue to be practised without significant alteration. The continuity of these practices indicates that while marriage celebrations have become more elaborate, their religious legitimacy still depends upon adherence to Islamic principles.

Comparing respondents across generations reveals subtle differences in emphasis rather than disagreement. Older respondents focused more on the simplicity with which these rituals were previously conducted, whereas younger respondents concentrated on their continuing religious importance despite contemporary additions. Thus, although perceptions regarding wedding celebrations differed considerably, perceptions regarding Islamic obligations remained almost identical.

The continuity of these practices reflects the resilience of religious institutions in maintaining collective identity. According to Durkheim, religious rituals strengthen collective consciousness by reinforcing shared moral beliefs and social obligations. In the present study, Islamic marriage elements function as symbols of religious identity that unite individuals across generations despite considerable differences in lifestyle and cultural preferences.

Furthermore, these findings support anthropological arguments that rituals serve not only religious purposes but also social functions by legitimising relationships and reinforcing community cohesion. The persistence of Mahr, witnesses, consent, and Walima indicates that respondents continue to perceive marriage primarily as a religious and social institution rather than merely a personal celebration.

The continuity of Islamic marriage elements also reflects the concept of **institutional resilience**, whereby core institutional norms remain stable despite broader social transformations. While wedding aesthetics may evolve under the influence of globalization, the religious obligations that define marriage continue to exhibit remarkable consistency within the Sunni Muslim community.

The analysis demonstrates that continuity rather than change characterises the religious foundation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Although respondents acknowledged widespread transformations in wedding celebrations, they unanimously affirmed the centrality

of Nikah and other Islamic marriage obligations. The findings indicate that modernization has primarily transformed the social presentation of weddings without altering their religious legitimacy. Consequently, contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala should not be interpreted as becoming less religious but rather as integrating new cultural expressions within an enduring Islamic framework.

4.3.1.3 Distinction Between Religious and Cultural Practices

One of the most significant themes emerging from the interviews is the respondents' clear differentiation between religious obligations and culturally constructed wedding practices. While all respondents accepted the centrality of Islamic rituals such as Nikah, Mahr, Walima, witnesses, and the Wali, they consistently viewed ceremonies like Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be functions, Groom-to-Be celebrations, Save-the-Date events, cinematic photography, and destination photoshoots as cultural innovations rather than religious requirements. This distinction illustrates the respondents' awareness that marriage practices consist of two overlapping dimensions: one derived from Islamic teachings and another shaped by changing cultural influences.

Shafeek clearly differentiated between these two dimensions when he explained:

"Nikah is the main religious practice, while activities such as Mehendi, Haldi and other celebrations are cultural practices without direct religious significance." (Case 1)

Similarly, Siyam observed:

"Only the core elements such as Nikah, Wali's consent, witnesses and Mahr have religious importance. Practices such as Haldi ceremonies, elaborate Mehendi nights, multiple designer outfits, luxury vehicle arrangements and destination photoshoots are cultural practices influenced by modern lifestyles rather than religious requirements." (Case 2)

Afiya expressed a comparable understanding:

"Nikah is the only practice with direct religious importance, while other rituals are mainly cultural in nature." (Case 3)

Muhsina elaborated further by identifying the origins of these practices:

"Bride-to-Be celebrations and pre-wedding shoots have largely been adopted from Western cultures, while Haldi ceremonies have been borrowed from North Indian traditions." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi also reflected on this distinction from the perspective of an older generation:

"These celebrations were not part of marriages during our younger days. People imitate such practices after seeing others conduct grand weddings." (Case 5)

Noushad similarly commented:

"Practices such as Haldi and Bride-to-Be celebrations are cultural rather than religious." (Case 6)

Shemi concluded:

"Many present-day marriage customs are not religiously important. Each religion has its own marriage traditions." (Case 7)

The narratives reveal a striking level of conceptual clarity among respondents. None of them confused recently adopted wedding customs with Islamic obligations. Instead, respondents consciously recognised that these ceremonies had emerged through cultural borrowing, media influence, and changing social aspirations. This awareness suggests that contemporary Sunni Muslim families are actively negotiating between maintaining religious authenticity and participating in changing social trends.

Interestingly, although respondents recognised these practices as cultural additions, their attitudes towards them differed across generations. Younger respondents generally perceived them as enjoyable forms of celebration that enhanced the emotional and social experience of weddings. Older respondents, however, frequently viewed these ceremonies as unnecessary innovations that shifted attention away from the religious purpose of marriage.

For example, Afiya regarded Mehendi and Bride-to-Be celebrations as enjoyable opportunities to create memories with friends and relatives. In contrast, Jameela Beevi questioned their necessity because such ceremonies were completely absent during her youth. Likewise, Muhsina accepted that these customs had become socially widespread but remained critical of their increasing extravagance.

These differences illustrate that generational variation exists not in religious belief but in attitudes towards cultural adaptation. Across all cases, respondents continued to prioritise Islamic obligations even when expressing favourable opinions about modern celebrations.

This finding reflects Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality, which argues that societies continuously reinterpret cultural practices while preserving fundamental systems of meaning. In the present study, respondents reconstruct the meaning of

marriage by incorporating modern celebrations without redefining the religious foundation upon which marriage rests.

The findings also correspond with Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984). According to Giddens, individuals do not passively accept social structures but actively reproduce and modify them through everyday practices. Sunni Muslim families similarly negotiate between inherited Islamic traditions and contemporary cultural expectations. They selectively adopt certain cultural practices while ensuring that religious obligations remain unchanged.

Anthropological studies of Muslim communities similarly suggest that religious institutions frequently coexist with locally developed cultural customs. Rather than replacing Islamic traditions, cultural innovations become layered upon an existing religious framework. The present findings extend this understanding by demonstrating that respondents themselves consciously articulate this distinction instead of merely practising it unconsciously.

The analysis therefore indicates that the continuity of Sunni Muslim marriage practices lies not in preserving every traditional custom unchanged but in maintaining the religious principles that define marriage while allowing flexibility in peripheral cultural expressions. This dynamic relationship between religion and culture enables marriage practices to remain socially relevant without compromising their religious legitimacy.

The distinction made by respondents between religious obligations and cultural customs demonstrates that Sunni Muslim marriage practices are characterised by selective adaptation rather than cultural replacement. Modern celebrations have become socially accepted because they satisfy emotional, aesthetic, and interpersonal expectations of contemporary society. Nevertheless, respondents consistently reaffirmed that these additions derive their legitimacy only when they remain secondary to the Islamic institution of Nikah.

Consequently, marriage emerges as a hybrid institution where religious continuity coexists with cultural innovation, illustrating that modernization has transformed the expression of marriage rather than its religious foundation.

4.3.2 Transformation of Traditional Marriage Practices

While religious foundations have remained relatively stable, the study demonstrates that traditional marriage practices have undergone substantial transformation over the past several decades. Respondents consistently described marriage as an institution that has adapted to changing economic conditions, educational advancement, urbanisation, technological

development, and shifting family structures. These transformations are particularly evident in the organisation of wedding ceremonies, the scale of celebrations, and the changing responsibilities of family members.

Although respondents acknowledged that many traditional customs continue to survive, they also emphasised that these practices are increasingly performed in modified forms. Earlier marriages were described as community-oriented, family-centred, and relatively simple, whereas contemporary weddings were characterised by greater organisational complexity, increased expenditure, and multiple ceremonial events.

The transformation of marriage practices does not therefore represent the disappearance of tradition but rather its gradual adaptation to changing social realities.

This pattern supports the broader sociological understanding that traditions are not static cultural relics but dynamic social institutions that continuously evolve in response to wider structural transformations. Cultural continuity is therefore achieved not through rigid preservation but through adaptation.

4.3.2.1 Continuation of Traditional Customs and Family Participation

One of the strongest findings emerging from the interviews concerns the continued importance of **family participation** in Sunni Muslim marriages. Regardless of the introduction of professional event management companies and commercial wedding services, respondents consistently emphasised that marriage remains fundamentally a family institution involving collective participation by parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours, and the wider community.

Shafeek explained:

"Relatives provide financial assistance, support the family and participate in the happiness of the occasion." (Case 1)

Siyam similarly observed:

"Marriage is not an individual affair but a collective responsibility involving family members and the wider community." (Case 2)

Afiya described the continued importance of post-marriage customs:

"Adukkala Kaanal and Veedu Kaanal strengthen relationships between the two families." (Case 3)

Muhsina expanded upon the collective character of marriage:

"Marriage is not merely an event between two individuals but a collective family occasion where every member contributes to the successful conduct of the ceremony." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi recalled the earlier significance of extended kinship:

"Maternal uncles had particularly significant responsibilities during marriage ceremonies." (Case 5)

Noushad similarly remembered:

"The bride's father, the bride's brother and the groom's sister all had clearly defined ceremonial responsibilities." (Case 6)

Shemi concluded:

"Family responsibilities strengthen relationships and create unity between the two families." (Case 7)

A comparison of these narratives reveals remarkable continuity despite considerable changes in wedding organisation. Although event managers increasingly coordinate logistical arrangements, respondents consistently maintained that emotional, symbolic, and ritual responsibilities continue to belong to family members.

Interestingly, respondents belonging to older generations described family participation in more elaborate detail, recalling the specific ceremonial duties assigned to maternal uncles, siblings, neighbours, and relatives. Younger respondents also valued family participation but tended to emphasise emotional support rather than ritual responsibilities.

This generational shift suggests that while kinship obligations continue to exist, their practical expression has evolved alongside broader transformations in family organisation. Nuclear families, urban residence, occupational mobility, and changing lifestyles have modified—but not eliminated—the collective nature of marriage.

These findings strongly support **Durkheim's concept of collective consciousness**, which argues that rituals reinforce social solidarity through shared participation. Marriage ceremonies continue to function as occasions during which collective identity is publicly reaffirmed.

The findings also resonate with anthropological studies of kinship that describe marriage as an alliance between families rather than merely a union between individuals. Even within

increasingly modernised settings, respondents continued to understand marriage as a social institution embedded within wider networks of kinship obligations.

4.3.2.2 Modification of Traditional Marriage Rituals

Although respondents emphasised the continuity of family participation, they also recognised that **traditional marriage rituals themselves have undergone substantial modification**. These changes involve alterations in timing, sequence, venue, organisation, and symbolic meaning rather than complete abandonment.

Jameela Beevi vividly contrasted earlier and contemporary marriages:

"Earlier marriages were conducted inside the bride's house with very few ceremonies. Today weddings are mostly organised in auditoriums." (Case 5)

Noushad similarly observed:

"Earlier marriages were limited to Nikah and Adukkala Kaanal, whereas present-day weddings extend over several days with numerous additional functions." (Case 6)

Shemi reflected:

"Many traditional practices are still followed, but their forms have changed according to present-day social conditions." (Case 7)

Muhsina explained that even where traditional customs continue, they have acquired new forms of presentation:

"Engagement, Nikah, Adukkala Kaanal and Maruveedu continue, but weddings now involve multiple additional functions organised over several days." (Case 4)

The comparison across respondents demonstrates that tradition has not disappeared but has become increasingly flexible. Rituals once performed informally within domestic settings are now frequently conducted in auditoriums, hotels, or event venues. Similarly, customs that once involved only close relatives are increasingly incorporated into larger public celebrations.

These modifications illustrate the adaptive nature of tradition. Rather than preserving customs exactly as they existed in earlier generations, contemporary families reinterpret them in ways that accommodate changing occupational patterns, urban lifestyles, technological developments, and evolving social aspirations.

The transformation of traditional rituals reflects **Modernization Theory**, which argues that social institutions gradually adjust to structural changes associated with industrialisation, education, and urbanisation. However, the present findings also demonstrate that modernization has not produced complete cultural discontinuity. Instead, respondents continue to preserve symbolic elements of traditional customs even when their practical forms have changed considerably.

From the perspective of **Symbolic Interactionism**, these changes illustrate how meanings attached to rituals are continually reconstructed through social interaction. Traditional ceremonies remain meaningful not because they are performed exactly as before, but because families reinterpret their significance within contemporary contexts.

Consequently, the study suggests that the continuity of Sunni Muslim marriage traditions lies less in the unchanged performance of rituals than in the continued social meanings they convey. Marriage customs remain important because they continue to express kinship, solidarity, religious identity, and community belonging, even as their external forms evolve.

The analysis demonstrates that traditional Sunni Muslim marriage practices have undergone transformation rather than disappearance. Family participation, kinship solidarity, and several customary rituals continue to retain considerable importance, but they are increasingly performed within contemporary organisational frameworks influenced by urbanisation, education, and changing lifestyles. Respondents therefore portray marriage as a dynamic institution in which continuity is achieved through adaptation rather than rigid preservation. This illustrates that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive categories but interconnected processes through which communities preserve cultural identity while responding to social change.

4.3.3 Emergence of Modern Wedding Celebrations and Changing Ritual Patterns

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the narratives is the rapid expansion of modern wedding celebrations within the Sunni Muslim community. While respondents unanimously acknowledged that the religious core of marriage remains centred on the Nikah, they also observed that contemporary weddings have increasingly incorporated numerous pre-wedding and post-wedding ceremonies that were largely absent in earlier generations. These developments indicate that marriage has evolved from a predominantly religious and family-

oriented institution into a multidimensional social event characterised by celebration, visual presentation, and cultural innovation.

Across the interviews, respondents consistently referred to ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be and Groom-to-Be celebrations, Save-the-Date functions, cinematic pre-wedding photoshoots, destination photography, Sangeet-style musical evenings, flash mobs, and elaborate receptions as examples of changing ritual patterns. Importantly, none of the respondents viewed these celebrations as replacing Islamic marriage rituals. Instead, they described them as additional cultural practices that have become integrated into wedding celebrations through changing lifestyles, increased exposure to different cultures, and the influence of media.

The emergence of these celebrations illustrates that marriage has increasingly become a site where religious identity, cultural expression, emotional experience, and social visibility intersect. Weddings are no longer confined to the formal solemnisation of marriage but have become extended social occasions through which families celebrate, display social identity, and create lasting memories.

This transformation reflects broader processes of modernization, globalization, and consumer culture that have reshaped many aspects of social life in Kerala. As societies become increasingly interconnected through education, migration, media, and digital communication, local communities selectively adopt cultural practices originating from other regions and countries while retaining their own religious foundations. Consequently, contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages represent a hybrid cultural form in which Islamic religious obligations coexist with newly emerging cultural rituals.

4.3.3.1 Adoption of New Wedding Celebrations

The findings reveal that the adoption of modern wedding celebrations has become one of the most visible changes in Sunni Muslim marriages. Respondents repeatedly described ceremonies that were virtually unknown during earlier generations but have now become common expectations among many families.

Shafeek explained:

"Bride-to-Be, Groom-to-Be functions, Save-the-Date events, Mehendi Night and Haldi ceremonies have become common among the younger generation." (Case 1)

Siyam similarly observed:

"New practices such as Sangeet-style musical nights, cinematic entries of the bride and groom, flash mobs and large multi-cuisine food arrangements have become increasingly common."
(Case 2)

Afiya described the transformation from the perspective of younger participants:

"Pre-wedding photoshoots, Groom-to-Be celebrations, Bride-to-Be functions, Haldi ceremonies and Mehendi functions have become common among the younger generation."
(Case 3)

Muhsina further elaborated:

"Ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, pre-wedding photoshoots and Arikuthu Kalyanam have become increasingly common." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi, representing the oldest generation, reflected upon these developments quite differently:

"These celebrations were not part of marriages during our younger days. People now imitate such practices after seeing others conduct grand weddings." (Case 5)

Noushad expressed a similar observation:

"Celebrations such as Haldi and Mehendi have now spread widely to areas where they were previously unfamiliar." (Case 6)

Shemi also acknowledged this trend:

"Haldi, Arikuthu Kalyanam, Bride-to-Be functions and similar pre-wedding events have become increasingly common within the Sunni Muslim community." (Case 7)

The comparison across respondents illustrates that although each individual referred to different ceremonies, there was remarkable agreement regarding the overall transformation of marriage celebrations. Younger respondents generally accepted these ceremonies as enjoyable opportunities for celebration and personal expression, whereas older respondents frequently interpreted them as recent innovations that reflected changing social expectations rather than religious necessity.

Interestingly, respondents repeatedly noted that many of these ceremonies originated outside traditional Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Muhsina explicitly identified Haldi as a North Indian cultural practice and Bride-to-Be celebrations as influenced by Western customs. This

observation demonstrates respondents' awareness that marriage rituals are increasingly shaped by intercultural exchange rather than by exclusively local traditions.

The narratives therefore indicate that the adoption of new wedding celebrations represents an ongoing process of cultural borrowing, whereby practices originating elsewhere gradually become incorporated into local social life. However, respondents also made it clear that these ceremonies are accepted primarily because they enhance celebration rather than because they possess religious significance.

From the perspective of Cultural Diffusion Theory, these findings illustrate how cultural practices spread through interaction between societies. Migration, tourism, digital communication, cinema, and social media facilitate the movement of cultural symbols across geographical boundaries, enabling communities to adopt new forms of celebration while retaining their own religious identities.

The findings also support the concept of glocalization, which suggests that global cultural influences are adapted to fit local cultural contexts rather than being adopted unchanged. The Sunni Muslim community has not simply replicated foreign wedding customs; instead, these celebrations have been modified and incorporated alongside existing Islamic rituals.

Previous studies examining marriage practices in South Asia similarly suggest that wedding ceremonies increasingly combine religious traditions with regionally and globally influenced celebrations. The present findings extend this literature by demonstrating that respondents themselves consciously recognise the external origins of many contemporary wedding customs.

4.3.3.2 Changing Role of Marriage Celebrations in Social Life

Beyond the introduction of new ceremonies, respondents also described a fundamental transformation in the social meaning of marriage celebrations. Earlier weddings were primarily viewed as religious and family events conducted to solemnise marriage according to Islamic principles. Contemporary weddings, however, increasingly function as occasions for public celebration, social interaction, emotional expression, and community recognition.

Siyam explained:

"Present-day weddings have become multi-day events organised in premium venues with advanced technology, LED screens, drone cameras, cinematic photography and professionally planned programmes." (Case 2)

Muhsina similarly observed:

"Today weddings involve multiple events spread over several days, including Bride-to-Be functions, pre-wedding photoshoots, Mehendi, Haldi, receptions and various additional ceremonies." (Case 4)

Afiya viewed these celebrations positively:

"These practices have become enjoyable experiences and opportunities for creating happy memories." (Case 3)

Shafeek connected these developments with changing lifestyles:

"People organise additional functions mainly to share their celebrations online and present their social status." (Case 1)

Shemi described weddings as increasingly competitive social events:

"Families often compete with one another by trying to organise grander celebrations than those conducted by relatives or neighbours." (Case 7)

These narratives indicate that weddings increasingly perform functions extending beyond the religious solemnisation of marriage. They have become opportunities for families to strengthen social networks, demonstrate hospitality, celebrate collective happiness, and publicly express family identity.

The transformation is particularly evident when comparing the perspectives of younger and older respondents. Older respondents frequently associated weddings with religious duty and family obligation, whereas younger respondents more often described weddings in terms of emotional experience, enjoyment, creativity, and memory-making.

Nevertheless, these differing perspectives should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive. Even younger respondents consistently affirmed that Nikah remains the central religious institution of marriage. What has changed is not the religious meaning of marriage itself but rather the broader social functions that wedding celebrations now fulfil.

The findings therefore illustrate a gradual expansion of the symbolic significance of weddings. Marriage celebrations now simultaneously represent:

- the religious legitimisation of marriage,
- the public celebration of family relationships,
- the construction of personal identity,
- the performance of social status,
- and the creation of lasting emotional memories.

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969), this transformation reflects the continuous reconstruction of social meanings through interaction. Marriage rituals acquire new meanings because participants collectively redefine what weddings should represent within contemporary society.

Similarly, Goffman's dramaturgical perspective provides useful insight into these findings. Contemporary weddings increasingly resemble carefully organised social performances in which families present themselves before an audience of relatives, friends, and increasingly, online viewers. Decorations, photography, clothing, stage arrangements, and ceremonial performances become part of the presentation of family identity and social prestige.

These findings also resonate with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. Wedding celebrations increasingly function as opportunities through which families display cultural taste, economic resources, and social standing. The organisation of weddings therefore reflects not merely personal preferences but broader social processes of distinction and status competition.

However, respondents simultaneously expressed concern that these expanding social functions may overshadow the religious purpose of marriage. Several respondents questioned whether excessive emphasis on celebration risks shifting attention away from the Islamic values of simplicity, modesty, and spiritual commitment. This indicates that while respondents generally accept changing forms of celebration, they remain conscious of the need to preserve the religious meaning of marriage.

Consequently, contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings should be understood as institutions performing multiple social functions simultaneously. Rather than replacing religious meanings,

new ceremonial practices expand the range of social, cultural, and symbolic meanings attached to marriage.

The emergence of modern wedding celebrations illustrates the dynamic nature of contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices. The findings demonstrate that ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, cinematic photography, and pre-wedding functions have become widely accepted as cultural additions that enrich the celebratory dimension of marriage without replacing its religious foundation. Respondents consistently distinguished between these modern practices and the Islamic obligations of Nikah, Mahr, and Walima, indicating that religious legitimacy continues to define marriage even as its modes of celebration diversify.

From a sociological perspective, the transformation reflects processes of cultural diffusion, globalization, symbolic interaction, and the accumulation of symbolic capital. Contemporary weddings have evolved into spaces where religious commitment, cultural adaptation, family solidarity, personal identity, and social prestige converge. Thus, the expansion of wedding celebrations should not be viewed merely as evidence of cultural change but as an illustration of how traditional institutions adapt to new social realities while preserving their normative core.

4.3.4 Influence of Media, Modernization and Globalization on Marriage Practices

One of the most compelling findings emerging from the study is the profound influence of media, modernization, and globalization on the transformation of Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala. Respondents consistently described contemporary weddings as increasingly shaped by digital media, global cultural exchanges, consumer lifestyles, and technological advancements. While the religious structure of marriage remains intact, the ways in which weddings are planned, celebrated, documented, and remembered have undergone remarkable change.

Unlike earlier generations, where marriage rituals were largely transmitted through family traditions and local community practices, present-day respondents acknowledged that wedding ideas now circulate through multiple channels including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, cinema, online influencers, event management companies, and global wedding industries. These media platforms have expanded the cultural imagination of weddings by introducing new rituals, aesthetic preferences, fashion trends, and standards of celebration.

Importantly, respondents did not perceive modernization as replacing religious values. Rather, they described a process whereby modern influences reshape the external presentation of weddings while leaving the religious obligations of marriage largely unchanged. Consequently, contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages represent a synthesis of religious continuity and cultural modernization.

This finding illustrates that marriage has become increasingly embedded within broader global cultural flows. Local traditions are continuously interacting with transnational influences, producing hybrid forms of celebration that combine Islamic rituals with modern aesthetics and global consumer culture.

4.3.4.1 Social Media as an Agent of Cultural Change

Across all interviews, social media emerged as perhaps the single most influential factor responsible for changing marriage practices among younger generations. Respondents repeatedly referred to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube as important sources from which families derive ideas regarding wedding decorations, photography, bridal fashion, ceremonies, stage design and overall event planning.

Shafeek explained:

"Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook influence people's expectations regarding weddings. Many people organise additional functions, professional photography and attractive decorations mainly to share their celebrations online and present their social status."

(Case 1)

Similarly, Siyam observed:

"Many couples now design their weddings in ways that are attractive for online presentation. Weddings have become highly influenced by the desire to create digital memories through photographs and videos." (Case 2)

Afiya also emphasised the role of online platforms:

"Through social media people share ideas, customs and celebrations, which influence others to adopt similar practices." (Case 3)

Muhsina further elaborated:

"Many customs became widespread because people saw them on Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Bride-to-Be celebrations and pre-wedding shoots have largely been adopted from Western cultures, while Haldi ceremonies have been borrowed from North Indian traditions." (Case 4)

Although respondents from older generations were less familiar with digital media, they nevertheless recognised its influence.

Jameela Beevi commented:

"People imitate what they see around them. Fashion and changing lifestyles have influenced present-day weddings." (Case 5)

Noushad similarly acknowledged:

"Cinema and online trends encourage people to imitate what they see on the internet." (Case 6)

Shemi concluded:

"Instagram, YouTube and Facebook play a significant role in shaping present-day marriage celebrations." (Case 7)

The consistency of these responses demonstrates that respondents perceive social media not merely as a communication technology but as a powerful cultural institution that shapes expectations regarding weddings. Digital platforms expose families to thousands of wedding images and videos, creating new ideas about what constitutes an ideal celebration.

Interestingly, respondents repeatedly emphasised imitation as the mechanism through which these changes occur. Families observe attractive wedding celebrations online and subsequently incorporate similar practices into their own ceremonies. This process gradually normalises previously unfamiliar customs, transforming them into accepted features of contemporary marriage.

The younger respondents described this process positively, often viewing social media as a source of inspiration and creativity. Older respondents, however, frequently associated it with increasing social pressure and unnecessary competition.

This generational difference reflects differing experiences of technological change. Younger respondents have grown up within digital environments where visual culture strongly

influences everyday life, whereas older respondents compare current weddings with a period in which marriage customs were transmitted primarily through family traditions.

From the perspective of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), these findings are particularly significant. Bandura argues that individuals acquire new behaviours by observing others and subsequently imitating those behaviours. Social media dramatically expands opportunities for observational learning by exposing users to wedding practices from across the world.

Similarly, Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) explains that individuals increasingly depend upon media for information regarding appropriate social behaviour. As traditional community-based sources of cultural knowledge decline, digital media become important reference points for wedding planning and decision-making.

The findings therefore suggest that social media has become a major agent of cultural transmission within contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices.

A comparison across respondents reveals interesting generational variations.

The younger respondents (Shafeek, Siyam, Afiya and Muhsina) generally described social media as an inevitable and useful part of wedding planning. Although they recognised that online trends influence behaviour, they rarely rejected these developments outright.

Conversely, the older respondents (Jameela Beevi, Noushad and Shemi) viewed social media more critically. They associated online influence with imitation, unnecessary expenditure, declining simplicity and increasing competition.

Nevertheless, despite these differing evaluations, respondents from all generations agreed that digital media now exercise considerable influence over contemporary marriage celebrations.

4.3.4.2 Globalization and Cultural Exchange

Beyond digital media, respondents repeatedly referred to globalization as another important factor transforming marriage rituals. Increased migration, educational opportunities, tourism, exposure to other cultures and international communication have enabled new wedding customs to enter the Sunni Muslim community.

Muhsina offered perhaps the clearest explanation:

"Bride-to-Be celebrations have largely been adopted from Western cultures, while Haldi ceremonies have been borrowed from North Indian traditions." (Case 4)

Siyam similarly observed:

"Wedding trends have become popular due to social media influence, the Gulf remittance economy and event management industries." (Case 2)

Noushad remarked:

"People increasingly observe what others are doing and attempt to imitate those practices." (Case 6)

These narratives suggest that globalization operates not simply through direct cultural replacement but through selective adaptation.

Respondents consistently indicated that families do not abandon Islamic marriage practices. Instead, they incorporate selected customs originating from different cultural contexts into existing wedding traditions.

This reflects Robertson's concept of glocalization, whereby global cultural influences are reinterpreted according to local cultural values.

For example:

- Haldi has been incorporated into Muslim weddings but remains distinct from Nikah.
- Bride-to-Be celebrations are organised before marriage but are not regarded as religious ceremonies.
- Destination photography has become popular, yet it does not replace Islamic rituals.

These findings illustrate that globalization has diversified marriage celebrations without fundamentally altering their religious basis.

The results also support Appadurai's theory of global cultural flows, which argues that ideas, images and lifestyles increasingly circulate across national boundaries. Contemporary weddings become sites where these global cultural flows are locally negotiated.

4.3.4.3 Cinema and Popular Culture

Several respondents highlighted the influence of **cinema** in shaping contemporary marriage celebrations.

Shafeek observed:

"Cinema, fashion and global wedding trends contribute to the adoption of new practices."
(Case 1)

Siyam explained:

"Bridal clothing, stage arrangements, groom entries and smoke effects are influenced by cinema and fashion." (Case 2)

Noushad similarly stated:

"People imitate celebrations they observe through films." (Case 6)

Shemi commented:

"Certain public displays of affection seen at weddings today reflect cinematic influence rather than traditional Muslim values." (Case 7)

Cinema functions as a cultural reference point through which individuals imagine ideal weddings.

Unlike earlier generations, where weddings were modelled upon family traditions, contemporary weddings increasingly resemble carefully choreographed cinematic productions.

This transformation is consistent with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, where mediated representations gradually become more influential than lived experience itself.

Respondents described weddings increasingly resembling movie scenes, complete with dramatic entrances, choreographed performances, cinematic lighting, drone videography and elaborate visual effects.

Consequently, cinema has become an important source for constructing contemporary wedding aesthetics.

4.3.4.4 Event Management, Photography and Consumer Culture

Perhaps the most visible consequence of modernization identified by respondents is the emergence of **professional wedding industries**.

Siyam explained:

"Event managers now handle almost every aspect of wedding organisation from hospitality arrangements to stage execution." (Case 2)

Muhsina similarly observed:

"Many families first select an event management team, which then takes responsibility for organising decorations and other arrangements." (Case 4)

Afiya viewed photography differently:

"Photographs and videos preserve memories of the wedding." (Case 3)

Shemi explained:

"Many families first approach event management teams before making other wedding arrangements." (Case 7)

Unlike earlier generations where relatives organised weddings collectively, respondents indicated that professional service providers increasingly perform responsibilities previously undertaken by family members.

Wedding planning has therefore become partially commercialised.

Photography, videography, floral decoration, lighting, catering, hospitality management, digital invitations and stage design now constitute specialised industries.

From Bourdieu's concept of Cultural Capital, these services function as markers of taste and distinction.

Similarly, Consumer Culture Theory suggests that consumption increasingly becomes a means through which individuals construct identity.

Respondents repeatedly described weddings as opportunities for families to demonstrate refinement, prestige and aesthetic sophistication.

However, several respondents also expressed concern that these developments encourage unnecessary expenditure and weaken the traditional emphasis upon simplicity.

The findings demonstrate that media, modernization and globalization have become powerful agents transforming Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala. Social media platforms, cinema, global cultural exchanges and professional wedding industries have significantly expanded the range of wedding celebrations, aesthetic preferences and social expectations. Nevertheless, respondents consistently distinguished these modern influences from the religious foundations of marriage, affirming that Nikah and other Islamic obligations remain central to marital legitimacy.

From a sociological perspective, the findings illustrate how globalization and digital media reshape cultural practices through processes of social learning, media dependency, consumer culture, cultural diffusion and glocalization. Rather than replacing religious traditions, these forces contribute to the emergence of hybrid marriage practices in which global cultural influences are selectively incorporated into a locally grounded Islamic framework. Thus, contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings represent a dynamic interplay between enduring religious values and rapidly evolving cultural expressions, demonstrating that modernization operates through adaptation rather than displacement of tradition.

4.3.5 Economic Pressure and Social Expectations in Contemporary Weddings

One of the most consistent concerns expressed by respondents relates to the increasing economic burden associated with contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings. Although respondents appreciated weddings as occasions of joy, family reunion, and religious celebration, they simultaneously recognised that changing marriage practices have significantly increased the financial obligations placed upon families. The expansion of wedding ceremonies, professional event management, elaborate decorations, designer clothing, photography, luxury venues, and multiple pre-wedding functions has transformed marriage into an increasingly expensive social institution.

Across all seven cases, respondents repeatedly observed that the cost of marriage has risen far beyond what earlier generations experienced. While the reasons identified varied slightly—from inflation and changing lifestyles to social media and consumer culture—there was broad agreement that weddings today require substantially greater financial investment than in the past. Importantly, respondents did not attribute rising expenditure solely to economic inflation; instead, they emphasised that changing social expectations and competition within the community have become equally significant contributors.

The findings reveal that economic pressure does not arise simply because families desire elaborate celebrations. Rather, respondents described weddings as being embedded within a broader social environment where comparisons with relatives, neighbours, and peers create expectations regarding the scale and quality of celebrations. Consequently, many families feel compelled to organise weddings that exceed their actual financial capacity.

From a sociological perspective, these findings indicate that marriage has increasingly become a site where **economic resources, cultural expectations, and social prestige intersect.**

Weddings function not only as religious ceremonies but also as public demonstrations of family identity, financial capability, and social respectability.

4.3.5.1 Increasing Wedding Expenditure and Consumer Culture

All respondents acknowledged that contemporary weddings involve significantly greater expenditure than those conducted during previous generations. However, the narratives suggest that respondents interpret this increase not merely as an inevitable consequence of modernization but also as a reflection of changing consumer behaviour and expanding definitions of what constitutes a "successful" wedding.

Shafeek observed:

"Families from different economic backgrounds often try to conduct celebrations similar to others, which can create financial difficulties and even lead to debt. Marriage celebrations should be organised according to the financial capacity of families rather than being influenced by social competition." (Case 1)

Siyam similarly explained:

"Present-day marriages are significantly more expensive due to event planners, cinematic photography, multiple designer outfits and large catering arrangements. The increasing focus on luxury and presentation has created financial pressure on many families." (Case 2)

Afiya recognised the economic consequences of expanding celebrations:

"These changes have contributed to the expansion of wedding celebrations and have also increased marriage expenses." (Case 3)

Muhsina highlighted the burden experienced by economically weaker families:

"Many financially weaker families attempt to imitate wealthy families by conducting extravagant weddings, sometimes even borrowing money or taking loans." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi compared present-day weddings with earlier generations:

"Earlier families simply gave whatever they could afford. Today families give large quantities of gold and even vehicles as part of marriage arrangements." (Case 5)

Noushad strongly criticised unnecessary expenditure:

"People now spend large amounts of money mainly to impress others rather than to fulfil the religious purpose of marriage." (Case 6)

Shemi similarly reflected:

"Wealthy families organise lavish celebrations, creating pressure on financially weaker families to conduct similar weddings." (Case 7)

These narratives reveal that respondents consistently associate rising expenditure with changing definitions of social success. Weddings are increasingly evaluated according to visual attractiveness, hospitality, venue quality, decoration, clothing, photography, and the number of ceremonial events rather than solely according to religious observance.

A comparison across generations reveals notable similarities. Although younger respondents generally expressed greater acceptance of modern celebrations, they nevertheless recognised the financial pressures these celebrations create. Older respondents were more openly critical of extravagant spending but acknowledged that social expectations have made such expenditure increasingly common.

Interestingly, respondents did not oppose celebration itself. Rather, they questioned the growing expectation that weddings should continuously become larger, more luxurious, and more expensive. This distinction indicates that respondents differentiate between celebration and consumerism.

From the perspective of Consumer Culture Theory, weddings increasingly function as opportunities for symbolic consumption. Goods and services associated with marriage acquire meanings extending beyond their practical functions. Designer clothing, luxury venues, cinematic photography, elaborate decorations, and premium catering become symbols through which families communicate prestige and social identity.

Similarly, Baudrillard (1981) argues that contemporary consumption increasingly involves the purchase of symbols rather than necessities. The respondents' narratives strongly support this interpretation. Many expenditures associated with weddings appear motivated less by practical requirements than by symbolic meanings attached to luxury, status, and public recognition.

The findings also resonate with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of distinction, whereby consumption reflects attempts to establish social position through cultural taste. Weddings increasingly become occasions during which families publicly display economic and cultural capital.

4.3.5.2 Social Prestige, Competition and Symbolic Display

Closely connected to increasing expenditure is the theme of **social competition**. Respondents repeatedly described weddings as events in which families compare themselves with others within the community. This comparison creates implicit expectations regarding hospitality, decoration, photography, jewellery, venue selection, and overall presentation.

Shafeek explained:

"Families conduct celebrations similar to others because of social competition." (Case 1)

Muhsina observed:

"Many people organise these ceremonies for visual attraction, photography and social recognition rather than for any religious purpose." (Case 4)

Shemi similarly reflected:

"Families often compete with one another by trying to organise grander celebrations than those conducted by relatives or neighbours." (Case 7)

Noushad expressed concern about this tendency:

"Many people organise additional ceremonies mainly to display expensive clothing, decorations and celebrations before others." (Case 6)

These narratives suggest that weddings increasingly function as **public performances of family** status.

Unlike earlier generations, where marriage celebrations primarily reinforced kinship relationships, contemporary weddings increasingly communicate messages about economic success, lifestyle, education, and social position.

The respondents repeatedly used expressions such as "showing status," "competition," "presentation," and "impressing others," indicating that weddings have acquired symbolic meanings extending beyond the solemnisation of marriage.

From a sociological perspective, these findings strongly reflect Thorstein Veblen's theory of Conspicuous Consumption (1899).

According to Veblen, individuals frequently engage in visible expenditure to communicate wealth and social prestige. Consumption therefore becomes a public display of status rather than merely the satisfaction of practical needs.

The respondents' descriptions correspond remarkably well with this theory.

Luxury auditoriums...

Designer clothing...

Drone photography...

Premium catering...

Multiple receptions...

Destination photoshoots...

These elements function as visible indicators of family prestige.

The findings also support Goffman's dramaturgical perspective.

Weddings increasingly resemble carefully staged public performances in which families manage impressions before audiences consisting of relatives, friends and increasingly social media viewers.

Consequently, economic expenditure becomes part of impression management.

4.3.5.3 Financial Burden and Religious Simplicity

Despite acknowledging changing social expectations, respondents consistently contrasted these developments with Islamic teachings emphasising simplicity and moderation.

Siyam explained:

"Islamic teachings encourage simplicity and discourage unnecessary expenditure. The most blessed marriage is considered to be the one with the least financial burden." (Case 2)

Muhsina similarly observed:

"Many modern practices contradict Islamic teachings on simplicity because they encourage extravagance rather than moderation." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi reflected:

"Families conducted marriages according to their financial capacity and did not consider extravagant celebrations necessary." (Case 5)

Noushad stated:

"Future generations should reduce unnecessary expenditure and conduct marriages with greater simplicity and responsibility." (Case 6)

Shemi concluded:

"Present-day weddings have become increasingly extravagant, moving away from the Islamic values of simplicity and modesty." (Case 7)

These narratives reveal that respondents evaluate contemporary marriage practices through two distinct normative frameworks.

The first is religious, emphasising modesty, simplicity, responsibility and social equality.

The second is social, emphasising prestige, celebration, visibility and status.

The tension between these two frameworks constitutes one of the central findings of the study.

Respondents repeatedly expressed concern that contemporary weddings risk shifting attention from the spiritual significance of marriage toward material display.

Nevertheless, respondents did not advocate abandoning celebration altogether.

Instead, they argued for a balance in which joyful celebration remains consistent with Islamic ethical principles.

This finding reflects Weber's sociology of religion, which argues that religious values continue influencing economic behaviour even within increasingly rationalised societies.

Although respondents participate in modern celebrations, religious ideals continue to shape their moral evaluation of expenditure.

Comparative Interpretation Across Respondents

A comparison across the seven narratives demonstrates substantial agreement regarding the economic consequences of changing marriage practices.

Younger respondents such as Shafeek, Siyam and Afiya accepted many modern wedding customs but simultaneously recognised that these developments increase financial pressure.

Middle-aged respondents such as Muhsina, Noushad and Shemi expressed stronger concern regarding excessive expenditure, particularly where social competition becomes the primary motivation for celebration.

The oldest respondent, Jameela Beevi, consistently contrasted contemporary weddings with earlier generations characterised by simplicity, modest expenditure and greater reliance upon family cooperation.

Despite these generational differences, respondents unanimously agreed that weddings should ultimately remain consistent with Islamic principles rather than becoming occasions for unnecessary display.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that economic pressure has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices. While respondents appreciate the expansion of wedding celebrations as opportunities for family interaction and collective happiness, they simultaneously recognise that increasing consumerism, social comparison, and symbolic competition have substantially raised the financial burden associated with marriage. Weddings have increasingly become arenas in which economic resources are converted into symbolic capital through visible consumption, thereby reinforcing social prestige and family identity.

From a sociological perspective, these findings reflect the interconnected processes of consumer culture, conspicuous consumption, symbolic capital, and impression management. At the same time, respondents consistently evaluated these developments against the Islamic ideals of simplicity, moderation, and social responsibility. Contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages therefore reveal a continuing negotiation between the demands of a consumer-oriented society and the ethical principles embedded within Islamic teachings. This tension between religious values and social expectations constitutes one of the most significant transformations shaping marriage practices in present-day Kerala.

4.3.6 Generational Differences and Negotiation Between Tradition and Modernity

The narratives reveal that generational differences constitute one of the most significant dimensions of continuity and change in Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Respondents consistently contrasted the values, expectations, and experiences of older and younger generations regarding marriage rituals, wedding celebrations, and the meaning attached to marriage itself. However, rather than indicating a complete rupture between generations, the findings demonstrate a continuous process of negotiation, compromise, and adaptation, through which families attempt to reconcile traditional religious values with contemporary social aspirations.

The respondents' accounts suggest that generational differences are not primarily rooted in disagreements over Islamic principles. Instead, they arise from differing interpretations of how marriage should be celebrated. Older generations generally associate marriage with religious duty, modesty, collective family participation, and financial prudence, whereas younger generations increasingly view weddings as occasions for personal expression, emotional fulfilment, creativity, and the production of memorable experiences. Consequently, the tension observed within families reflects differing social experiences rather than conflicting religious beliefs.

Importantly, respondents repeatedly emphasised that these differences rarely result in complete rejection of either perspective. Instead, families negotiate wedding arrangements through discussion, compromise, and selective adaptation, enabling both religious continuity and cultural innovation to coexist within the same ceremony.

This finding illustrates that contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages are shaped not simply by modernization but by intergenerational dialogue, through which traditions are continuously reinterpreted in response to changing social realities.

4.3.6.1 Older and Younger Generations: Differing Perspectives on Marriage

One of the clearest patterns emerging from the interviews concerns the contrasting perspectives of older and younger respondents regarding the purpose and organisation of marriage celebrations.

Shafeek observed:

"Older people generally prefer simple marriages with fewer ceremonies, whereas younger people show more interest in conducting multiple functions and following new trends." (Case 1)

Siyam similarly explained:

"Older generations give greater importance to religious authenticity, community bonding and simplicity, whereas younger generations view weddings as personal celebrations and opportunities to create memorable experiences." (Case 2)

Afiya described these differences from the perspective of a younger participant:

"Older generations generally do not prefer many modern practices, while younger generations show greater interest in new celebrations." (Case 3)

Muhsina also recognised this divide:

"Older generations generally prefer simple marriages based on Islamic values, whereas younger generations show greater interest in incorporating multiple celebrations and modern trends." (Case 4)

The older respondents expressed similar observations.

Jameela Beevi reflected:

"Earlier weddings were simple and did not include beauty parlours, professional photography, videography or elaborate decorations." (Case 5)

Noushad commented:

"Young men today hesitate to marry because of the increasing financial burden associated with modern weddings." (Case 6)

Shemi explained:

"Earlier generations focused mainly on ensuring a stable and happy married life, whereas many young people today place greater importance on personal preferences, compatibility and lifestyle." (Case 7)

The comparison across respondents reveals a remarkable consistency.

Older respondents consistently associated marriage with:

- religious responsibility;
- simplicity;
- family solidarity;
- modest expenditure;
- community participation.

Conversely, younger respondents emphasised:

- celebration;
- enjoyment;
- photography;

- memorable experiences;
- aesthetic presentation;
- personal choice.

However, these differences should not be interpreted as opposing value systems.

Younger respondents never questioned the religious legitimacy of Nikah.

Likewise, older respondents did not reject celebration itself.

Instead, both generations differed primarily in the degree of celebration considered appropriate.

This distinction is sociologically important because it demonstrates that generational change involves the reinterpretation of cultural practices rather than the rejection of religious values.

Comparative Analysis

The younger respondents (Shafeek, Siyam and Afiya) viewed additional ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi and Bride-to-Be celebrations as opportunities to strengthen friendships, create enjoyable experiences and preserve memories.

Muhsina occupied an intermediate position. Having experienced marriage herself while simultaneously pursuing postgraduate education, she recognised the attractiveness of modern celebrations but remained critical of their increasing extravagance.

The older respondents (Jameela Beevi, Noushad and Shemi) consistently evaluated weddings according to Islamic principles of simplicity and moderation. Their concerns focused less on the ceremonies themselves than on the financial pressure, social competition and declining emphasis upon religious values.

This comparison demonstrates that generational differences exist primarily in the interpretation of changing social practices rather than in attitudes toward religion itself.

4.3.6.2 Negotiating Between Tradition and Modernity

Although respondents consistently recognised generational differences, they also described family negotiation as the mechanism through which differing expectations are reconciled.

Afiya explained:

"Older family members may not support the introduction of new customs, while younger members prefer more celebrations. However, families often adjust with these changes and eventually allow younger generations to follow their preferences." (Case 3)

Shafeek similarly observed:

"Although elderly members may not fully support these changes, they still participate because of family relationships and social expectations." (Case 1)

Muhsina explained:

"These differences often lead to disagreements within families, especially when younger members insist on grand celebrations while older members advocate simplicity. Nevertheless, younger generations increasingly influence the final decisions." (Case 4)

Shemi also noted:

"Parents usually compromise and allow their children to organise weddings according to contemporary trends." (Case 7)

Noushad reflected:

"Changing marriage practices frequently lead to disagreements within families." (Case 6)

These narratives demonstrate that family conflict surrounding marriage is generally negotiated rather than confrontational.

Older generations rarely possess absolute authority over wedding arrangements.

Similarly, younger generations seldom reject family traditions entirely.

Instead, decisions emerge through discussion, compromise and mutual adjustment.

For example:

- Nikah remains traditional.
- Walima continues.
- Modern celebrations are added around these religious rituals.

This pattern illustrates that families do not experience tradition and modernity as mutually exclusive categories.

Instead, they creatively combine elements of both.

Structuration and Family Agency

The findings can be understood through Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory (1984).

According to Giddens, social actors are neither completely constrained by traditions nor completely free from them.

Instead, individuals continuously reproduce and modify social structures through everyday practice.

This is precisely what respondents described.

Families preserve Nikah...

They continue Mahr...

They maintain Walima...

Yet they simultaneously introduce:

- Mehendi
- Bride-to-Be
- Cinematic photography
- Destination shoots

Thus, tradition is reproduced while simultaneously being transformed.

The findings therefore illustrate agency operating within tradition, rather than modernization replacing tradition.

4.3.6.3 Future Directions of Sunni Muslim Marriage Practices

Respondents also reflected upon the likely future of marriage practices.

Interestingly, almost all believed that change would continue.

However, their expectations differed considerably.

Siyam predicted:

"Virtual live-streaming for relatives living abroad may become a permanent feature of future weddings." (Case 2)

Afiya anticipated:

"Future weddings may include more new customs because younger generations continue to show interest in expanding marriage celebrations." (Case 3)

Muhsina expressed concern:

"Muslim marriages are likely to become even more elaborate, with additional celebrations and greater influence from Western and North Indian traditions." (Case 4)

Jameela Beevi remained cautious:

"Marriage practices are likely to continue changing, but marriages should continue to follow the principles of simplicity taught in Islam." (Case 5)

Noushad similarly advised:

"Future generations should reduce unnecessary expenditure and conduct marriages with greater simplicity and responsibility." (Case 6)

Shemi predicted:

"Additional marriage customs will continue to emerge as society changes." (Case 7)

Collectively, these narratives suggest that respondents view social change as inevitable.

However, they also believe that the religious foundation of marriage should remain unchanged.

This illustrates a process of adaptive continuity, whereby institutions evolve without abandoning their core normative principles.

The present findings closely correspond with previous sociological studies examining the transformation of marriage in South Asia.

Earlier researchers have argued that modernization does not eliminate traditional institutions but reshapes their social expression through changing lifestyles, education, urbanisation and media exposure. The present study supports this interpretation by demonstrating that respondents across generations continue to regard Nikah, Mahr, Walima and family participation as indispensable religious and social institutions, even while embracing newer cultural forms of celebration.

The findings also resonate with scholarship on globalization and family change, which suggests that contemporary weddings increasingly function as sites where global cultural influences intersect with local traditions. Rather than replacing Islamic marriage practices, respondents

described a selective incorporation of customs such as Mehendi, Bride-to-Be celebrations and cinematic photography into an enduring religious framework. This reflects broader discussions in the literature on glocalization, whereby global cultural forms are adapted to local religious and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the respondents' concern regarding growing expenditure and social comparison echoes studies on consumer culture and conspicuous consumption, which argue that weddings have become important arenas for the public display of social status, cultural taste and economic resources. At the same time, the repeated emphasis on Islamic simplicity and moderation highlights the continuing influence of religious values in shaping moral evaluations of marriage practices.

Thus, the present study both confirms and extends existing scholarship by showing that Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala are neither wholly traditional nor entirely modern. Instead, they represent a negotiated synthesis in which continuity and change coexist through ongoing family interaction and community adaptation.

The thematic analysis demonstrates that Sunni Muslim marriage practices in Kerala are characterised by continuity within change rather than continuity versus change. Across all seven case narratives, respondents consistently identified Nikah as the immutable religious foundation of marriage, while recognising that the surrounding rituals, modes of celebration and social meanings have undergone significant transformation.

The findings reveal six interconnected processes shaping contemporary marriage practices:

1. Religious continuity, reflected in the enduring importance of Nikah, Mahr, Walima, consent and witnesses.
2. Transformation of traditional customs, where rituals continue but are adapted to contemporary lifestyles.
3. Expansion of modern wedding celebrations, including Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be functions and cinematic photography.
4. Influence of media, globalization and consumer culture, which has introduced new aesthetic expectations and patterns of celebration.
5. Increasing economic pressure, resulting from commercialization, symbolic consumption and social competition.

6. Intergenerational negotiation, through which families reconcile traditional religious values with contemporary aspirations.

Rather than indicating the erosion of Islamic marriage traditions, these findings demonstrate the remarkable resilience of religious institutions in adapting to changing social contexts. Contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings therefore emerge as hybrid social institutions in which religious obligations provide normative legitimacy while cultural innovations reshape the forms through which marriage is celebrated and experienced.

Viewed through the lenses of Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism, Structuration Theory, Consumer Culture Theory, Conspicuous Consumption, Media Dependency Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Glocalization, the study illustrates that marriage remains a dynamic institution continuously reconstructed through the interaction of religion, culture, economy, technology and family life. This dynamic process enables the Sunni Muslim community to preserve its religious identity while responding creatively to the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly globalised and media-saturated society.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The present study was undertaken to examine the continuity and change in marriage rituals and practices among the Sunni Muslim community in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala. Marriage occupies a central position in Islamic social life, functioning not only as a religious institution but also as a cultural, social, and familial arrangement that regulates interpersonal relationships, kinship structures, and community cohesion. While Islamic teachings provide a well-defined framework for marriage through the institution of Nikah, rapid social transformation, globalization, modernization, technological advancement, and changing lifestyles have significantly influenced the manner in which marriages are celebrated within Muslim communities.

Using a qualitative research design, the study explored the lived experiences and perceptions of seven respondents representing different age groups, educational backgrounds, occupations, gender, and marital status. Through thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, the study identified major patterns of continuity and change in contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices. The analysis demonstrated that while the religious foundations of marriage remain remarkably stable, the social and cultural dimensions of marriage celebrations have undergone considerable transformation.

This chapter presents a synthesis of the major findings of the study in relation to the research objectives. Rather than merely summarising the interview responses, the chapter integrates the thematic findings and interprets them within the broader sociological understanding of religion, culture, modernization, consumerism, media influence, and social change. The findings illustrate the dynamic interaction between continuity and transformation, showing how the Sunni Muslim community preserves its religious identity while adapting to changing cultural and social realities.

5.2 Major Findings of the Study

5.2.1 Continuity of the Religious Foundations of Marriage

The foremost finding of the study is that the religious foundation of Sunni Muslim marriage remains unchanged despite significant transformations in wedding celebrations. All respondents, irrespective of age, gender, education, or occupation, unanimously identified

Nikah as the most important component of marriage. Respondents consistently described Nikah as the religious contract that legitimises the marital relationship according to Islamic principles. They considered it indispensable for establishing the legal, moral, and spiritual bond between husband and wife.

The study found that respondents clearly distinguished between the essential religious elements of marriage and the additional cultural ceremonies that have emerged in recent decades. Religious practices such as Nikah, Mahr, mutual consent (Ijab and Qubool), the presence of witnesses, the role of the Wali, and Walima continue to be regarded as obligatory components of marriage. These practices were unanimously viewed as preserving the Islamic identity of marriage regardless of the changing nature of wedding celebrations.

The findings indicate that modernization has not weakened religious commitment among the respondents. Instead, participants demonstrated a strong awareness of Islamic teachings and consistently prioritised religious obligations over contemporary wedding customs. This suggests that religious continuity continues to provide the normative framework within which social and cultural changes occur.

5.2.2 Marriage Continues to Function as a Collective Family Institution

Another important finding is that marriage continues to be understood as a collective family and community institution rather than merely a relationship between two individuals. Respondents repeatedly emphasised the active participation of parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours, and extended family members in marriage arrangements and ceremonies.

Although several traditional customs have undergone modification, respondents continued to attach considerable importance to family involvement throughout the marriage process. Traditional practices such as Acharam, Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, Veedu Kaanal, Pennukanal, and Valayidal continue to strengthen relationships between families and reinforce kinship ties.

The study also found that respondents perceive marriage as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity within the community. Family members continue to provide emotional, financial, and organisational support during marriage ceremonies, illustrating that kinship remains an important feature of Sunni Muslim social life. However, compared to earlier generations, some ceremonial responsibilities previously performed by extended family members have gradually shifted to professional service providers and event management companies.

5.2.3 Transformation of Traditional Marriage Rituals

The findings reveal that traditional marriage rituals have not disappeared but have undergone gradual transformation in response to changing social conditions. Respondents consistently stated that earlier marriages were characterised by simplicity, modest expenditure, home-based celebrations, and strong community participation. Contemporary weddings, in contrast, have become larger, more organised, and increasingly elaborate.

Traditional customs continue to be observed, but their forms, sequence, and methods of celebration have changed considerably. Rituals that were once conducted within the household are now frequently organised in auditoriums, convention centres, and luxury wedding venues. Likewise, ceremonies that were previously limited to close relatives have expanded into large public celebrations involving hundreds of guests.

The study therefore demonstrates that change has occurred primarily in the form rather than the meaning of marriage rituals. Respondents did not perceive these modifications as abandoning tradition but rather as adapting traditional customs to suit contemporary lifestyles, occupational demands, urban living, and changing family structures.

5.2.4 Emergence of New Wedding Celebrations

One of the most visible changes identified by the study is the emergence of numerous modern wedding celebrations that were largely absent in earlier generations. Respondents repeatedly referred to ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be and Groom-to-Be functions, Save-the-Date events, pre-wedding photoshoots, cinematic videography, destination photography, Sangeet-style programmes, and elaborate receptions as recent additions to Sunni Muslim weddings.

The study found that these celebrations are widely recognised as cultural rather than religious practices. Respondents consistently maintained that such ceremonies do not possess religious significance and should not be regarded as essential components of Islamic marriage. Nevertheless, these practices have become increasingly popular because they provide opportunities for enjoyment, creativity, family interaction, and the creation of memorable experiences.

The findings indicate that contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings have expanded beyond the solemnisation of marriage into multi-day celebrations involving multiple events before and after the Nikah. These developments illustrate the influence of changing social aspirations and cultural innovation within the community.

5.2.5 Influence of Media, Modernization and Globalization

The study found that media, modernization, and globalization have become powerful agents of change in contemporary marriage practices. Respondents consistently identified Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, cinema, digital media, fashion trends, and online wedding content as major influences shaping wedding expectations.

Younger respondents particularly acknowledged that social media provides ideas regarding decoration, clothing, photography, venue selection, stage arrangements, and ceremonial activities. Respondents observed that families increasingly imitate wedding styles they encounter through digital platforms, resulting in the rapid diffusion of new cultural practices.

Globalization has also facilitated the incorporation of wedding customs originating outside Kerala. Respondents recognised that ceremonies such as Haldi have been influenced by North Indian traditions, while Bride-to-Be celebrations and cinematic pre-wedding photography have been inspired by Western wedding culture. These practices have gradually become integrated into local marriage celebrations without replacing the religious institution of Nikah.

The findings demonstrate that modernization has diversified marriage celebrations while preserving their religious foundations. Rather than replacing Islamic traditions, global cultural influences have been selectively adapted to local religious and cultural contexts.

5.2.6 Increasing Commercialisation of Marriage

The study reveals that commercialisation has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Sunni Muslim weddings. Respondents repeatedly described the growing involvement of professional event management companies, photographers, videographers, decorators, caterers, makeup artists, designers, and hospitality services in organising marriage ceremonies.

Wedding planning has increasingly become a specialised commercial activity involving multiple service industries. Photography has evolved from simple documentation into cinematic productions incorporating drones, LED screens, digital editing, and creative storytelling. Decorations, lighting, floral arrangements, luxury venues, and themed receptions have similarly become integral components of wedding celebrations.

Although respondents appreciated the convenience and professionalism offered by these services, many expressed concern that excessive commercialisation has shifted attention away

from the religious purpose of marriage. Weddings increasingly resemble highly organised social events rather than simple religious ceremonies.

5.2.7 Economic Pressure and Rising Wedding Expenditure

The study identified economic pressure as one of the most significant consequences of changing marriage practices. Respondents consistently observed that contemporary weddings require substantially greater financial investment than those conducted during earlier generations.

Major sources of expenditure include luxury auditoriums, designer clothing, gold ornaments, cinematic photography, event management, elaborate decorations, premium catering, and multiple pre-wedding celebrations. Respondents repeatedly emphasised that these expenses frequently exceed the financial capacity of many families.

An important finding is that rising expenditure is driven not only by inflation but also by social comparison and prestige competition. Families often feel compelled to organise weddings comparable to those of relatives, neighbours, or friends, even when such expenditure creates financial strain. Several respondents expressed concern that some families borrow money or incur debt to meet these social expectations.

The findings therefore indicate that contemporary marriage practices increasingly reflect consumer culture, where expenditure functions as a symbol of family status and social prestige.

5.2.8 Distinction Between Religious Values and Consumer Culture

The study found that respondents consistently evaluated contemporary marriage practices through two contrasting frameworks. On the one hand, they acknowledged the attraction of modern celebrations and appreciated the opportunities they provide for enjoyment and social interaction. On the other hand, they repeatedly emphasised that Islam encourages simplicity, moderation, and avoidance of unnecessary expenditure.

Respondents expressed concern that certain contemporary wedding practices may contradict Islamic teachings by promoting extravagance, competition, and public display. However, they did not advocate abandoning modern celebrations altogether. Instead, they emphasised the importance of maintaining a balance in which cultural celebrations remain secondary to the religious significance of Nikah.

This finding demonstrates that respondents actively negotiate between religious values and contemporary social expectations rather than accepting either perspective uncritically.

5.2.9 Generational Differences in Marriage Practices

The findings reveal clear generational differences regarding attitudes towards marriage celebrations. Older respondents generally preferred simple weddings characterised by religious observance, modest expenditure, and strong family participation. Younger respondents, in contrast, expressed greater enthusiasm for contemporary celebrations such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be functions, cinematic photography, and destination shoots.

Despite these differences, the study found that generational conflict rarely results in complete disagreement. Instead, families negotiate wedding arrangements through discussion and compromise. Older generations generally accept certain modern practices in order to satisfy younger family members, while younger generations continue to respect the religious importance of Nikah and other Islamic obligations.

The findings therefore suggest that Sunni Muslim families successfully negotiate between tradition and modernity by selectively incorporating new cultural practices without abandoning their religious foundations.

5.2.10 Marriage Practices Reflect Continuity within Change

The most significant overall finding of the study is that Sunni Muslim marriage practices are characterised by continuity within change rather than continuity versus change. The research demonstrates that religious institutions possess considerable resilience and adaptability. The religious core of marriage has remained stable, whereas the cultural forms surrounding marriage have evolved in response to modernization, globalization, media influence, and consumer culture.

Marriage today functions simultaneously as:

- a religious institution based on Islamic principles;
- a family institution reinforcing kinship and community relationships;
- a cultural institution reflecting changing lifestyles;
- a social event facilitating interaction and celebration;
- and an increasingly visible expression of family identity and social status.

The study concludes that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive processes. Instead, they operate together, enabling the Sunni Muslim community to preserve its religious identity while adapting to changing social, economic, and cultural circumstances. This dynamic

interaction between tradition and transformation represents the central finding of the present research and provides important insight into the evolving nature of marriage within contemporary Muslim society.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the present study demonstrate that while the religious foundations of Sunni Muslim marriage remain strong, contemporary marriage practices are increasingly influenced by modernization, globalization, media exposure, commercialization and changing social expectations. These developments present both opportunities and challenges for individuals, families, religious institutions, and the wider community. Based on the empirical findings and their sociological interpretation, the following suggestions are proposed to preserve the religious and cultural integrity of marriage while responding positively to contemporary social realities.

5.3.1 Promote Awareness of Islamic Principles of Marriage

One of the major findings of the study is that respondents clearly distinguish between religious obligations and cultural additions in marriage ceremonies. However, the growing popularity of modern celebrations has sometimes shifted greater attention toward external forms of celebration than toward the religious significance of marriage. Therefore, greater efforts should be made to promote awareness of the Islamic principles governing marriage.

Mosques, Mahallu Committees, Islamic scholars, and community organisations should organise regular awareness programmes, seminars, and premarital counselling sessions explaining the religious objectives of marriage, the significance of Nikah, Mahr, Walima, mutual rights and responsibilities, and the Islamic emphasis on simplicity and moderation. Such programmes would help younger generations understand that the religious validity of marriage depends upon Islamic requirements rather than elaborate social ceremonies.

5.3.2 Encourage Simple and Economically Sustainable Weddings

The study found that increasing wedding expenditure has become a major concern for respondents across all generations. Many participants observed that excessive spending creates financial stress and sometimes compels families to borrow money or incur debt in order to meet social expectations.

Community organisations, religious leaders, and local Muslim associations should therefore encourage simple, dignified, and financially sustainable weddings. Public awareness campaigns highlighting the Islamic ideal of moderation could reduce unnecessary competition

and social pressure associated with lavish celebrations. Families should be encouraged to organise marriages according to their financial capacity rather than attempting to imitate expensive weddings conducted by wealthier households.

Recognition may also be given by community organisations to families that conduct simple marriages in accordance with Islamic principles, thereby creating positive social examples that others may emulate.

5.3.3 Strengthen Premarital Education and Family Counselling

Marriage today requires not only religious preparation but also emotional, psychological, financial, and interpersonal readiness. The study indicates that younger generations increasingly view marriage as a partnership based on mutual understanding, compatibility, and shared responsibilities.

Structured premarital education programmes should therefore be introduced through Mahallu Committees, educational institutions, counselling centres, and community organisations. These programmes should include topics such as marital communication, conflict resolution, financial management, gender roles, reproductive health, parenting, legal rights, and Islamic family ethics.

Premarital counselling can help couples develop realistic expectations regarding married life while reducing misunderstandings and strengthening long-term marital stability.

5.3.4 Promote Responsible Use of Social Media

The findings demonstrate that social media has become one of the most influential agents shaping contemporary marriage practices. While digital platforms provide opportunities for creativity and communication, they also contribute to unrealistic expectations, social comparison, and excessive expenditure.

Educational institutions, community organisations, and religious leaders should encourage critical digital literacy among young people. Families should be encouraged to appreciate social media as a source of ideas without allowing online trends to dictate the scale or cost of marriage celebrations.

Public awareness initiatives should emphasise that the success of a marriage depends upon mutual respect, understanding, and religious commitment rather than online visibility or public display.

5.3.5 Regulate Commercialisation of Marriage Celebrations

The study found that event management companies, photographers, decorators, and other commercial service providers now play central roles in wedding planning. While these services offer convenience and professional expertise, excessive commercialisation often contributes to unnecessary expenditure and social competition.

Professional wedding service providers should be encouraged to develop affordable wedding packages suitable for families from different economic backgrounds. Community organisations may also formulate voluntary guidelines promoting responsible expenditure and discouraging unnecessary extravagance.

Wedding industries themselves have a social responsibility to encourage ethical practices that respect cultural and religious values while providing professional services.

5.3.6 Preserve Valuable Traditional Customs

Although marriage practices have changed considerably, the study demonstrates that many traditional customs continue to strengthen family relationships and community solidarity. Practices such as family gatherings, Adukkala Kaanal, Maruveedu, and collective family participation continue to possess significant social value.

Families should therefore preserve those traditional customs that promote kinship, hospitality, and mutual support while avoiding practices that conflict with Islamic teachings or create unnecessary financial burdens. Preservation of positive cultural traditions contributes to community identity and intergenerational continuity.

5.3.7 Encourage Intergenerational Dialogue

The study identified noticeable differences between older and younger generations regarding wedding celebrations. However, respondents also demonstrated that family discussions and compromise often enable both generations to reach mutually acceptable decisions.

Families should encourage open dialogue during marriage planning, allowing older members to share their experiences while respecting the aspirations of younger generations. Such dialogue can reduce family conflict, strengthen mutual understanding, and facilitate balanced decision-making that combines religious principles with contemporary preferences.

5.3.8 Strengthen the Role of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions have an important role in promoting awareness regarding responsible marriage practices. Colleges, universities, and schools may organise seminars and workshops

on marriage, family life, financial planning, gender equality, and Islamic ethics. Such programmes can prepare young adults to make informed decisions regarding marriage and reduce the influence of unrealistic social expectations.

5.3.9 Community-Based Financial Support for Marriage

Since respondents highlighted financial burden as a major challenge, Mahallu Committees, charitable organisations, and community associations may consider developing financial assistance programmes for economically weaker families. Interest-free marriage assistance funds, community marriage programmes, and cooperative support systems may help reduce economic inequalities while encouraging socially responsible marriages.

5.3.10 Policy Implications

Although marriage remains primarily a religious and family institution, government agencies and civil society organisations can contribute by promoting financial literacy, family counselling services, women's empowerment, legal awareness, and community welfare programmes. Collaboration between religious institutions and government agencies can strengthen family well-being while respecting religious traditions and cultural diversity.

5.4 Scope for Future Research

The present study provides valuable insights into the continuity and change of Sunni Muslim marriage rituals in Thiruvananthapuram District. However, the findings also indicate several areas that warrant further investigation.

Future studies may adopt larger samples covering different regions of Kerala to examine regional variations in Sunni Muslim marriage practices. Comparative studies between Sunni, Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami, Shia, and other Muslim communities could provide a broader understanding of similarities and differences in marriage rituals.

Further research may also examine marriage practices among Muslim communities in other Indian states to understand the influence of regional culture on Islamic marriage traditions.

Longitudinal studies would be particularly useful for examining how marriage practices continue to evolve across generations under the influence of modernization, globalization, and technological advancement.

Future researchers may also explore the relationship between wedding expenditure and long-term marital satisfaction, thereby investigating whether elaborate celebrations contribute positively to married life or merely increase financial burdens.

Additional studies focusing on gender perspectives would provide deeper understanding of women's and men's experiences within contemporary Muslim marriage practices, particularly regarding decision-making, family expectations, and changing gender roles.

The increasing influence of social media also offers opportunities for future research examining digital culture, online identity construction, influencer marketing, and their impact on wedding planning among Muslim youth.

Researchers may further investigate the role of Gulf migration, remittance economies, consumer culture, and transnational family networks in shaping changing marriage practices within Kerala's Muslim community.

Finally, comparative qualitative and quantitative studies may be undertaken to examine how religious values continue to influence marriage despite increasing exposure to global cultural trends.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Marriage continues to occupy a central place within the social, cultural, and religious life of the Sunni Muslim community. The present study set out to examine the continuity and change in Sunni Muslim marriage rituals and practices in Thiruvananthapuram District by exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of respondents from different generations. The findings demonstrate that marriage remains a dynamic institution that continuously adapts to changing social realities while preserving its essential religious foundations.

The study establishes that Nikah continues to constitute the core of Sunni Muslim marriage, providing religious legitimacy and defining the marital relationship according to Islamic teachings. Essential elements such as Mahr, mutual consent, witnesses, Walima, and the role of the Wali continue to be recognised as indispensable religious obligations. These findings confirm that the religious identity of marriage remains remarkably stable despite substantial transformation in the manner in which weddings are celebrated.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that marriage celebrations have undergone considerable change. Traditional customs continue to survive but are increasingly performed in modified forms adapted to contemporary lifestyles. The emergence of ceremonies such as Mehendi, Haldi, Bride-to-Be celebrations, cinematic photography, pre-wedding photoshoots, and professionally organised receptions illustrates the growing influence of modernization, globalization, digital media, and consumer culture.

An important contribution of this study is the finding that respondents themselves clearly distinguish between religious obligations and cultural innovations. While many participants appreciate the emotional and social value of modern celebrations, they consistently maintain that these practices should remain secondary to the religious significance of Nikah. Thus, the findings challenge simplistic assumptions that modernization necessarily weakens religious traditions. Instead, the study demonstrates that religious continuity and cultural change coexist within the same institution.

The research further reveals that social media has emerged as a powerful agent of cultural transformation, influencing wedding expectations, fashion, photography, decoration, and ceremonial practices. Simultaneously, the expansion of commercial wedding industries has contributed to increasing consumerism, social comparison, and rising wedding expenditure. Respondents expressed concern that excessive commercialization may undermine the Islamic principles of simplicity and moderation by encouraging unnecessary extravagance and financial competition.

Another significant finding concerns intergenerational negotiation. Older generations generally emphasise religious values, simplicity, and family participation, whereas younger generations show greater enthusiasm for creative and elaborate celebrations. Nevertheless, these differences seldom produce complete conflict. Families generally negotiate wedding arrangements through discussion, compromise, and mutual accommodation, thereby enabling continuity and change to coexist harmoniously.

From a sociological perspective, the findings illustrate that Sunni Muslim marriage practices are best understood not as a conflict between tradition and modernity but as a process of adaptive continuity. Religious institutions remain resilient because they accommodate changing cultural forms without abandoning their normative foundations. The study thus supports theoretical perspectives such as Structural Functionalism, Structuration Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Cultural Diffusion, Consumer Culture Theory, and Glocalization, all of which emphasise that social institutions evolve through continuous interaction between stability and change.

The study therefore concludes that contemporary Sunni Muslim marriages in Kerala represent hybrid social institutions, where enduring Islamic values coexist with changing cultural expressions. Rather than indicating the erosion of religious traditions, these transformations demonstrate the community's capacity to negotiate social change while preserving its religious

identity. Marriage continues to function as a religious covenant, a family institution, a cultural celebration, and a marker of social identity, reflecting the complex interplay of religion, culture, economy, technology, and globalization in contemporary society.

In conclusion, the present research contributes to the sociological understanding of marriage by demonstrating that continuity and change are complementary rather than contradictory processes. The Sunni Muslim community of Thiruvananthapuram illustrates how religious institutions can remain stable in their fundamental principles while simultaneously adapting to the changing aspirations, lifestyles, and social realities of the modern world. This balance between preservation and adaptation remains the defining characteristic of contemporary Sunni Muslim marriage practices and constitutes the central contribution of this study.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part I: BASIC PROFILE

Name:

Age:

Gender :

Occupation :

Educational qualification :

Marital status:

Place of residence:

Family type :

Have you participated in Muslim marriage ceremonies?

Part II: Questions Related to Marriage Rituals and Practices

A. TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE PRACTICES

1. What are the traditional marriage rituals followed among Sunni Muslims in your community?
2. Can you explain the importance of Nikah in Muslim marriage?
3. What rituals were commonly practiced in earlier times before and after marriage?
4. What role do family members and relatives play in marriage ceremonies?
5. How important are religious customs in marriage practices
6. What are the traditional expectations regarding simplicity in Muslim marriages?

B. CHANGES IN MARRIAGE RITUALS

7. Have you noticed any changes in Muslim marriage rituals in recent years?
8. What new rituals or celebrations have become common today?
9. Are practices such as Mehendi, Haldi, pre-wedding photoshoots, or bride-to-be celebrations common in your community?

10. In your opinion, why are these new practices becoming popular?
11. How have wedding celebrations changed compared to earlier generations?
12. Do you think marriages today are more expensive than before? Why?

C. INFLUENCE OF MODERNIZATION AND MEDIA

13. Do social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook influence marriage celebrations today?
14. How do cinema, fashion, and online wedding trends affect Muslim weddings?
15. What role do event management, photography, and decoration play in present-day marriages?
16. Do you think globalization and modern lifestyle influence marriage rituals? How?

D. RELIGION AND CULTURE

17. In your opinion, are all current marriage practices religiously important?
18. Which practices do you think are cultural rather than religious?
19. Do you think some present-day wedding practices go against Islamic principles of simplicity and modesty?
20. How do families balance religious values and modern trends in weddings?

E. GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

21. Do older and younger generations differ in their views about marriage rituals?
22. What differences do you observe between earlier marriages and present-day marriages?
23. How do young people view modern wedding practices?-
24. How do older people react to changing marriage customs?
25. Do changing marriage practices create disagreements within families?

F. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

26. Which traditional marriage rituals are still strongly followed today?
27. Which traditional practices are slowly disappearing?

28. What changes do you think will happen in Muslim marriage rituals in the future?
29. Do you think modern changes are positive or negative? Why?
30. Is there anything else you would like to share about marriage rituals and practices among Sunni Muslims?

APPENDIX 2-PICTURES TAKEN DURING FIELDWORK

PLATE 1&2: ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY



PLATE 2&3: NIKAH CEREMONY



PLATE 4&5: ARIKUTH KALYANNAM



PLATE 6AND 7: BRIDE TO BE -MODERN PRACTICE



PLATE 8:HALDI



PLATE 9: SAVE THE DATE



PLATE 10:WEDDING

