

## Movement and Spiritual Transformation in Pilgrimage: A Phenomenological Study of Kalpwasis at Kumbh Mela

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the role of movement in shaping spiritual transformation during the pilgrimage cycle of Kalpwasis at the Kumbh Mela, using them as the central unit of analysis. The research aims to examine how each stage of the journey—departing from home, engaging in ritual practices at the sacred site, and returning to everyday life—contributes to the spiritual awareness and long-term transformation of pilgrims. Employing a phenomenological qualitative approach, the study draws on in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires conducted with approximately 200 Kalpwasis who resided in the Kumbh Mela camp throughout the major bathing days of 2025. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns of experience. Findings reveal that physical movement through sacred space, combined with ritual immersion and temporary withdrawal from worldly routines, fosters heightened spiritual discipline, emotional purification, and a renewed sense of identity. A significant insight of the study is the transformative impact of the return journey, where pilgrims integrate insights gained during Kalpwas into their everyday lives, reinforcing their commitment to spiritual growth. The study recommends further longitudinal and comparative research on post-pilgrimage reintegration and encourages a broader exploration of embodied movement within Indian pilgrimage traditions to deepen theoretical understanding of cyclical spiritual practices.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage Movement; Spiritual Transformation; Phenomenology; Kalpwasis; Kumbh Mela

## 1. Introduction

Pilgrimage is one of the oldest and most enduring social and religious practices in human history. This practice is present across cultures, geographical spaces, and religious traditions, and places movement at the center as the primary medium for seeking spiritual meaning. In various religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, pilgrimage is understood as a sacred journey that not only connects individuals to sacred spaces but also shapes the religious and collective identities of pilgrims (Barber, 1993; Bilu, 1998). In the context of a contemporary society characterized by high mobility, pilgrimage remains an enduring appeal and has evolved into a massive-scale social phenomenon. The Kumbh Mela in India is a prominent example of this practice, with millions of pilgrims undertaking long and challenging physical journeys to participate in sacred bathing rituals, *tapa brata*, and other ascetic practices. The movement is not just a transportation activity, but a social action that is full of symbolic, spiritual, and emotional meaning. As Cohen (1979) and Bærenholdt et al. (2004) argue, movement in a religious context is fundamentally different from a tourist trip, because physical suffering, distance, and sacrifice are actually interpreted as an essential part of spiritual attainment. Nevertheless, the dimension of movement in pilgrimage—particularly in the Indian context—has not been fully studied as a cyclical process that has a long-term impact on the social and spiritual lives of pilgrims after they return to daily life.

Academic studies on pilgrimage have evolved significantly, encompassing anthropological, sociological, geographical, and tourism studies perspectives. Several classical works view pilgrimage as a liminal process involving



separation from profane life, transition within sacred space, and reintegration into the social order (Turner, in Ray, 2005). Other studies highlight pilgrimage centers as sacred spaces that are spatially and symbolically organized (Cohen, 1992; Stoddard, 1997). In addition, the literature on the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism highlights the commonalities and motivational differences between pilgrims and tourists (Cohen, 1992; Badone & Roseman, 2004). Collins-Kreiner (2010) and Liro et al. (2018) add that pilgrimage is also a mobility practice that shapes landscapes, identities, and social interactions. However, most of these studies focus more on sacred destinations or journeys to pilgrimage sites, while the final stage of pilgrimage—the pilgrim's return home—is often overlooked. Spiritual transformation is often assumed to occur automatically, without an in-depth study of how the change is negotiated, maintained, or even fades after the pilgrim returns to regular life. In the Indian context, the study of the Kumbh Mela emphasizes aspects of ritual, symbolism, and the impact of economics and tourism (Stoddard, 1966; Collins-Kreiner & Sagi-Tueta, 2010), thereby leaving an important gap in the understanding of pilgrimage as a complete, cyclical process.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to examine pilgrimage as a cyclic movement process that includes departure from home, intense involvement in sacred space, and return to daily life. Taking the Kalpwas at the Kumbh Mela as a unit of analysis, the study aims to understand how the practices of temporary residence in sacred spaces, body discipline, and ritual participation shape the spiritual experiences of pilgrims. In particular, this study places the return phase as an integral part of the transformation process, not just the conclusion of the physical journey. The primary purpose of this study is to address the gap in existing research that has not adequately explored how the pilgrim experience is internalized and reinterpreted upon pilgrims' return to their social environment. Using a phenomenological approach, this study focuses on the subjective experiences of pilgrims, the way they reflect on their self-changes, as well as how the spiritual identities formed during Kalpwas are negotiated in daily life. Thus, this study not only contributes to the study of pilgrimage in India but also enriches the theoretical discourse on religious mobility, embodied movement experiences, and spiritual transformation in the study of anthropology and sociology of religion.

The primary argument of this study is that spiritual transformation in pilgrimage cannot be fully understood without considering the dimension of movement as an iterative and continuous process. Pilgrimage is not a linear event that ends in a holy place, but rather a series of movements that make up the experience before, during, and after the journey. This research departs from the hypothesis that the return of pilgrims to their homes is a crucial phase in consolidating the spiritual transformation obtained during Kalpwas. At this stage, the pilgrim reflects on their ascetic experiences and rituals, seeking to integrate spiritual values—such as simplicity, self-control, and closeness to the divine—into their everyday life. In line with Turner's thinking on liminality and reintegration, this study argues that failure to understand the phase of return will result in a partial understanding of the meaning of pilgrimage. By placing gestures and lived experiences at the center of the analysis, this study confirms that pilgrimage is a dynamic social-spiritual practice, in which the meaning of transformation is continuously produced and reproduced through cycles of departure, engagement, and return. This approach is expected to expand the theoretical framework of pilgrimage studies and provide new perspectives in understanding religious mobility in the contemporary world.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Pilgrimage as a Social Practice and a Universal Religious Phenomenon

Pilgrimage has long been recognized as a universal religious practice that connects individuals, sacred spaces, and religious communities in a complex, symbolic, and social experience. Barber (1993) emphasized that pilgrimage is not just a journey to a holy place, but a structured religious practice in which physical suffering, distance, and sacrifice are interpreted as integral to the search for spiritual meaning. Bilu (1998) expands on this understanding by demonstrating that pilgrimage serves as a form of collective worship that strengthens the relationship between humans and the divine, while fostering social solidarity among pilgrims. From the perspective of religious

anthropology, pilgrimage serves as a crucial medium for understanding how religious beliefs are embodied in concrete actions, particularly through rituals and bodily movements in sacred spaces. Bowman (1991) points out that the pilgrimage space is never neutral, but rather ideologically and theologically constructed, so that the pilgrim's experience is always tied to a particular religious narrative. Thus, pilgrimage not only reflects individual beliefs but also reproduces the social, symbolic, and cultural structures within a religious tradition.

Several studies have also highlighted the social dimension of pilgrimage as a collective practice that involves the negotiation of identity and meaning. Stoddard (1997) classifies pilgrimage based on spatial characteristics, religious intensity, and pilgrim movement patterns, asserting that pilgrimage is not a homogeneous phenomenon. In the Indian context, Stoddard (1966) demonstrated that Hindu holy sites served as nodes in religious networks, connecting vast geographical areas through pilgrim mobility. This perspective is reinforced by Cohen (1998), who sees pilgrimage as a social practice that intersects with economic, cultural, and tourism dimensions. However, although the literature is rich in explaining the social and religious functions of pilgrimage, most studies still place pilgrimage as an event centered on a sacred destination. The aspect of the pilgrim experience as a continuous process—especially the long-term impact that persists after the pilgrimage is over—has not been the primary focus. This opens up space for research that views pilgrimage as a social practice that extends beyond the sacred space, continuing to resonate in the pilgrim's daily life.

## 2.2. Movement, Mobility, and Body Experience in Pilgrimage

Physical movement is a central element in the practice of pilgrimage, serving as the primary differentiator between pilgrimage and other forms of travel. Cohen (1979), through a phenomenological approach, emphasizes that the pilgrim's experience cannot be understood solely in terms of the journey's purpose, but rather in the context of the entire process involving the body, emotions, and consciousness. In this context, gestures—such as walking, fasting, ritual bathing, and temporary sojourns in sacred spaces—serve as a medium for transforming religious experiences. Bærenholdt, Haldrup, and Urry (2004) suggest that religious mobility is a performative practice in which spiritual meaning is created through actions and interactions within a given space. This perspective expands the understanding of pilgrimage as an embodied movement practice, a religious experience that is experienced through direct bodily involvement. Studies of walking as a reflective practice (Nicholson, 2008; Manning & Manning, 2012) have also shown that physical movement can facilitate the processes of contemplation, self-discipline, and reinterpretation of life.

In addition, the literature on the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism highlights the dynamics of convergence and divergence in mobility experiences. Cohen (1992) and Badone & Roseman (2004) demonstrate that, although pilgrimage and tourism both involve travel, the motivations, meanings, and experiences associated with the two are fundamentally different. Pilgrims interpret movement as a form of devotion and sacrifice, while tourists tend to view travel as a means of recreation. Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) and Collins-Kreiner and Gatrell (2006) emphasize that pilgrims' behavior is shaped by strong religious orientations, which affect the way they move, interact, and interpret space. However, although these studies have succeeded in explaining the importance of mobility and the body in pilgrimage, the focus of the analysis remains predominantly on the phase of the journey to and from the holy site. The dimension of homecoming as part of the experience of religious mobility has not received adequate attention in the existing literature.

## 2.3. Spiritual Transformation, Liminality, and the Pilgrimage Cycle

The concept of spiritual transformation is a central theme in pilgrimage studies and is often associated with the theory of liminality introduced by Victor Turner. Turner views pilgrimage as a transitional process in which individuals leave their everyday social structures and enter liminal spaces, allowing the formation of new identities to occur (Ray, 2005). In this phase, pilgrims experience community, characterized by an egalitarian and intense sense of togetherness that fosters spiritual solidarity. Cohen (2007) suggests that these liminal experiences can create deep

meanings that linger in the pilgrim's memory and identity. However, many studies have stopped at liminal phase analysis and have less explored how individuals return to social structures after the pilgrimage ends. In fact, in Turner's framework, reintegration is a crucial stage that determines whether the transformation is temporary or sustainable.

Collins-Kreiner (2010) emphasizes the importance of understanding pilgrimage as a practice that continues to evolve in response to social and cultural changes. Liro et al. (2018) added that changes in the spatial organization of pilgrimage centers affect the way pilgrims experience and interpret their journeys. However, although this literature acknowledges a change and continuity in pilgrimage practices, empirical studies of how pilgrims internalize spiritual experiences after returning home are limited. In the context of the Kumbh Mela, most research focuses on rituals, symbolism, or socio-economic impacts, while the subjective experience of Kalpwasis after returning home is rarely studied in depth. Therefore, this study aims to fill this void by positioning return as an integral part of the pilgrimage cycle. Thus, spiritual transformation is understood not as an instant result of ritual, but rather as an ongoing process mediated by movement, reflection, and reintegration into everyday life.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Material Objects

The material object of this research is the experience of Kalpwasis' pilgrimage at the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, India, specifically the physical and spiritual movements experienced during the pilgrimage cycle: departure, ritual involvement, and return. The focus of the study is on the lived experience of pilgrims as they undergo ascetic practices, sacred bath rituals, and body discipline, which serve as a form of meaningful religious mobility (Barber, 1993; Stoddard, 1966).

#### 3.2 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach to understand the subjective meaning of the pilgrimage experience from the perspective of the participant. This approach was chosen because pilgrimage is understood as an embodied and reflective experience that cannot be reduced to mere quantitative data (Cohen, 1979). Phenomenology allows for an in-depth exploration of the spiritual transformations that pilgrims undergo during and after the Kumbh Mela.

#### 3.3 Data Sources

The main data source comes from Kalpwasis who participate in the Kumbh Mela 2025 and settle in the pilgrimage area during the main ritual period. Respondents consisted of men and women with diverse geographical and age backgrounds. Supporting data were obtained from the academic literature on pilgrimage, religious mobility, and spiritual transformation, including the work of Cohen (1992), Collins-Kreiner (2010), and Turner (Ray, 2005).

#### 3.4 Data collection techniques

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires, which allowed respondents to reflect on their spiritual experiences, motivations, and changes following the pilgrimage. Interviews were conducted during the Kalpwas period, covering the days of the main holy bath. This technique was chosen to capture the personal narrative and reflective meaning inherent in the experience of pilgrimage movements and rituals (Badone & Roseman, 2004).

#### 3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out thematically by identifying patterns of experience, symbolic meanings, and transformational narratives that emerged from the interviews. The analysis process involves open coding, thematic

grouping, and reflective interpretation to understand the relationship between movement, ritual, and spiritual transformation. This approach aligns with phenomenological studies of pilgrimage and religious experience (Cohen, 1979; Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Kalpwasis Movement Patterns and Motivation in the Pilgrimage Cycle

Field findings consistently reveal that physical movement towards Prayagraj is a very sacred and meaningful part of the overall Kalpwasis experience. Respondents did not view this trip as merely a logistical necessity, but rather as an initial ritual that was transformative. They deliberately choose challenging modes of transportation, such as long-distance walking or congested train travel, as a form of sacrifice (*tyaag*) and self-discipline (*sanyam*). The process of leaving the comforts of home and worldly routines is understood as the first step in releasing the bonds (*moha*) and mentally preparing to enter the sacred space. Many pilgrims describe the sensation of self-cleansing that begins to occur during the journey, where the farther away from home, the stronger the feeling of spiritual detachment. These findings reinforce the classic view of Stoddard (1966) and Barber (1993), who assert that in many pilgrimage traditions, particularly Hinduism, a physical journey that requires sacrifice is the primary means of achieving a state of purity and spiritual readiness, where the difficulties encountered on the road are thought to enhance the religious value of the pilgrimage itself.

The motivation to undergo Kalpwas, although it may seem diverse on the surface, has a strong common thread in the form of a deep search for self-transformation. In-depth interviews reveal that the motivation to "deepen spiritual awareness" is often linked to personal crises, a desire to find existential answers, or a thirst for direct experience (*anubhava*) of the Divine. While motivations such as fulfilling vows or continuing family traditions may sound more instrumental, in practice, these things also develop into a more personal search for meaning once they are involved in the rites. The recurring pattern of participation is a key indicator that the Kumbh Mela pilgrimage is not a once-in-a-lifetime checklist. Many Kalpwasis who have participated multiple times describe each experience as a new layer of understanding, as if they were "reading the same scripture but always finding new verses." This cyclic pattern aligns closely with Collins-Kreiner's (2010) concept of pilgrimage as a practice that experiences 'continuity', where religious experiences are constructed and enriched through repetition, thereby becoming part of an individual's spiritual rhythm.

Furthermore, the data reveal that these movements are rarely solitary. The collective dimension is striking, with many pilgrims traveling in cohesive groups. These groups serve as social and spiritual support during the grueling journey. Group interactions during the trip—such as sharing stories about devotions, singing bhajans together, or simply sharing simple meals—effectively begin the process of building imaginative, faith-based communities before they arrive at the main location. This collective experience transforms the journey from an individual displacement to a shared journey to holiness. This reflects the findings of Badone and Roseman (2004) and Cohen (1992) that pilgrimage is a powerful social phenomenon, in which interaction between pilgrims and the building of group solidarity are integral to the meaning of the experience itself, reinforcing collective identity and belonging to larger traditions.

### 4.2. Experience of Rituals, Body Discipline, and Daily Life During Kalpwas

Daily life during Kalpwas created a completely separate temporal and spatial structure, a temporary "sacred geography" on the banks of the Sangam. Respondents described a very orderly and disciplined lifestyle, far from worldly distractions. The activity begins before dawn with a ritual bath (*snan*) in the cold waters of a river confluence, which is believed to not only cleanse the body but also purify sins. The days are then filled with a series of activities, such as meditation (*dhyana*), attending spiritual lectures (*pravachan*), performing japa (repetition of mantras), and engaging in selfless service (*seva*), including helping in community kitchens. This strict, focused routine serves to

empty the mind of the chaos of the outside world and fill it with religious awareness. This temporary monastic lifestyle is fully aligned with the observations of Collins-Kreiner and Klot (2000), who note that at pilgrimage sites, pilgrims often adopt highly structured and ritual-oriented patterns of behavior, forming a kind of "religious enclave" that symbolically separates them from the flow of time and profane obligations.

Deliberate bodily discipline emerged as the main language of devotion during Kalpwas. Strict restrictions on food—often eating only once a day in the form of simple vegetarian meals (*sattvik*), fasting on certain days, and reducing sleep hours—are universally understood as a means of controlling the senses (*indriya nighraha*) and subduing physical desires. Fatigue from walking long distances between tents and *ghats* or *standing in line for rituals* is not complained of, but rather is considered a "sacrifice pleasing to God" or a contemporary form of *tapasya* (asceticism). This voluntary acceptance of physical discomfort is the central mechanism for transcending attachments to the body and directing consciousness to the spiritual realm. These empirical findings directly support the arguments of Barber (1993) and Nicholson (2008) that, in many pilgrimage traditions, intentional physical suffering is not a negative side effect, but rather a productive component that actively builds religious meaning, reinforcing the journey as something authentic and transformative.

In addition to individual discipline, Kalpwas also forms a unique and intense social network based on shared spirituality. Life in adjacent tents creates temporary egalitarian communities where worldly socio-economic backgrounds often become less relevant. Daily social interactions are reconfigured around collective religious activities: participating in mass *kirtan* (devotional chanting), discussing scriptures with tent neighbors, or preparing offerings together. This form of interaction produces a sense of brotherhood (*bhaichara*) and a deep unity that is considered rare in the outside world. The communal space of Kalpwas thus becomes a stage for the performance of collective religious identity, where shared practices actively create and maintain a sense of community. This concept of pilgrimage space perpetuity, as described by Bærenholdt et al. (2004), is clearly manifested here, where collective actions such as sharing food or singing together not only accompany the ritual, but are actively rituals themselves that build sacred social bonds.

#### 4.3. Return, Reflection, and Sustainability of the Pilgrimage Experience

The return from the Kumbh Mela marks a transitional phase, filled with reflection and ambivalent emotions for the Kalpwas. All respondents described the return trip as a contemplative period, a quieter "step back" during which they began to process, synthesize, and try to make sense of the intense experiences they had just had. Many express feelings of sadness or hesitation about leaving the atmosphere of pure spirituality in Sangam and returning to the complexities of worldly life. Significantly, however, this return is not seen as a broken end, but rather as a necessary phase of reintegration of the entire cycle of pilgrimage. This view reflects the understanding that the pilgrimage process encompasses stages of separation, liminality, and reunification, as illustrated in the pilgrimage cycle model by Stoddard (1997), where return is an integral part of the transformative process.

The integration of pilgrimage experiences into daily life after return varied significantly between individuals, but almost all respondents reported a conscious attempt to bring home some aspect of Kalpwas. This can take the form of maintaining certain spiritual practices such as waking up early for meditation, continuing a simple vegetarian diet, or seeking patience and an unfettered attitude (*vairagya*) in the face of family conflicts or work pressures. For some, the change is more internal, in the form of a new perspective on life's problems or priorities that have been rearranged. These findings suggest that liminal experiences during Kalpwas do have ripple effects that continue into the profane realm, although their intensity may fade over time. This pattern supports Collins-Kreiner's (2010) observation of the existence of a "continuity" between the pilgrimage space and the home, where the pilgrim actively negotiates to bring acquired values and practices into their normal context, thus creating a kind of "portable sacredness".

More importantly, the data strongly suggest that these pilgrimage experiences are often regenerative, planting the seeds for future participation. For many Kalpwas, homecoming is precisely the moment when the intention

(*sankalp*) to return to the next Kumbh Mela begins to crystallize. Memories of collective awareness, inner peace, and ritual intensity create a spiritual longing that ultimately encourages the repetition of the cycle. This pattern of repeated participation transforms pilgrimage from a discrete event into a lifelong spiritual practice or discipline. Consequently, physical movement to and from the Kumbh Mela is seen not as a straight line, but rather as part of an upward spiral, in which each cycle builds on the previous one. This perspective on sustainability and the reproduction of pilgrimage practices is closely aligned with contemporary studies, such as those conducted by Liro et al. (2018) and Collins-Kreiner (2010), which emphasize pilgrimage as a layered and continuous process that dynamically shapes the spiritual narratives of individuals and communities over time.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the physical movements of the Kalpwasis during the Kumbh Mela form a structured cycle of pilgrimage experience, encompassing the stages of departure, ritual involvement in the sacred space, and return to daily life. Empirical data confirm that the journey to Prayagraj is understood as the initial stage of spiritual commitment, where a break from worldly routines becomes an integral part of the pilgrimage practice. During Kalpwas, intense ritual life, body discipline, and collective social interaction create a temporary living space that is fully oriented towards religious practice. At the return stage, respondents reported a continuation of pilgrimage experiences in the form of changes in habits and intentions to return to participate in Kalpwas in the future. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that movement serves not only as a means of reaching a sacred location but also forms a structure of repetitive and continuous pilgrimage experiences, as reflected in the practice of Kalpwasis.

The findings of this study confirm that the Kalpwas pilgrimage cannot be understood solely as a ritual event that is localized to a single point in space and time. Reflection on the results reveals that the pilgrimage experience is shaped by the interconnectedness between mobility, daily life arrangements, and social interaction within the context of sacred space. The simple lifestyle, body discipline, and ritual routines that Kalpwasis underwent during the Kalpwas period showed a complete rearrangement of life, even though it was temporary. This reflection reinforces the view that pilgrimage creates an alternative space, allowing pilgrims to live a different form of life from their daily lives. These results also demonstrate that the social and collective dimensions of pilgrimage play a significant role in shaping the Kalpwasis' experience, indicating that the practice of pilgrimage is not purely individual, but is firmly rooted in religious togetherness and solidarity.

In the conceptual framework of pilgrimage, the results of this research can be understood as evidence that physical movement functions as a mechanism for the formation of layered spiritual experiences. The journey to and from the sacred space, as well as the internal mobility during Kalpwas, form an experience that is cyclical and repetitive. This interpretation aligns with Stoddard's (1997) view, which emphasizes the importance of paths and movements in the classification of pilgrimage. In addition, the practice of body discipline reported by Kalpwasis shows the interconnectedness between the body, space, and religious meaning, as discussed by Nicholson (2008) in his study of the body and sacred space in the Hindu tradition. Thus, the results of this study interpret the Kalpwas pilgrimage as a practice that integrates mobility, ritual, and embodied experiences simultaneously, without reducing any of these elements to secondary elements.

When compared to previous studies on pilgrimage and religious tourism, the findings of this study strengthen and expand the existing discourse. In line with Cohen (1992), the results of this study demonstrate convergence between pilgrimage and travel experiences, while still maintaining a dominant religious character. In comparison to the research by Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000), which focused on the behavioral characteristics of Christian pilgrims, this study emphasizes the cyclical dimension and sustainability of pilgrimage practices in the Hindu context. In addition, this study enriches the study of Badone and Roseman (2004) by showing how movement and temporary ritual life form "intersecting journeys" between sacred space and everyday life. Thus, this article contributes to a cross-contextual understanding of pilgrimage as a complex form of religious mobility.

Based on these results and discussions, further research is recommended to explore the long-term implications of the Kalpwas experience, specifically regarding how the practices and values acquired during the pilgrimage are maintained or undergo transformation in daily life. Longitudinal studies will be particularly relevant to trace the sustainability impact of pilgrimage on pilgrims' religious and social practices. In addition, a comparative approach across pilgrimage traditions can be used to test the extent to which cyclic patterns of movement and body discipline are found in other religious contexts, as suggested by Collins-Kreiner (2010) and Liro et al. (2018). Advanced research can also utilize interdisciplinary approaches that combine geography, anthropology, and religious studies to deepen understanding of the relationship between mobility, sacred space, and spiritual transformation.

## 6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the physical movement of Kalpwas during the Kumbh Mela is a fundamental element in shaping the spiritual experience and transformation of pilgrims. Empirical findings suggest that the Kalpwas pilgrimage occurs in a structured cycle—departure, ritual life in sacred space, and return—that collectively constructs a continuous religious experience. Movement not only serves as a means to a sacred location, but becomes an integral part of the spiritual practice itself, framing the discipline, ritual rhythms, and temporary patterns of life that Kalpwas live during the Kalpwas period.

In terms of scientific contribution, this study enriches the study of pilgrimage by placing mobility and embodied experiences as the center of phenomenological analysis. By focusing on the Kalpwas—a group of pilgrims that is relatively underexplored in international literature—this study provides a new empirical perspective on how Hindu pilgrimage shapes the relationship between the body, sacred space, and religious practice. These findings also expand the discourse on the relationship between pilgrimage and religious tourism by asserting that the pilgrimage experience cannot be reduced to a purely symbolic activity, but rather a complex and multi-layered practice of life.

In conclusion, this study recommends the development of a longitudinal follow-up study to investigate the long-term effects of the Kalpwas pilgrimage on the social and religious lives of pilgrims after they return to their home environment. Additionally, a comparative approach can be taken across pilgrimage traditions and geographical regions to test the relevance of these findings in other religious contexts. The integration of anthropological, geographical, and religious studies perspectives is also expected to deepen our understanding of the role of movement in shaping spiritual transformations in global pilgrimage practices.

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