

Women in Jainism: Exploring the Position of Jain Laywomen with Reference to Patriarchal Framework

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Abstract

Originated roughly around the 6th century BCE, Jainism propounds nonviolence as one of its major religious doctrines. The religion originated along with Buddhism; however, its presence is mainly in some parts of India as opposed to the international presence of Buddhism. The followers of Mahavira are a numerical minority in India, their financial and social position posits them far from being a marginalized minority. With impressive literacy rates, educational indicators and other attainments, Jains top the charts among almost all religions in India in various socio-economic dimensions. Due to the strict adherence to nonviolence, agriculture, as is the primary occupation in the country, was not an option for the Jains, hence, trade was their only way out, which in turn benefitted them dearly. Majorly identified as the trading community, the Jain community has time and again reaped the benefits of modernity and globalization owing to their urban residence. Easy access to urban healthcare and education also mandated a significant position of women in terms of literacy and other attainments. The paper here seeks to examine the position of laywomen in this well-to-do religious community. Studying data from the National Family Health Survey-4 and 5 and Census 2011, the author shall analyze the position of women in the Jain community. The central objective of the paper is to understand the social position of Jain women as an entity and the working of patriarchy in the community by analyzing various socio-economic indicators.

Keywords: Community, Jainism, Lay women, Minority, Patriarchy.

Introduction

One of the oldest religions of India, Jainism, originated around 6th century BCE, and has continued to thrive today with almost a population of 44,51,753 in India (1). Majorly concentrated in states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, the Jain community forms an affluent part of the vibrant social rubric of the country. The community may boast of a separate identity today, but in its philosophical foundations, the religion was supposed to be a universal one. As has rightly been pointed out by Glasenapp, 'Jainism is universal, it is according to its own theory, a world religion that tries to include all beings' (2). Relying on the karma theory and transmigration of the soul, Jainism originated as an opposition of Brahmanical and Vedic supremacy. Logically then, the doors were open to all who wished to resolve their bad karmas and attain salvation. The spiritual leaders were called as Jinas or the conquerors, after which the religion has been named, who have attained salvation and reached the goal. These

Jinas, much human earlier, have emerged victorious over their desires and their senses and thus have achieved the revered position. These Jinas, now enunciate the path to others to assist them to attain salvation. Thus, 'Jainism's spiritual aim is, ultimately, to disengage oneself from worldly existence, and Jain devotionism is directed at those souls that have reached that perfect detachment and become liberated' (3). Although all souls have the means to attain salvation, the tradition worships twenty-four idols known as Tirthankaras, who have displayed great perseverance and have established the codes and rules of the religion. Most celebrated of these twenty-four Tirthankaras is Lord Mahavira, often known as the contemporary of Buddha. Lawrence a Babb, believes that Jainism rose in the first half of the first millennium BCE and 'Mahavira and Parsva, the twenty-third in the series, are the only Jinas who left traces detectable by historians. All Jains revere the Jinas and consider their teachings as authoritative' (4). Of all the major teachings of

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Jainism, non-violence remains the most prominent one, often used as a marker to distinguish the community from others. As pointed out by Babb, 'Jains are not only strict vegetarians, but they are also forbidden to consume root vegetables (believed to contain multiple souls) and to eat at night (for fear of consuming small forms of life that might fall into the food in the darkness)' (4). Owing to their belief of nonviolence, the traditional occupation, agriculture was out of question. They thus turned to trading and business for a living. Concentrated in the northern part of India, mostly Jains are either traders or businessmen. Utilizing various opportunities thrown up by the forces of modernization and globalization, the Jains have reaped the benefit due to their access to literacy and urban spaces. To quote Babb, 'Jains are generally stereotyped as wealthy merchants, and to some extent this is accurate' (4). Their financial status has helped them to acquire educational skills and their urban residence has enabled them to access modern healthcare and educational facilities. Being one of the most urbanized religious communities in India, the Jains have 79.7% population residing in urban areas and one of the highest survival ratios of 0.93 due to their urban residence (1). In the light of this religious and historical framework, the paper seeks to understand the social position of Jain women in the 21st century. The religious framework provides a background to the analysis and the demographics helps us to understand the position of the community. However, the identity of the community has been distraught at various levels. The community isn't a homogeneous class, rather has various divisions and subdivisions. The division between Śvetāmbara and Digambara sect not only diverge on fundamental beliefs but also have differing opinions on women and their social position. However, the paper deals with the entity of Jain women, not delving into sectarian and geographical differences due to reasons of data availability and research limitations. Moreover, majority of Jains also associate and identify themselves as Hindus due to their similarity in some beliefs and practices. The first use of the term Jain to identify a separate category was used in 1881, in the census (5). The Indian census also enumerates them as a separate category but the constitution, for the purpose of application of law, treats them as Hindus, with no separate personal

law. The constitution in Article 25, 'In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jains or Buddhist religion, and the reference to the Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly' (6). There was a huge uproar among the community and a fear of being subsumed in the majority community, several attempts were made to detangle this crisis of identity. Thus, the constitution makers adhered to their demands and clarified, such a definition is used only for the purposes of application of the law, and 'there need be no apprehension that the Jains are designated as Hindus. There is no doubt that the Jains are a different religious community, and this accepted position is in no way affected by the Constitution' (6). Thus, the community has had a separate identity often with porous boundaries but has tried to maintain its own philosophy and further its religion. The religious scriptures also talk of a fourfold ideal social order, which includes the monks, nuns and laymen and laywomen. At the outset, the religious code not only recognizes the female presence but also accords them equal position in the social order. Right from the origin of the religion to today, the nuns have superseded the monks in number and 'the Jain community itself relies heavily on laywomen's participation for religious education, the performance of key rituals, and the locus of religious knowledge' (7). The academic scholarship however significantly neglected the Jain laywomen focusing majorly on the ascetic aspects of the religion and its philosophical teachings. Research on Jainism has had a limited scope of only catering to the ascetic ideals and its philosophical underpinnings. The lay population has thus been left out from the view of research. Bearing in mind the heterogeneity of the Jain community, the paper seeks to present an overview of the position of Jain women in the community. Overriding sectarian and geographical divergences, the study seeks to present an alternative understanding to Jainism beyond ascetism and its monastic order. The study shall provide an impetus into further research on the Jain community which has promising socio-economic parameters. The position of women in a wealthy, educated and empowered community can act as variable to understand the roadmap to gender equality. An overview of the position of women can stimulate further studies which delve

deeper into the possible roadmap for women upliftment and empowerment. Thus, by examining the overall position of Jain women through socio-economic factors, the article seeks to understand the working of patriarchy in the community.

Methodology

The paper follows a mix method approach where the quantitative data from National Family Health Survey-IV and V (NFHS-4 and 5), conducted in 2015-16 and 2019-21 respectively, by the Ministry of the Health and Family Welfare, Government of India the Census of India 2011 are taken into account to test the above formulated argument. The descriptive methodology shall analyze the position of Jain women in the country based on the reports. The use of secondary data shall provide relevant information about the Jain community and will aid in making analysis about the working of patriarchy. Socio-economic indicators like education, literacy, health, access to money, asset ownership, work participation rate, autonomy and decision making shall be taken into consideration to arrive at a wholesome understanding. The NFHS data from 2015-16 and 2019-21 and the census report of 2011 are the latest datasets released by the government of India. The census data provides an overview while the NFHS data provides microanalysis of socio-economic factors. This using these two datasets is important to understand the community and the position of women. Although the Jain community comprises of caste and class disparities, the data portrays a larger national picture of the community overriding these divisions. Therefore, the study shall follow a descriptive approach based on the data which has been collected by the government. Limited data does pose a limitation to understand the micro-divisions of the community, but it presents a larger picture of the community. Based on a larger understanding of the community and data availability limitations, the paper seeks to develop an understanding of women in the Jain community across caste, class and geographical disparities. Since there a paucity of research on Jain laypersons, limited reliable data from the Census and NFHS can be analysed to study women of the Jain community.

Based on quantitative data, theoretical frameworks relating to patriarchy, gender and public/private divide shall be engaged to

understanding the position of Jain women vis-à-vis patriarchy. Understanding the idea of gender as espoused by Beauvoir, along with theories on public/private divide by Pateman shall be employed to develop the understanding of patriarchy. Theoretical formulations by Walby on patriarchy and Whitney M. Kelting's work on Jain women under religious context shall also be used to provide theoretical foundations to the study.

Results

The Jain Community: A Demographic Overview

With a population of just 0.4% of India's total population, the Jain community stands tall with astounding literacy rates, educational attainment, and urban residence. Reiterating its urban ethos, 1/3rd of the Jain population resides in Maharashtra with maximum population in Mumbai Suburban district. Of the 44,51,753 persons, 51.17% are males and 48.83% are females. The Jain population exhibits high literacy rates often surpassing the national and state levels. The Jain community tops the literacy charts with 94.88% faring far better than the national average of 72.98%. Moreover, this rate is also highest among the six religious' groups in India. This data further resonates with the highest number of graduates, with 25.65% graduate population as compared to the national average of a meagre 5.63%. The sex ratio of the Jain community also stands above the national statistic of 943 at 954, owing to their literacy levels and the practice of nonviolence which thereby disallows female foeticide or infanticide. As has already been discussed that the community is primarily involved in trade and business, only 9.03% are cultivators, 3.66% are agricultural laborers and 4.61% are employed as industry household workers. Thus, as per the census of India 2011, 82.69% of the population, highest among all religions is engaged in other occupations, which reinforces their trader characteristics (1). Not only does the community fare well on the demographic front, but it also has shiny numbers at the economic front. During her study on the Jain community in a suburb in Pune in 2001, Kelting reported that the houses she visited were grand, hired help was available, education and weddings of the family gave an idea of their good financial status (7). As the data by the National Family

Health Survey 2019-21 also suggests, the Jain community has 80.1% population living in the highest wealth quintile of the five wealth quintiles which is used to divide the population. This number is highest among all religious communities with the Sikh community being second in line with 59.1% population in the highest quintile. Consequently, only 1.6% population is in the lowest quintile reiterating the wealth the community has. The community thrives on close communal connections since historical times. As Shalin Jain says the mobility and immense opportunities available for the enterprising communities and their leaders in the making. At the same time, the sources of authority and legitimacy of the socio-economic and religious leadership have to be located in the given vibrancy of community relations (5).’ The strong communal ties are also reflected in their marital relation wherein they adhere to or rather wish to adhere to endogamy. As V.A. Sangave reports, ‘though there are a few incidents of intermarriage, between different Jain-castes, yet the general rule was to marry in own’s own caste or sub-caste only’ (8). Politically, the community was accorded the status of a National Minority in 2014 as per Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act (NCM), 1992 (9). Earlier tagged as minorities in 11 states, they are now the sixth recognized national minority in India. This status allows them to manage their educational institutions and makes them eligible for funds for minority development. However, the minority status

demands were more for autonomy rather for funds. It also has helped to mitigate the fears of being subsumed in the national minority. With such astounding demographic and economic statistics which speak for the community’s modern outlook, a cursory glance may suggest that the women in such a community must be better placed than their religious counterparts. The upcoming part of the paper shall now move to analyzing the place of laywomen in the Jain community.

Social Parameters

The Census of India provides an overview of literacy rates and educational levels of various religious groups. In addition to this, the NFHS data lists various other micro-parameters which are important to understand the position of women in the community. Thus, along with education, parameters showcasing the status of health and their position in the society will help to develop a fuller picture of their footing in the society.

Educational Parameters

Educationally, Jain women are among the most educated women in the country among all religions. As the Table 1 shows, women in the Jain community have a literacy rate of 92.91% which is the highest among the six religious’ groups in India. This literacy rate is also roughly 2% less from their male counterparts representing the least difference between the two genders among other religious groups. Their literacy rate is also higher than the total literacy rate of India as well as Indian females.

Table 1: Religion Wise Literacy rates in India based on Census of India, 2011 (10)

Literacy (%)	Rate	Total	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Buddhist	Jain
Total		72.98	73.27	68.54	84.53	75.39	81.29	94.88
Male		80.88	81.70	74.73	87.70	80.03	88.31	96.78
Female		64.63	64.34	62.04	81.47	70.31	74.04	92.91

In terms of the level of education, the community yet again outperforms other religious communities and the national average. Given below is the data of education level of various religious communities as per their level of educational attainment. While roughly all other communities have less than 10% graduates, almost 23% Jain women possess a graduate degree as per the Census of India 2011.

Health Parameters

Awareness about health, access to healthcare facilities, family planning, menstrual hygiene, and the conditions of women during pregnancy and childbirth are some parameters assessed by the NFHS to ascertain women’s health. The religion wise data once again points to the favorable condition of women in the Jain community with respect to other communities.

Table 2: Education Level by Religious Community and Sex for Population 7 and Above (%) based on Census of India, 2011 (10)

Religion	Literate			Metric/Secondary			Pre-University			Graduate and above		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
Hindu	63.60	70.77	55.97	9.00	10.61	7.28	6.62	7.77	5.39	5.98	7.24	4.64
Muslim	57.28	62.40	51.89	6.33	7.16	5.45	4.44	4.95	1.90	2.76	3.41	2.07
Christian	74.34	76.77	71.97	10.08	10.72	9.45	10.32	10.24	10.39	8.85	8.98	8.72
Sikh	67.51	71.32	63.29	14.78	16.64	12.71	8.25	8.89	7.55	6.40	6.10	6.73
Buddhist	71.83	77.87	65.58	10.93	12.29	9.51	8.61	10.02	7.15	6.18	7.51	4.80
Jain	86.43	87.86	84.93	15.48	16.13	14.81	14.05	15.15	12.90	25.65	27.66	23.55
Others	50.34	59.38	41.38	5.12	6.55	3.70	3.26	4.16	2.36	2.16	2.75	1.56

Note: P, M and F Stand for Persons, Male and Female Respectively

Table 3: Menstrual Protection Methods used by Women of Different Religious Groups Based on NFHS-5 (11)

Religion	% Women Using a Hygienic Method During Menstruation
Hindu	77.6
Muslim	74.7
Christian	85.7
Sikh	93.6
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	86.6
Jain	94.7
Other	71.5

Note: Percentage of women aged 15-24 who have ever menstruated by type of protection used during their menstrual period, according to background characteristics, India, 2019-21

Table 4: Place of Delivery by Religion based on NFHS- 5 (11)

Religion	Percentage Delivered in a health facility
Hindu	89.5
Muslim	84.3
Christian	83.3
Sikh	96.1
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	93.8
Jain	99.7
Other	73.4

Note: Percent distribution of live births to women aged 15-49 in the five years preceding the survey by place of delivery, and percentage delivered in a health facility, according to background characteristics, India, 2019-21

As per the NFHS-5, the total fertility ratio of a women decreases with the increase in her schooling. Thus, Jain women have the lowest fertility rate of a mere 1.2%, thereby indicating their awareness for health. Moreover, Jain women have also recorded the highest birth intervals going up to 45.7 months which also signifies awareness of women's health and well-being.

Social Parameters

Table 5 shows that Jain women are second only to Sikh women in terms of mobility and freedom of movement. However, the community also has the least number of women having no mobility.

Table 6 shows that the participation of women in decision making and it shows that Jain 96% Jain women participate in decision making related to

healthcare, household purchases and visit to family and relatives. The overall percentage of women participating in decision making varies between 70%-80% with Buddhist women having the lowest percentage.

Economic Aspect

In economic terms as well, Jain women have a good scorecard. Almost 66% of women in the Jain community have money and can decide where and how they wish to spend that money. As per the NFHS-4 data of 2015-16, 30.8% Jain women hold a land either alone or jointly, however this number has fallen almost 56% in 2019-21 with only 13.3% women holding land alone or jointly (12).

Table 5: Women's Freedom of Movement based on NFHS-5 (11)

Religion	Allowed to go alone All to the Market, Health Facility and Outside the Village/Community Alone	Percentage Not Allowed to Go to any of These Places Alone
Hindu	43.3	4.5
Muslim	33.8	6.2
Christian	39	3.1
Sikh	59.3	3.3
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	45.3	8.3
Jain	54.1	1.4
Other	53	2.4

Note: Percentage of women age 15-49 who are allowed to go alone to specific places, and who are not allowed to go at all (alone or with someone else) to all of the specific places, by background characteristics, India, 2019-21

Table 6: Women's Participation in Decision Making by Religious Background based on NFHS-5 (11)

Hindu	% Who Participate in Decisions about Own Health Care, Household Purchases and Visit to Family and Relatives	% Who Participate None of the Decisions
Hindu	71.3	11
Muslim	76.6	13.8
Christian	76.8	8
Sikh	79.1	8.5
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	59.8	14.2
Jain	77.7	4
Other	79.3	8.9

Note: Percentage of women age 15-49 Percentage of currently married women age 15-49 who usually make specific decisions alone or jointly with their husband, by background characteristics, India, 2019-21

Table 7: Women's Access to Money based on NFHS-5 (11)

Religion	Percentage Who Have Money That They Can Decide How to Use	Percentage Who Have Bank or Savings Account That They Themselves Use
Hindu	51.9	79.3
Muslim	46.8	73.4
Christian	47.7	81.7
Sikh	55.9	82.4
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	51	76.3
Jain	65.6	88.4
Other	51.7	74.8

Note: Percentage of women aged 15-49 who Percentage who have money that they can decide how to use and have saving account they operate themselves, according to background characteristics, India, 2019-21

Table 8: Women's Ownership of Assets based on NFHS-5 (11)

Religion	Own a House Alone or Jointly	Own a Land Alone or Jointly
Hindu	42.6	32.5
Muslim	38.5	28.7
Christian	40.8	23.7
Sikh	60	31.7
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	29.9	22
Jain	20.2	13.3
Other	59.7	40.9

Note: Percentage of women age 15-49 who owns a house or land either alone or jointly, percentage of women who own a mobile phone that they themselves use according to background characteristics, India, 2019-21.

Table 7 shows the percentage of women who have money which they decide where to be used and nearly 66% Jain women have that authority. Moreover around 90% Jain women have savings bank account which they use personally which showcases economic freedom and independence. However, Table 8 presents a grim picture as it showcases the low percentage of Jain women (between 10%-20%) owning a land or house alone

to jointly. This does reflect on the dependence and limited economic freedom available to women. Jain women have the lowest Work Participation Rate (WPR) within the country (12.27%) while males of the same community have the highest WPR in the country (57.71%) as shown in Table 9. In addition to this, while Jain men have the lowest percentage share of willing non-workers, Jain women top the list in this category (13).

Table 9: Work Participation Rate based on Census of India, 2011 (10)

WPR (%)	Total	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Buddhist	Jain
Total	39.80	41.04	32.57	41.91	36.32	43.15	35.53
Male	53.26	53.91	49.51	52.90	55.43	52.39	57.71
Female	25.52	27.35	14.77	31.16	15.16	32.54	12.27

Discussion

The Jain community is a small minority community in India, highly conscious of its identity and its population. Conservative in nature, it disallows exogamy and strictly adheres to endogamy. As per a research, Vegetarian Jains are the least likely to say they would ever eat food in a restaurant that serves both non-vegetarian and vegetarian food or in the home of a friend who is not vegetarian (14). The community is particular about its habits and its rules. According to the Pew Research Centre, Jains tend to prefer living separately from other religious and caste groups due to their fear of being absorbed in irreligious practices (15). Jain women, thus, are also a part of this identity conscious and rule abiding community. Rules, however, loosely translate as patriarchy when it comes to women. Kelting in her research has written that, this community was one bent on moving rapidly up the economic scale, with aspirations to new Indian middle-class consumption patterns, and was simultaneously committed to maintaining a long-standing claim to middle-class morality and social conservatism (3). This social conservatism, however, manifests itself in terms of the low work participation rate. Jain community, as stated earlier in the paper, form the highest percentage of women who are willing to work, are in the willing non-worker category. They are educated and they are willing to work, then what is it that keeps the WPR of Jain women to a minimum of 12.27%? The answer to this question is the existence of patriarchy. While one can argue that women of the Jain community have various

opportunities in terms of education, health, social and economic opportunities, it is also worth noticing that these opportunities do not translate into their aspiration to work outside their homes. So, what keeps Jain women tied to their households?

Public/Private Divide and Women being the In-Charge of the Household Responsibilities

Social Barriers of Culture and Caregiving

Jain women top the charts when it comes to literacy rates (as in Table 1) and in the highest number of graduate women (Table 2). Their urban residence, stable economic status allows them to gain benefit of the new opportunities opened to them. High educational levels have also made them aware of their health and well-being. The evidence in Table 3 and 4 suggest that women of the Jain community have access to healthcare and are faring well in terms of personal hygiene. The economic status of the community has placed women at a better position than their religious counterparts in terms of education and health. However, educational awareness and well-being has had limited ramifications on other social indicators. There are still 19% men and 29% women who agree to wife beating, thereby reiterating the secondary status of women under patriarchy. In terms of autonomy and empowerment as well, only 54.1% women of the community are allowed to go alone all to the market, health facility and outside the village/community and 77% women engage in in decisions about own health care, household

purchases and visit to family and relatives (Table 5 and 6). Leaving behind a huge fraction of women, these statistics present a unique conundrum where progress in certain social indicators does not indicate an overall betterment of women's position in the community. The prevalence of social and cultural norms which necessitate women's presence in the household and their role in cultural dissemination is a probable answer to this puzzle. Traditionally, women have been the in-charge of the household and the primary responsibility of a woman is to manage her house. The public realm belonged to men, and they were to be the breadwinners of the family. The private sphere of domesticity not only burdens women with the responsibility of the house but also disallows them entry into the masculine public sphere. The feminist movement has long sought to eradicate the gendered division of public and private sphere to free women from the shackles of domesticity. To rise to freedom, rights, and power, which are all a part of the public sphere, women need to break these gendered boundaries and participate in the public sphere. Thus, as Carole Pateman has rightly stated, 'the public-private dichotomy is ultimately, what the feminist movement is all about (16). In a traditional community where, joint family is the trend, this burden of household responsibilities increases manifold. As Kelting mentions, 'Jain women, a *pativrata* performs the expected labor (both physical and spiritual) of wives, including keeping a Jain home, maintaining Jain food restrictions, producing sons, offering hospitality, feeding monks, performing, and sponsoring *puja*'s, teaching Jainism to husbands and children, providing religious patronage, performing public acts of religious piety (such as fasting), and serving as a moral compass for the family' (3). This duty of the household seldom discourages women to participate in work outside the house as it will only result in more burden on them, since the household shall never cease to be their sole responsibility. In addition to household duties and responsibilities, Jain women also act as identity cards for their community. Threatened by the fear of being subsumed in the emerging global culture, women are often used as repositories of culture, as argued by Fernandes, 'gender in this context serves as the socio-symbolic site which attempts to manage the destabilizing contradictions which

globalization produces in the Indian nation' (17). Burdened by the responsibility of being the compass that defines the morals of the family, Jain women remain tied to their household and are unable to avail the opportunities which are presented to them. Unable to make their own decisions and rise to the available opportunities, is an outcome of limited empowerment and autonomy which is again a direct result of economic and financial dependence.

Enabling Economic Wealth as a Disabling Factor

With roughly 80% population living in the wealthiest quintile, the Jain community is one of the wealthiest communities in the country. Surprising as it may sound, this wealth which enables women to access education, healthcare, and access to money and can be a hindrance to participate in the workforce and gain economic independence. However, it is important to note that women's asset ownership is below 20% in the community, signifying areas of economic dependence and discrimination. High ownership of money does not translate itself into decisions and ownership. As per the income effect theory of Kapsos, 'Families take pride when female members withdraw from work, demonstrating that male members can provide a comfortable life for the family' (18). The Jain community is a classic example of the above theory. Taking pride in the wealth and economic status, women often choose unpaid domestic unpaid activities to engage in 'status producing' as shown in various researches (19). Beauvoir, however, has another argument in context of rich households. She argues that 'the richer the husband, the greater dependence of the wife, the more powerful he feels socially and economically and the more authoritatively he plays the *paterfamilias*' (20). Both the explanations point how economic wealth which should have enabled women, in fact disables them and binds them back to patriarchy. Therefore, the factors which could have been the steppingstones for gender equality in the community have themselves become a new trap for patriarchy. Sylvia Walby says, 'patriarchy is a dynamic system. If women do win a victory, then patriarchal forces will regroup and regain control over them in a different way' (21). So, while women of the Jain community are faring well in terms of education, health and social parameters, the patriarchal framework shall

'regroup' to create a system to dominate them in this new dynamic. While women are 'allowed' to pursue higher education and 'allowed' to have the freedom of mobility, they are seldom 'allowed' to pursue their careers, since their primary responsibility remains that of the household. Kandiyoti argues that '20th century has witnessed a major shift from private to public patriarchy' (22). The 21st century Jain woman is bound to the same public patriarchy. Women are thus, no longer prevented from entering the public sphere, rather their entry in the public sphere is controlled, censored, and often dominated. The degree of control doesn't change the pattern of control changes and so does the format of patriarchy. Walby states, 'They are not barred from the public arenas, but are nonetheless subordinated within them' (21). Jain women also are on the receiving end of this very public patriarchy, which not only allows limited access of the public sphere to women but subordinates them there. Modern day changes have enabled women to carve out a space of their existence and dominance but within the framework of community values. Community values here depict patriarchy where women create spheres of limited influence within a patriarchal set up. As argued by Kelting in her study on singing in the temples to the deities, 'Stavan singing was tied to the Jain understanding of gender roles were- the primary singers, knowers, and collectors of stavan were women' (7). Singing prayers provided women with a platform to make space for themselves within the fold of the community. Further Kelting argues that 'all Jain rituals are accompanied by stavan singing. This ubiquity provided women with a forum in which to perform and learn stavan while affirming the orthodox values of the Jain community' (7). This is an example which reiterates the idea of public patriarchy where women are allowed and then subsequently dominated in the public sphere. Moreover, increasing educational and opportunities of globalization has made women of the Jain community more conscious and aware of their roles in the society, therefore as the upholders of religious values and doctrines, they have started to seldom occupy religious leadership position, but under the leadership of laymen of the community (23). This is like the male domination in the monastic order where nuns outnumber monks yet are subjugated and controlled by male

leadership and religious gurus. Renunciation, however, in some cases becomes an escape route for women to exert limited power and control over their own lives. Burdened with the household responsibilities and the jobs of womanhood, Jain women prefer the limited freedom and autonomy offered in the monastic order (24). The monastic order is led by male monks, but the absence of wifehood accords significant freedom to women and renunciation is an attractive option even today. However, women of the community are also emerging as entrepreneurs and attaining heights in their careers due to exemplary educational opportunities, these examples are limited and concentrated in countries like USA which has a entirely different social system (25). The reality in India as depicted by Table 9 shows the limited accessibility of Jain women in work participation regardless of high educational attainment and the community benefitting from the process of globalization. This limited access allows them to see a snapshot of freedom but soon makes them realize that this freedom is not available to them. Bhowmick describes this as 'window shopping- what we see is technically within our grasp, but the attainment of it is not exactly a given' (26). It is almost like a slingshot which attempts to cross lengths and breadths but is tied back to the same starting point. The sling here is patriarchy which keeps women within its tenacles and keeps them under control even in the process of giving them freedom. While women of the Jain community have impressive socio-economic parameters, they also top the charts of willing non-workers as per the 2011 census. This category describes the number of people who are willing to work but are not working. A study has shown that this correlation between willing non workers and graduates is negative in men and positive in women. However, this correlation is highest among Jain women, since this community has the highest number of graduate women (13). Here we see the control of patriarchy in mandating a newer control in the garb of newer freedoms.

Conclusion

Patriarchy as mentioned earlier is a dynamic system and the patriarchal forces dominating women of the Jain community have a peculiar characteristic. Women in the Jain community can be called the torchbearers of change with

considerable freedoms and literacy; however, it should also be noted that, their position overall is still subservient to the male members of the community. Thus, the question we began with in the beginning of the paper, has found a rather multifaceted answer. While women in the Jain community fare better than women of other religious groups, their position is still subordinate to men. Their subordination is, however, of two types, one subordinated by men of the society and subordinated by patriarchy. What forms a crucial picture here is the smoke screen of freedom and modernity that is presented by the data of Jain women. At a cursory glance, it may appear as if the community is on the right track, almost at the destination of equality, but on a closer analysis, it is revealed that this equality is short lived and marred with patriarchy, however in a new version. One may argue that patriarchy is existent for all women, why is this analysis different? The answer to this is the peculiarity of patriarchy here, which hides behind the garb of partial modernity and selective applications and allowances of freedom. What goes in behind this selective application is nothing but patriarchy. This patriarchy is even more dangerous as it wears the garb of freedom. Giving certain freedoms, it creates a false consciousness of freedom among women which in turn makes patriarchy more entrenched. Since many wouldn't even think of being under a patriarchal set-up, there are even lesser attempts to thwart patriarchy, making it a given of society. Therefore, the position of Jain laywomen is affected by a peculiar patriarchy which affects women of this affluent community. It can also be said that affluence and socio-economic indicators also do not remove the existence of patriarchal subjugations. The study thus is a starting point for delving deeper into the geographical and sectarian divergences affecting the lives of women in the community.

Abbreviation

NFHS: National Family Health Survey.

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