

CHAPTER 8

Beyond Rituals: Concluding Reflections

Over the last three decades, the study of religion has shifted significantly, emphasising the importance of discourse, identity, and ritual in the everyday practice of religion (Edgell, 2012). This cultural turn has led to a deeper understanding of how religion is not just a set of doctrines or institutional affiliations but is profoundly embedded in people's day-to-day lives. The study of lived religion emphasises how people engage with religious idioms—encompassing language, symbols, rituals, and objects—and use them to shape their lives and their worlds. As Robert Orsi aptly summarises, ‘There is no religion apart from this, no religion that people have not taken up in their hands’ (Orsi 2003, p. 172). This perspective highlights the active role individuals play in creating and sustaining religious practices, as religious idioms do not exist independently from people. These religious idioms need to be activated by individuals who possess the socially mediated and highly specific aptitude to do so (see Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 150–151). Key figures in this discourse, such as Robert Orsi, Meredith McGuire (2008), David Hall (1997), Nancy Ammerman (2007; 2014; 2016), and Courtney Bender (2003; 2012), have expressed their concerns regarding several inherent biases within traditional religious studies. These biases include a Protestant theological slant in the conceptualisation and theoretical frameworks (highlighted by McGuire, 2008; Orsi, 2016; also see Stringer, 2008), a fixation on secularisation debates (critiqued by Ammerman 2007), an overemphasis on religious institutions over non-institutional expressions of faith (examined by Bender 2003), and a problematic hierarchical distinction between ‘elite’ and ‘popular’ religion. The latter is often undervalued for its perceived deviation from officially sanctioned ‘proper’ religion (Hall 1997, p.viii; also discussed in

Primiano, 1995). These scholarly critiques have paved the way for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of religious expression, highlighting the need to consider the full spectrum of lived religious experiences. Orsi (2010, p. xli) emphasises the importance of a dialectical approach to religion as lived, which navigates the complex interplay between structure and agency, tradition and action, imagination and reality. However, the dynamic between individual agency and social structure is only sometimes adequately explored in lived religion scholarship, leading to a potential overemphasis on creativity and subversion over more conformist aspects. This is evident in how some studies equate lived religion with unconventional interpretations of approved religious practices and beliefs (e.g., Marks, 2014, pp. 65–66; Peumans, 2014, p. 620; Possamai, 2015, p. 788). Proponents of the lived religion approach advocate for an awareness of how hierarchical assumptions in conventional definitions can warp investigations into the religious lives of subjects. Hence, there is a preference for centering the interpretations of individuals concerning their practices and beliefs (Ammerman, 2007, p. 5; McGuire, 2008, pp. 4–12; Orsi, 1997, p. 7). Kupari (2016; 2020) highlights the limitations of viewing religious experience as merely a contrast between institutionalised religion and personal practice. This perspective misses the nuanced ways individuals engage with religion, which are influenced by larger social structures and the complex power dynamics within. By examining how individuals perceive and classify their religious experiences, we gain insights into their navigation through diverse religious landscapes, revealing the importance of understanding the broader social contexts that shape personal religiosity. The study of lived religion has distinctly turned our attention to how bodies, emotions, and extraordinary experiences are critical to analysing how religion is situated in social life (Ammerman, 2016). In this context, the practice of Chaṭṭha exemplifies how these elements are central to understanding religion as it is lived and

experienced by individuals. Chaṭha, as a lived religious practice, is not confined to the traditional boundaries of religious organisations but is deeply embedded in the daily lives of its practitioners. This practice highlights how individuals actively negotiate religious norms to address personal and familial challenges such as reproductive aspirations, health issues, and infertility. By engaging in Chaṭhā, individuals are not merely adhering to religious traditions; they are dynamically interpreting and adapting them to suit their needs and aspirations.

Building on these scholarly understandings of lived religion, this thesis set out to explore the lived religious experiences of worshippers participating in Chaṭha Pūjā, with a particular focus on the domestic and familial environment. One of the primary contributions of this thesis is its detailed portrayal of the lived experiences of Chaṭha Pūjā worshippers. Through ethnographic methods, including in-depth interviews and participant observation, this research has captured the nuances of how worshippers engage with their religious practices on a daily basis: this happens through making vows, story-telling, conversations of successful vows of others, and sometimes, also dream calls. These lived experiences are not merely ritualistic acts but are deeply intertwined with the worshippers' personal histories, social contexts, and life events. The worshippers' personal histories, including their childhood socialisation into the religious tradition, play a crucial role in shaping their religious practices. Many interviewees recounted how they learned the rituals from their mothers, grandmothers, and sometimes, even relatives and friends, internalising the values and beliefs of their religious community from a young age. This intergenerational transmission of religious knowledge highlights the importance of family in maintaining and perpetuating religious traditions. In the context of Chaṭhā, this approach also shows that the participants are not just conforming to religious expectations but creatively interpreting and utilising religious rituals to meet their practical needs. This adaptability

underscores the dynamic nature of religion as it is lived and experienced by individuals. The study of Chaṭha thus contributes to a broader understanding of lived religion. It challenges us to look beyond traditional measures of religiosity, such as temple attendance or adherence to doctrinal orthodoxy, and to appreciate the nuanced ways people incorporate their faith into their daily lives. This perspective not only enriches our understanding of Chaṭha but also broadens the scope of religious studies to include the lived experiences of all believers, particularly those from marginalised communities. By examining how worshippers in Chaṭha navigate their religious practices to address personal and familial challenges, we gain insight into religion's complex and active role in their lives. This understanding reinforces the importance of considering lived religion as a vital lens through which to study and appreciate how people engage with their faith in the contemporary world.

The previous chapters focussed on different aspects of Chaṭha Pūjā rituals and practices to offer profound insights into the intricate tapestry of cultural, religious, and social dynamics within indigenous communities. By comprehensively examining various facets, including material culture, ritual purity, embodied knowledge, conditional vows, and narratives, a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in religious experiences and communal identities could be gained. The festival is a religious observance and a cultural phenomenon deeply rooted in the communal narratives, beliefs, and practices across various regions. Understanding the narratives surrounding Chaṭhī Māī is crucial for comprehending the origins, evolution, and significance of Chaṭha Pūjā within different indigenous groups. These narratives provide a framework for interpreting the rituals, symbols, and customs associated with the festival, offering insights into the community's collective effervescence, cultural identity, and religious worldview. The narratives of Chaṭhī Māī are multifaceted and diverse, reflecting the rich tapestry of cultural

diversity within the Chaṭha Pūjā tradition. They vary across indigenous groups, regions, and communities, adapting to local histories, legends, and mythologies. While some narratives may focus on the mythical origins of the festival or the exploits of Chaṭhī Māī, others may emphasise the importance of specific rituals, symbols, or deities. These narratives are not static but evolve over time, influenced by socio-cultural changes, historical events, and religious syncretism. One prevalent narrative surrounding Chaṭhī Māī revolves around her mythical origins and divine attributes. According to this narrative, Chaṭhī Māī is believed to embody the primordial energy of the universe, symbolising fertility, abundance, and protection. She is often depicted as a benevolent goddess who blesses her devotees with prosperity, good health, and familial harmony. The festival of Chaṭha Pūjā is celebrated as a tribute to her divine powers, with devotees offering prayers, rituals, and offerings to invoke her blessings.

Another common narrative focuses on the legendary exploits of Chaṭhī Māī, highlighting her role as a protector of the marginalised and the downtrodden. This narrative depicts Chaṭhī Māī as a fearless warrior who defends her devotees against evil forces, natural calamities, and social injustices. She is revered as a symbol of resilience, courage, and solidarity, inspiring her followers to confront adversity with faith and determination. Additionally, narratives surrounding Chaṭha Pūjā often incorporate elements of local folklore, legends, and folk tales, enriching the cultural tapestry of the festival. These narratives may feature mythical beings, legendary heroes, or historical figures, weaving together threads of tradition, imagination, and symbolism. Through storytelling, songs, and oral traditions, these narratives are passed down from generation to generation, preserving the collective memory and cultural heritage of the community. Furthermore, the narratives of Chaṭhī Māī serve as a source of cultural identity and communal cohesion for indigenous groups, fostering a sense of belonging and shared heritage among

devotees. They provide a common framework for interpreting the rituals and symbols of Chaṭha Pūjā, creating a sense of continuity and tradition across different communities. By invoking the stories of Chaṭhī Māī, devotees reaffirm their faith, values, and social bonds, reinforcing the festival's cultural significance. Thus, the narratives surrounding Chaṭhī Māī play a central role in shaping the religious beliefs, cultural practices, and social identities of indigenous communities celebrating Chaṭha Pūjā. By studying these narratives, scholars can gain insights into the cultural dynamics, symbolic meanings, and ritual practices associated with the festival, enriching our understanding of Chaṭha Pūjā as a lived religious experience.

Material culture emerges as a central theme in the study of Chaṭha Pūjā in the chapter on ritual meals and materials of the festival, showcasing the transformative power of ritual objects and meals in facilitating connections with the divine and reinforcing social hierarchies. Objects such as offerings, vessels, and decorations play a crucial role in reflecting and shaping social identities within the community. These material artefacts not only serve functional purposes but also carry symbolic meanings deeply embedded within the cultural fabric of the community. The meticulous preparation and use of specific materials signify devotion and socio-economic status, emphasising the interplay between material culture and social stratification. The ritual objects used in Chaṭha Pūjā serve as markers of identity and status, reflecting the participants' cultural capital and religious commitment. In Chaṭha Pūjā, the materials involved in the rituals—such as the sacred river water, earthen pots, bamboo baskets, and specific food offerings—serve as signifiers that communicate the devotees' reverence and devotion. These materials are not just physical objects but are imbued with symbolic meanings that facilitate a connection with the divine. In the context of Chaṭha Pūjā, devotees seek blessings, health, and prosperity through physical acts of offering prayers and performing rituals with specific materials. The sacred water,

offerings, and ritual objects used in the *pūjā* are imbued with cultural and ritual significance, making them central to the religious practice. The rituals of Chaṭha Pūjā, including bathing in the river, preparing offerings, and presenting them to the setting and rising sun, engage the devotees' senses in profound ways. The tactile experience of handling the ritual materials, the visual spectacle of the offerings, the sound of prayers, and the aroma of food all contribute to a lived experience of devotion, purification, and connection with the divine. The ritual meals and other materials used in Chaṭha Pūjā exemplify this mediation. Preparing and consuming ritual meals are not merely about sustenance but creating a sacred space where the divine is honoured and the community is brought together. The food items, collected and prepared locally reflect regional traditions and religious customs, serving as vessels of memory and markers of cultural identity. The integration of these perspectives reveals that the materials used in Chaṭha Pūjā are essential in understanding the lived religious experiences of the devotees. They help shape social identities, mediate ritual experiences, and reinforce cultural traditions. The ritual meals, viewed through the lens of material religion, are not just culinary exercises but expressions of cultural, religious, and social dimensions. They encapsulate the festival's folk origins, employing indigenous ingredients and preparation techniques sanctioned by religious customs. The meals prepared and consumed during Chaṭha Pūjā are culinary exercises and intricate expressions of profound significance, encompassing a spectrum of cultural, religious, and social dimensions. Deeply rooted in local traditions, these culinary practices witness the folk origins of the festival, encapsulating indigenous ingredients, preparation techniques, and religious sanctions.

Moreover, the discussion of ritual purity in Chaṭha Pūjā reveals a multifaceted understanding of cleanliness and moral integrity within the religious tradition. The differentiation between purity stages—state of impurity, normal purity, and ritual purity—demonstrates how

these concepts permeate everyday life and special religious observances. The impurity state is linked to physical uncleanness and moral or ritual defilement. Common sources of impurity, such as contact with death, pregnancy, illness, and certain taboo foods, necessitate purification before reintegration into normal social and religious activities. Normal purity represents the baseline state of cleanliness and moral acceptability, maintained through daily hygiene practices and adherence to social norms. This purity level is sufficient for most everyday activities and interactions within the community, highlighting the importance of regular maintenance of personal and environmental cleanliness. Ritual purity, the highest state of cleanliness, is essential for participating in sacred rituals, handling holy objects, and performing religious duties. This stage, achieved through specific rites and ceremonies, underscores the elevated significance of purity in religious contexts, marking a clear distinction from everyday practices. The purification processes—self-purification, space purification, and intention purification—are central to restoring and maintaining purity. Self-purification involves both inner and outer aspects. Inner purification emphasises the importance of moral and ritual cleanliness, with practices such as meditation, prayer, and self-reflection cleansing the inner self of negative thoughts and emotions. Outer purification is achieved through regular bathing, wearing clean clothes, and using natural substances like water and herbs to wash away impurities. Space purification involves regular rituals to cleanse homes, communal areas, and sacred sites, removing physical dirt and pollution. Methods include sprinkling water, burning incense or herbs, marking with vermilion, and performing specific cleansing ceremonies. Intention purification highlights the critical importance of the purity of one's intentions in conducting the Pūjā and assisting others. Lapses in maintaining the sanctity of ritual spaces or offerings can result in the goddess's wrath,

manifesting as unusual skin changes. These ritual errors are corrected by making vows to the deities, such as committing to observe the annual festival.

Achieving and maintaining purity in Chaṭha Pūjā involves various methods with both symbolic and practical significance. Water, revered as a universal cleanser, is central to many purification rituals. Burning specific herbs to produce cleansing smoke purifies the environment and dispels negative energies. Complex rituals involving chants, prayers, and offerings restore purity after significant defilement. Maintaining purity requires constant vigilance and adherence to cultural norms. Individuals avoid known sources of impurity, practice daily hygiene and regularly participate in rituals to prevent ritual pollution. These practices reflect the broader cultural and religious values embedded in Chaṭha Pūjā where purity is not merely a physical state but a holistic embodiment of ritual and moral integrity. The nuanced understanding of *saḥā* (cleanliness) and *śuddha* (purity) in Chaṭha Pūjā reveals the intricate interplay between cultural practices, religious beliefs, and social structures. The emphasis on maintaining purity through various stages and purification processes highlights the festival's role in reinforcing communal cohesion, individual discipline, and ritual sanctity. This comprehensive approach to purity underscores its centrality in the lived experiences of the community, shaping both their daily lives and religious observances. A critical contribution of the lived religion approach is its focus on embodiment and experience (Ammerman, 2016). This attention to the physical and emotional dimensions of religious practice is vital for understanding how sacred things are produced, encountered, and shared. Whether through the bodily expressions involved in performing Chaṭha rituals or the emotional resonances these rituals evoke, we see how religion is enacted in tangible, lived ways. This perspective is crucial for examining the human dimensions of religious practice, regardless of whether it occurs within formal religious organisations or in more

personal, everyday settings (Heider & Warner, 2010). The study of Chaṭha underscores the importance of embodiment, vow-making, materiality, and narratives in lived religion. These categories of practice, with their crosscutting emphasis on gender and power, have been brought to the forefront by voices from the margins—women, people of lower castes and class. By prioritising the experiences of ordinary people in ritual settings, this approach has transformed our understanding of religious ways of life that were previously hidden or suppressed.

By reflecting on these diverse aspects of lived experiences elaborated to us by the worshippers, we contend that Chaṭha, as a festival, demonstrates how individuals and communities actively engage with and negotiate religious practices to address their mundane pursuits like reproductive aspirations, health issues, infertility, and other unpredictabilities of everyday life. This active engagement with religion highlights a crucial aspect of lived religion—agency. Contrary to the perception of religious adherents as passive followers of rigid norms, the worshippers in Chaṭha exhibit significant agency. They navigate and sometimes transgress established religious norms to bring about desired changes in their lives, particularly in the context of happy family life, that cannot be seen in isolation from their understandings of *suhāg*, *saubhāgya*, etc. Women and other marginalised groups, often perceived as mere followers of tradition, show remarkable resourcefulness and resilience. By invoking religious practices such as Chaṭha, they find ways to align their personal and family aspirations with their religious beliefs, even when this means bending or reinterpreting traditional norms. The attention to lived religion has been significantly informed by voices from the margins. These diverse voices have collectively challenged the dominant narratives in religious studies, urging us to consider how religion is experienced and practised in everyday life rather than solely through formal doctrines and institutions (Min, 1992; Gilkes, 1985; Wilcox, 2009; Bender et al., 2011; N’Guessan, 2015).

The women equated their present-day practice of Chaṭha with the religious socialisation they received in childhood, following ‘their mothers’ and/or mothers-in-law’s way.’ Their emphasis on maintaining a continuum of religious practice and belief was based on upbringing and personal history despite notable transformations overtime. This insistence on stability can be seen as a deliberate strategy to reinforce their religious traditions against differing values. Despite this, many aspects of their religious practices had significantly transformed over their lifetimes, including during childhood, marriage, and motherhood. While these changes were acknowledged, they were often downplayed. From this perspective, the women’s insistence on stability can be seen as a performative strategy. These practices and beliefs helped reinforce their religious world against others organised around different values. Overall, these individuals intentionally position themselves within a lineage of tradition, choosing continuity over discontinuity; they did so consciously and deliberately.

8.1 Layers of Meaning

The lived religion approach not only enriches the study of religious communities themselves but also reminds us that symbols, rituals, and myths—no matter how individual or chosen they appear—are collective productions that extend beyond their places of origin. Chaṭha, as a lived religious practice, illustrates this dynamic vividly. Ritual practices in Chaṭha, though observed in individual homes and everyday contexts, have their roots in collective gatherings where they are invented, nurtured, and adapted. The festival, deeply embedded in the daily lives of its practitioners, demonstrates how religious practices are negotiated and integrated into personal and familial challenges, such as reproductive aspirations, health issues, and infertility. The rituals associated with Chaṭha, from fasting to offering prayers, are deeply physical practices that

engage the body and evoke strong emotional connections. These practices are not merely symbolic but are integral to how individuals negotiate and make sense of their religious lives. Attention to the lived religious practices of Chaṭha worshippers reveals how these rituals are not confined to the traditional boundaries of religious organisations but travel and evolve within the broader social fabric. The meticulous preparation, health and wellness practices, and social and familial dynamics involved in Chaṭha show how these collective processes permeate everyday life. The rituals of cleaning, purification, and home preparations for welcoming the goddess are as much a part of daily existence as they are of the festival itself. Moreover, as worshippers navigate the expectations of their contemporary worlds and draw on traditional practices, they demonstrate how lived religion bridges personal and communal experiences. This ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity ensures that practices evolving in everyday contexts can take root inside religious institutions, thus continually shaping and being shaped by both realms. The study of Chaṭha through the lens of lived religion reveals the rich tapestry of collective and individual religious life. It underscores the importance of considering these everyday practices to appreciate how people engage with their faith in the contemporary world. By opening the boundaries between personal, communal, everyday and institutional, we gain a deeper understanding of the collective processes and pathways that define religious experience and personal religious trajectory.

The uniqueness of this study spans various dimensions of Chaṭha Pūjā research. At its core, our investigation diverges from conventional methodologies by adopting an interdisciplinary framework that integrates insights from material culture studies, ritual theory, religious anthropology, and cultural narratives. This approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the festival, unveiling layers of meaning and significance previously overlooked

in scholarly discourse. One key aspect distinguishing this research is its focus on material culture and its transformative role within religious practices. Unlike traditional analyses that may neglect the material dimensions of Chaṭha Pūjā, this study delves deeply into the symbolic and practical aspects of ritual objects, offerings, and meals. Moreover, our examination of ritual purity presents a fresh perspective; by scrutinising the intricate rituals and purification processes associated with the festival, we challenge prevailing assumptions about purity and impurity in religious contexts, offering new insights into the symbolic significance of ritual cleansing and its function in maintaining religious sanctity within Indigenous communities. Another notable feature of this study is its emphasis on embodied knowledge and the agency of ritual practitioners, known as the *parvaitin*. Rather than treating rituals as static performances, we highlight the active role of the *parvaitin* in shaping religious experiences through embodied engagement and cultural transmission. This focus on lived religious practices enhances our understanding of Chaṭha Pūjā as a dynamic and participatory phenomenon, highlighting the collaborative relationship between ritual performers and participants in constructing religious meaning. Additionally, exploring conditional vows in Chaṭha Pūjā provides innovative insights into the reciprocal relationship between humans and the divine. By analysing the types of vows, their fulfilment rituals, and their socio-religious implications, we unravel the complex dynamics of gift-giving, reciprocity, and gratitude inherent in the festival tradition. This inquiry deepens our understanding of religious devotion and piety and underscores the social and communal dimensions of religious practice within Indigenous contexts. Additionally, our study of the narratives surrounding Chaṭhī Māi adds a cultural dimension to the research, enriching our understanding of the festival's mythic origins, symbolic motifs, and cultural significance. By examining diverse narratives, legends, and folktales, we offer valuable insights into the cultural

heritage and collective memory of Chaṭha Pūjā ritual communities, highlighting the enduring relevance of storytelling and oral tradition in shaping religious identity and worldview.

At the heart of our investigation lies the recognition of Chaṭha Pūjā as a dynamic and evolving religious phenomenon deeply entrenched in the lived experiences of its practitioners. Participants often draw upon familial traditions and cultural heritage, viewing their present-day religiosity as a continuation of ancestral practices passed down through generations. This emphasis on continuity reflects a deep-seated desire to preserve and honour religious customs amidst the ever-changing landscape of modern life. However, our research also reveals the fluidity and adaptability of religious practices within the context of Chaṭha Pūjā. While participants revere traditional rituals and observances, they also demonstrate a willingness to innovate and reinterpret religious teachings in response to contemporary challenges and personal experiences. This fluidity is evident in the diverse ways individuals engage with Chaṭha Pūjā, incorporating modern elements while staying rooted in timeless religious principles. The argument that innovating and reinterpreting religious teachings might dilute the authenticity of traditional Chaṭha Pūjā practices holds a basis in the desire to preserve the purity of rituals as they have been performed for generations. However, the essence of Chaṭha Pūjā, or any religious practice for that matter, resides more in the intention behind the practice rather than the inflexibility of its rituals. Adaptation and reinterpretation can be seen as a testament to the robustness of the faith, reflecting its relevance and relatability to contemporary followers. By welcoming innovation, we ensure that the practice remains vibrant and meaningful, fostering a deeper connection among its practitioners, rather than alienating them with rigid orthodoxy.

Furthermore, the present study highlights the pivotal role of ritual purity and sacred spaces in the religious experience of Chaṭha Pūjā. Participants meticulously adhere to purification rituals and ceremonial preparations, infusing everyday activities with more significance and reverence. Through these practices, devotees create a sacred framework that sanctifies their interactions with the divine, transforming mundane tasks into acts of worship and devotion. In addition to ritual practices, our research underscores the significance of narrative-making and storytelling in shaping the religious imagination of Chaṭha Pūjā devotees. Participants draw upon mythic narratives, folk tales, and cultural motifs to contextualise their religious experiences, imbuing the festival with layers of meaning and symbolism. These narratives serve not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to forge a sense of collective identity and belonging within the ritual community. Moreover, our investigation into the agency of ritual practitioners, known as the *parvaitin*, sheds light on the active role of individuals in shaping the religious landscape of Chaṭha Pūjā. The *parvaitin* engages in embodied rituals, communal celebrations, and cultural exchanges, contributing to the evolution of religious practices and beliefs. Their agency underscores the participatory nature of religious experience, highlighting the collaborative efforts of devotees in co-creating the rituals and traditions of Chaṭha Pūjā.

8.2 The Field, Practice, and Habitus in Chaṭha Pūjā

While Bourdieu's works have been criticized for portraying the laity as passive consumers of religious goods, his theories can also be used to develop nuanced, micro-level accounts that highlight lay people's practical knowledge of the religious field and the positions they occupy within it. Since it emerged as a distinct research field, the study of lived religion has been linked

to theories of practice to examine the complex power dynamics shaping religious activity (Hall, 1997, p. xi; Orsi, 2003, pp. 171–172). While the value of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and practice has been recognised in lived religion literature (Bender, 2012; 2003, pp. 167–168; McGuire, 2008, pp. 99–100; Orsi, 1997, p. 16), in-depth engagements with his theories remain relatively uncommon (Kupari, 2016; 2020). By focusing on Bourdieu’s core concepts of field, capital, and habitus, this study provides a nuanced analysis of how religious practices are not only performed but also deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the communities that observe Chaṭha Pūjā. Through extensive fieldwork and qualitative analysis of interviews and observations, our research offers a detailed account of how religious capital is accumulated and wielded by different social actors within the context of this festival. Drawing on the study of respondents’ lived experiences of Chaṭha Pūjā, it is shown how scholars can explore the ways informants’ personal histories and investments within the religious field influence their practice of religion as it is lived.

The concept of religious capital, as outlined by Bourdieu, encompasses the knowledge, skills, and expertise that individuals or groups possess within the religious sphere (Bourdieu, 1977; 1991). Our research illustrates how certain castes, particularly those historically marginalised, amass religious capital through their specialised knowledge and abilities required for the preparation and conduct of Chaṭha Pūjā. These capabilities bestow legitimacy and influence, enabling these groups to establish their importance within religious and social hierarchies. For example, artisanal and service castes possess distinct proficiencies in crafting ritual items and preparing sacred foods, which are essential components of Chaṭha Pūjā. Their mastery of these skills, handed down through generations, becomes a form of religious capital that elevates their societal standing. This dynamic demonstrates how marginalised castes utilise

their religious capital to redefine their status within the community, challenging and reshaping established social hierarchies. According to Bourdieu, the division of labour in producing religious goods is a prerequisite for forming an independent religious field (1977). This field is populated by various religious specialists who control religious capital—such as knowledge, competencies, commodities, and qualifications. This framework allows us to explore how subaltern castes, often marginalised in broader social hierarchies, can accumulate and exercise religious capital within the context of Chaṭṭha Pūjā. In many Indian communities, subaltern castes have historically been excluded from certain religious roles and spaces. However, festivals like Chaṭṭha Pūjā allow these groups to assert their religious authority and cultural significance. Through the specialised knowledge and skills required for the preparation and execution of rituals, subaltern castes can gain religious capital and, consequently, a degree of social legitimacy. For instance, certain artisanal and service castes possess unique competencies in crafting ritual objects, preparing sacred foods, and conducting specific rites essential to Chaṭṭha Pūjā. These skills are passed down through generations, and their mastery confers religious authority and respect within the community. The ability to produce and manage these religious goods gives these castes a crucial role in the festival, allowing them to negotiate their status within the social hierarchy. Moreover, the legitimacy of these subaltern castes in the religious field is bolstered by their deep understanding of the rituals and their symbolic meanings. Their expertise in preparing the *sūplā* (ritual basket), offerings, and other paraphernalia necessary for the *pūjā* is not merely technical but also deeply intertwined with religious and cultural knowledge. This knowledge includes understanding the auspicious timings, appropriate invocations, and the religious significance of various ritual elements. In this way, subaltern castes leverage their religious capital to carve out a space of respect and influence within the religious

field of Chaṭha Pūjā. Despite broader social inequalities, their control over essential religious goods and knowledge allows them to gain recognition and assert their cultural and religious importance. This dynamic underscores the multifaceted nature of power and authority in religious practices, where expertise and skill can transcend rigid social hierarchies. Another crucial facet of religious capital in Chaṭha Pūjā is the role of women, particularly from older generations, who wield substantial religious authority through their profound knowledge and practice of the rituals. Bourdieu's concept of religious capital helps us understand how these women, often the custodians of tradition, play a vital role in maintaining and transmitting the religious practices associated with Chaṭha Pūjā. Older women in many Indian communities are seen as repositories of traditional knowledge and practices. Their deep familiarity with the rituals, songs, prayers, and the overall conduct of Chaṭha Pūjā enables them to guide and instruct others, thereby positioning themselves as key religious authorities. This knowledge is a form of religious capital that grants them considerable influence within their families and communities.

Preparing for Chaṭha Pūjā involves intricate rituals requiring detailed knowledge of specific practices and taboos. Women, especially those from older generations, often lead these preparations, ensuring that all rituals are performed correctly to secure the blessings of the deities. Their expertise encompasses the practical aspects of the rituals and the underlying symbolic meanings, which are essential for the efficacy of the rituals. For instance, these women understand the significance of ritual purity, the correct methods for preparing offerings, the appropriate times for conducting various rites, and also how to tackle ritual errors. They also possess a deep knowledge of the mythological and cultural narratives associated with Chaṭha Pūjā, which they pass on to younger generations. This transmission of knowledge ensures the continuity of the traditions and reinforces the women's role as religious authorities. Furthermore,

the communal nature of Chaṭha Pūjā amplifies the influence of these women. The festival often involves collective rituals where women gather to perform prayers and offerings together. The older women guide the proceedings in these settings, demonstrating their knowledge and reinforcing their authority. Their ability to lead and instruct others during these communal rituals enhances their religious capital and solidifies their status within the community. This dynamic is particularly significant in a cultural context where women's roles are often constrained by patriarchal norms. Through their religious knowledge and practices, women can assert a form of authority and agency that might be limited in other areas of social life. Their control over the religious capital associated with Chaṭha Pūjā allows them to influence religious practices and broader cultural and social dynamics.

The habitus, as defined by Bourdieu, represents the internalised dispositions that guide individuals' actions within the field (1990, p. 53). In the context of Chaṭha Pūjā the religious habitus is manifested in the ritualistic behaviours, beliefs, and practices that participants engage in. These embodied actions, performed regularly through routine and ritual, become second nature to the practitioners. The present work highlights how the religious habitus of the participants shapes their understanding of the festival's significance and their role within it. This habitus is not static; it evolves as individuals interact with their social and religious environment, reflecting changes in the broader social field. Integrating Bourdieu's theory of practice into our research enriches our understanding of the lived experiences of the interviewees and the role of religious practice in shaping individual and collective identities within the community. The present research highlights how the worshippers' religious practices are not isolated or arbitrary actions but are deeply embedded in their everyday lives and social identities. The rituals and routines associated with Chaṭha Pūjā become ingrained in the worshippers' habitus, shaping their

perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards religion. For example, the interviewees grew up in households where Chaṭha Pūjā was a central aspect of their cultural and religious upbringing. This led them to internalise the rituals and practices associated with the festival as natural and familiar. Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of habitus elucidates how religious practices become second nature for individuals through routine and ritual. Their engagement in Chaṭha Pūjā rituals reflects their habitus, predisposing them to perform these actions without conscious deliberation or effort. For instance, the worshippers follow established patterns of behaviour and observance passed down through generations, adhering to specific rituals, prayers, and offerings associated with Chaṭha Pūjā as a matter of tradition and custom. Furthermore, the concept of habitus helps contextualise the worshippers' religious practices within broader social structures and hierarchies. The worshippers' habitus reflects their social positioning, economic status, and cultural capital within the community, influencing their participation in Chaṭha Pūjā rituals and their interpretation of religious beliefs and values. By integrating Bourdieu's theory of habitus into our research, it has been attempted to offer a theoretical articulation of the worshippers' religious experiences, framing their practices as embodied actions deeply rooted in their cultural, social, and religious habitus; that is, their castes, class, gender, marital status etc. This theoretical framework enriches our understanding of the lived realities of the interviewees and how religious practices become ingrained and naturalised through routine and ritual. Bourdieu's theory of practice, which emphasises the dialectic between relations of meaning and relations of domination, provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the social dynamics of Chaṭha Pūjā. Our research shows how the festival operates as a semi-autonomous field where individuals and groups compete for religious capital. This competition is not merely about ritual correctness but also about social recognition and power. By analysing the practices and dispositions of

participants, this study reveals how Chaṭha Pūjā serves as a site for the negotiation and reconfiguration of social hierarchies.

Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasises the interrelatedness of structure and agency, highlighting how individual actions are shaped by their social context and their own dispositions and strategies. By integrating Bourdieu's theory of practice into our research, we have elucidated how the interviewees navigate the complex social, cultural, and religious landscape of Chaṭha Pūjā through their everyday practices and interactions. Bourdieu posits that individuals' practices are not isolated actions but within larger social fields characterised by power relations, symbolic capital, and cultural norms. In the context of Chaṭha Pūjā, the worshippers' participation in religious rituals is influenced by their position within the social field, including factors such as their socio-economic status, caste, gender, and education. For example, individuals from higher caste backgrounds may have greater access to cultural capital and social networks facilitating their engagement in Chaṭha Pūjā rituals. In contrast, those from lower caste or marginalised communities may face barriers to full participation. Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasises the role of habitus in mediating individuals' engagement with their social world. Habitus encompasses the embodied dispositions, habits, and tastes individuals acquire through socialisation experiences, shaping their perceptions, preferences, and behaviours. In the context of Chaṭha Pūjā, the interviewees' habitus influences their attitudes towards religious authority, ritual observance, and community norms surrounding the festival. For example, individuals with a strong religious habitus may approach Chaṭha Pūjā rituals with reverence and devotion. In contrast, those with a more secular habitus may participate in the festival for cultural or social reasons. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of practice highlights the role of symbolic capital in shaping individual practices and interactions within social fields. Symbolic capital refers to the

resources individuals possess valued within a particular social context, such as cultural knowledge, prestige, or religious authority. In the context of Chaṭha Pūjā, individuals may accumulate symbolic capital through participation in religious rituals, adherence to community norms, and displays of piety and devotion. For example, individuals who hold religious authority or leadership positions within the community may wield symbolic capital to influence the interpretation and practice of Chaṭha Pūjā rituals.

Integrating Bourdieu's theory of practice into our research allows for a nuanced analysis of how individuals navigate the religious landscape of Chaṭha Pūjā through their everyday practices and interactions. By examining the interplay between habitus, social fields, and symbolic capital, we elucidate the complex dynamics of religious belief and practice within the community. Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of practice provides a theoretical lens through which to analyse how individuals' actions reproduce or challenge existing social structures and power relations within the context of Chaṭha Pūjā. Future research could further explore the interplay between habitus and religious practice within the context of Chaṭha Pūjā. For example, researchers could investigate how individuals' habitus influences their attitudes towards religious authority, community norms, and social expectations surrounding Chaṭha Pūjā rituals. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking changes in habitus over time could provide insights into the dynamic nature of religious identity formation and the impact of socio-cultural factors on religious beliefs and behaviours. Scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between culture, society, and religion within contemporary contexts by continuing to examine the role of habitus in shaping religious practice.

8.3 Context, Continuity, and Change in Chaṭha Pūjā

Chaṭha Pūjā is deeply rooted in its practitioners' cultural, geographical, and social context, primarily in the northern Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and parts of Nepal (Anderson, 1988). This context plays a significant role in shaping the practices, meanings, and experiences of the festival. Chaṭha Pūjā is a unique Hindu festival dedicated to the Sun God (Sūrya) and his wife, Uṣā. It is one of the few Hindu festivals that do not involve idol worship but venerate natural elements, emphasising a direct connection with nature. This cultural specificity underscores the festival's ancient origins and alignment with agrarian lifestyles, reflecting the deep bond between the people and their environment. The geographical context of Chaṭha Pūjā is crucial. The festival is celebrated on the banks of rivers, ponds, and other water bodies, considered sacred and central to the rituals; the physical setting provides a natural stage for the observance of rituals like offering *arghya* (water) to the setting and rising sun. The geographical setting thus not only facilitates the performance of rituals but enhances the ritual experience by connecting devotees to the natural world. Chaṭha Pūjā is a community-oriented festival. The social context involves communal gatherings, collective prayers, and shared meals, strengthening social bonds and reinforcing communal identity. The festival is marked by collective efforts to clean the riverbanks, prepare offerings, and organise processes. This communal participation reflects the social fabric of the communities where Chaṭha Pūjā is celebrated, highlighting the importance of collective religious experiences. Despite the passage of time and the influence of modernisation, Chaṭha Pūjā has maintained a remarkable continuity in its practices and significance. This continuity is evident in several aspects. The core rituals of Chaṭha Pūjā have remained largely unchanged for centuries. Devotees still perform the traditional steps of *nahāe-khāe* (the first day of ritualistic bathing and fasting), *lohaṇḍā* and *kharanā* (the second day of rigorous fasting and preparation of prasāda), *sanjhyā aragh* (offering

to the setting sun), and *bihānī aragh* (offering to the rising sun). These rituals are meticulously followed, ensuring that the essence of the festival is preserved. The transmission of Chaṭha Pūjā practices through oral traditions is key to maintaining continuity. Elders in the community pass down the rituals, songs, and stories associated with the festival to younger generations. This intergenerational transmission keeps the cultural heritage alive and ensures that new generations understand and respect the festival's significance. Family plays a crucial role in sustaining the continuity of Chaṭha Pūjā. The festival often involves entire families in the preparation and performance of rituals. This involvement not only reinforces family bonds but also instils a sense of duty and devotion in younger members, who learn to value and uphold the traditions of their ancestors.

While continuity is a hallmark of Chaṭha Pūjā, the festival has also adapted to changing times, reflecting the dynamic nature of lived religion. Modernisation has brought about a neo-traditionalization of the ritual, where the traditional structure is adapted rather than dissolved. This transformation encompasses logical reasoning and modifications to fit practical needs and available resources, reflecting a blend of tradition and modernity. The advent of technology has significantly changed how Chaṭha Pūjā is observed. Social media platforms and digital communication have allowed devotees to share prayers, rituals, and experiences, fostering a global community among practitioners. Live streaming of rituals enables those who cannot physically attend to participate virtually, ensuring that the festival's reach extends beyond geographical boundaries. Addressing concerns around the potential conflict between preserving ancestral practices and incorporating modern elements necessitates a nuanced understanding of what traditions symbolise and how they function within a community. It's about finding a balance, and honouring the past while embracing the present. This can be achieved by engaging

in open dialogues within the community, understanding the core values encapsulated in Chaṭha Pūjā traditions, and exploring ways these values can manifest in today's context. The goal is not to compromise the tradition but to ensure its sustainability and accessibility for future generations, making it a living, breathing practice that evolves while staying rooted in its origins.

Modern environmental concerns have influenced Chaṭha Pūjā practices. There is a growing awareness about the ecological impact of traditional rituals, leading to adaptations such as using eco-friendly materials for offerings and ensuring that water bodies are not polluted during the festival. These changes reflect a conscious effort to align religious practices with contemporary environmental ethics, demonstrating a willingness to adapt while maintaining core ritualistic elements. Urbanisation and migration have also affected how Chaṭha Pūjā is celebrated. In urban areas, public parks and artificial ponds often substitute for natural water bodies, allowing city dwellers to participate in the rituals. Migrant communities in different parts of India and abroad have brought the festival, adapting it to their new environments while preserving its essential rituals and spirit. This geographic dispersion has helped spread awareness of Chaṭha Pūjā, enriching its cultural tapestry with diverse regional influences. Socio-economic changes have influenced the scale and manner of Chaṭha Pūjā celebrations. Increased economic prosperity has enabled more elaborate celebrations, with grander decorations, larger processions, and more abundant offerings. Conversely, economic hardships have prompted simpler observances, focusing more on the ritual essence than on material aspects. These variations reflect the festival's flexibility and ability to resonate with people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Changes in gender roles have also impacted Chaṭha Pūjā. Traditionally, the festival involves significant participation from women, who undertake rigorous fasting and perform many rituals. However, contemporary gender dynamics have seen more men actively

participating in and supporting the rituals, reflecting broader societal changes towards gender equality. This shift shares the physical burden and promotes a more inclusive approach to religious observance.

With an increasing focus on health and well-being, adaptations have been made to accommodate individuals who might find traditional fasting practices physically challenging. Modifications such as partial fasting or the inclusion of health-conscious dietary options during the festival are becoming more common. These changes ensure that the observance remains inclusive and accessible to all devotees, regardless of their health status. The changes in Chaṭha Pūjā also involve a transformation in the underlying ideology. Practitioners, especially the younger generation, often rationalise the rituals with logical reasoning and modify strict regulations to align with practical needs and available resources. This rationalisation process has led to various points of difference between the older and younger generations, particularly regarding notions of purity and ritual execution. The older generation, as custodians of tradition, tends to adhere more strictly to the ideal norms of Chaṭha Pūjā, such as using unstitched clothes and avoiding any kind of knots during rituals. The younger generation, however, makes modifications to suit contemporary needs, often attaching rationale to their arguments. For instance, while older devotees may insist on performing the Pūjā in the Ganges to maintain ritual purity, younger practitioners might opt to perform it at home due to convenience and resource availability. These generational differences extend to the concept of purity. While the older generation views certain traditional practices as essential for maintaining ritual purity, the younger generation's modifications reflect a more flexible understanding of purity. This shift is evident in the acceptance of performing rituals at home versus in the Ganges, traditionally seen

as less pure. This change highlights the adaptive nature of Chaṭha Pūjā, ensuring its relevance in the modern context while respecting its traditional roots.

Understanding Chaṭha Pūjā requires a nuanced appreciation of its context, continuity, and capacity for change. The festival's rich cultural and geographical roots provide a profound sense of identity and belonging. At the same time, its unbroken traditions offer a link to the past and a sense of communal continuity. At the same time, Chaṭha Pūjā's adaptability to modern influences and changing circumstances illustrates the dynamic nature of religious practice. By exploring how Chaṭha Pūjā is practised and experienced across different contexts, we gain insight into the broader patterns of religious life. This approach highlights the interplay between tradition and innovation, showing how religious observances can be steadfast and flexible. It underscores the importance of considering the lived experiences of practitioners, which can offer valuable perspectives on how religious traditions evolve and thrive in contemporary society. The pandemic-induced shift to performing rituals at home, such as creating small pools on terraces, illustrates how devotees have adapted to maintain the festival's observance while adhering to social distancing norms. This change highlights the flexibility and resilience of traditional practices in the face of modern challenges. Using social media and other digital platforms to share images and videos of Chaṭha Pūjā celebrations globally is a testament to integrating modern technology with traditional practices. This not only enhances the festival's visibility but also helps preserve and propagate cultural heritage. Younger generations have started rationalising and modifying certain strict regulations of the rituals to align with practical needs and available resources. For example, while the older generation avoids unstitched clothes and knots, the younger generation adapts these practices based on practicality. The emphasis on cleanliness associated with Chaṭha Pūjā aligns with modern environmental consciousness. The

festival's focus on cleaning roads, rivers, and riversides reflects an evolving discourse that integrates traditional practices with contemporary environmental concerns.

By maintaining core rituals and practices, Chaṭha Pūjā ensures the preservation of cultural heritage and the transmission of traditions across generations. This continuity strengthens communal bonds and reinforces cultural identity. The ability to adapt rituals and practices to modern contexts, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates the dynamic nature of traditions. These changes ensure cultural practices remain relevant and accessible, even in changing circumstances. The discourse on Chaṭha Pūjā exemplifies how traditional practices can coexist with modern advancements. During his address, the Prime Minister's emphasis on solar energy and cleanliness parallels the traditional worship of the Sun, bridging the gap between past and present. The celebration of Chaṭha Pūjā in modern times exemplifies a harmonious blend of continuity and change. The festival retains its core rituals and cultural significance while adapting to contemporary challenges and integrating modern values. This dynamic interplay ensures that Chaṭha Pūjā remains a vibrant and relevant tradition, reflecting the evolving discourse on cultural practices in a rapidly changing world. In conclusion, Chaṭha Pūjā exemplifies the intricate layers of religious experience, demonstrating how a festival can maintain its core essence while dynamically responding to the changing needs and contexts. As for the viewpoint that emphasising the continuity and preservation of religious customs might hinder the adaptability of Chaṭha Pūjā to contemporary challenges and societal changes, it's essential to distinguish between the form and the spirit of practice. True adaptability lies in a community's capacity to uphold the spirit of its traditions while allowing the form to evolve. Preserving religious customs does not inherently inhibit adaptability; rather, it challenges practitioners to find creative and meaningful ways to engage with their traditions in the context

of the modern world. This approach promotes a vibrant interaction between stability and evolution, guaranteeing that traditions such as Chaṭha Pūjā continue to meet the religious requirements of the community while adapting to changing societal contexts.

To Conclude...

The worship of Chaṭhī Māī and the associated festival serve as a quintessential example of "lived religion," a concept emphasising the everyday practice and experience of faith among ordinary people. This form of religious expression is deeply embedded in the worshippers' daily lives and practical needs. The rituals and vows made to Chaṭhī Māī are invoked to address personal crises such as infertility, the loss of valuable items, and various mundane worries. This practical and immediate orientation is a key characteristic of lived religion, reflecting how faith functions as a tangible tool for navigating everyday life. A defining aspect of the worship of Chaṭhī Māī is its foundation in shared communal understanding rather than formal, written scriptures. The practices, stories, and methods of worship are passed down orally through generations. This oral tradition underscores the community's role in maintaining and transmitting religious knowledge, making the religion accessible and deeply rooted in the lived experiences of the people. The human-divine interaction is also central to this religious practice, with Chaṭhī Māī perceived as a relatable, motherly figure who responds to the actions and emotions of the worshippers. This dynamic relationship underscores the personal and relational nature of lived religion, where the divine is approachable and intimately involved in the lives of devotees.

Flexibility and adaptability are further hallmarks of the worship of Chaṭhī Māī. The rituals can be adjusted to suit specific needs and circumstances, such as making vows (*manautī*) to negotiate with the deity. This flexibility allows the religious practices to remain relevant and

responsive to the changing lives of the devotees. The worship of Chaṭhī Māi is also deeply integrated with local culture, becoming a significant regional festival (*lokparva*) in Bihar and Jharkhand. This cultural integration reinforces community identity and ensures the continuity of traditional practices, emphasising the interconnectedness of religion and local traditions. Community participation plays a crucial role in the worship of Chaṭhī Māi, with rituals often involving collective activities, especially among women. These communal gatherings provide social support and reinforce group solidarity, making the religious experience a shared endeavour. The emotional and personal engagement of the worshippers is evident in their interactions with the deity, which can range from devotion to frustration. This emotional depth makes the religious practice intensely personal and meaningful for the devotees, highlighting the strong human-divine relationship where the deity is seen as an active participant in the worshippers' lives.

The process of meaning-making in the worship of Chaṭhī Māi involves specific ritual practices, such as fasting and making vows, believed to elicit divine intervention. These practices are tailored to individual needs, reflecting a pragmatic approach to religion. Symbols and rituals are imbued with personal and communal meanings, helping worshippers interpret their experiences and the world around them. The emphasis on maintaining family traditions (*ghar ke paramparā khatam nā hoī*) underscores a motivation to preserve cultural roots, providing a sense of identity and belonging. This holistic approach to life's challenges, blending ritual, emotional, and practical aspects, makes worshipping Chaṭhī Māi a vital and relevant part of the worshippers' everyday lives. The worship of Chaṭhī Māi is not only about individual needs but also about reinforcing social and cultural cohesion. The festival brings together families and communities, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. The collective observance of rituals, such as

communal fasting and prayers, strengthens social bonds and promotes mutual support. This communal aspect of the festival underscores the role of religion in building and maintaining social networks, which are essential for the community's well-being.

The narratives surrounding Chaṭhī Māī, including her maternal nature and her responsiveness to worshippers' actions, provide a framework for making sense of life's events. These stories and beliefs help devotees interpret their experiences, offering a means to understand and cope with their challenges. The human-like qualities attributed to Chaṭhī Māī make her relatable and accessible, fostering a deep emotional connection between the deity and the worshippers. This connection is evident in how devotees express their devotion, plead for assistance, and even question the deity in times of distress. The human-divine relationship in the worship of Chaṭhī Māī is characterised by its immediacy and intimacy. Devotees believe that Chaṭhī Māī actively listens to their prayers and responds to their needs. This belief is reinforced through personal experiences and communal narratives, creating a shared sense of the deity's presence and intervention in daily life. The rituals and practices associated with the worship are designed to invoke this divine presence, making the deity an integral part of the worshippers' lives.

The adaptability of the worship practices also reflects the dynamic nature of lived religion. As the needs and circumstances of the worshippers change, so do the rituals and practices. This adaptability ensures that the worship remains relevant and meaningful, allowing it to evolve while maintaining its core principles. The flexibility in ritual practices, such as the making of vows and the adaptation of ceremonies, demonstrates the pragmatic approach of the worshippers, who seek tangible results from their religious practices. The cultural significance of the worship of Chaṭhī Māī extends beyond the religious sphere, influencing various aspects of

social and cultural life. The festival is a time to renew social ties, reaffirm cultural values, and celebrate community identity. The rituals and ceremonies associated with the worship are imbued with cultural meanings, reinforcing the importance of tradition and continuity. The emphasis on maintaining family traditions (*ghar ke paramparā*) highlights the role of religion in preserving cultural heritage and promoting intergenerational continuity.

The worship of Chaṭhī Māī also reflects a broader trend in lived religion, where the boundaries between the sacred and the secular are often blurred. The deity is invoked for a wide range of issues, from personal crises to everyday concerns, demonstrating the pervasive influence of religion in all aspects of life. This holistic approach to religion, where the divine is seen as actively involved in every facet of life, underscores the integrative nature of lived religion. Hence, the worship of Chaṭhī Māī exemplifies lived religion through its practical, flexible, and deeply personal nature. It is maintained and transmitted through shared communal practices and narratives, offering both a means of coping with daily challenges and reinforcing cultural identity and continuity. The practices are adaptable and responsive to the needs of the worshippers, reflecting a pragmatic approach to religion. The communal aspect of the worship fosters social cohesion and mutual support, while the emotional engagement with the deity provides a deeply personal and meaningful religious experience. The worship of Chaṭhī Māī thus is a powerful example of how religion is lived and experienced in everyday life, offering solutions to personal crises, reinforcing social and cultural bonds, and preserving tradition and identity.