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How Covid -19 has Changed the Way of Worship : A Review

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Abstract

One of the manifestation of social activity is religious life. But any pandemic disorganizes the life of wider society .The covid-19 pandemic has impacted every sector worldwide including the religious activities . This includes the closer of worship places, cancellation of pilgrimages, ceremonies and festivals of all faith including the cancellation of services. While changing the organization of religious life, the worship places ,maintained contact with the believers in various ways using modern technology access to public mediain this regard.The author in this article has tried to document the relevant literature.

Key Words: Religion, Covid -19, Worship, Pandemic

Introduction

The Covid -19 pandemic has impacted every sector world wide including the religions in various ways .This includes the cancellation of worship services of various faiths and closure of warship places ,sunday schools ,cancellation of pilgrimages,ceremonies and festivals .Many churches ,synagogues and temples have offered worship through livestream amid the pandemic [1].

The relief wings of various religions organisations have dispatched disinfection supplies ,powered air purifying respirators ,face sheilds,gloves,test kits ,ventilators,patient monitors ,syringe pumps,infusion pumps and food to the affectef areas[2].Adherents of many religions have gathered together to pray for an end to the covid -19 pandemic for those affected by it,as well as for wisdom for physician and scientist to combat the disease[3].

Christianity Response and Impact

According to Gallop report by Frank Newport there is a dramatic shift of religious services from in person to online wworship..From hundred years churches have used various communication methods to reach their audiences,such as radio,television and online media.Gallop says that halting of inperson worship is one of the most significant sudden disruption in the practices of religion in US history[4]. There is change in religious habits due the pandemic according to Pew Research report in March 2020.Most of the respondents said that they have prayed for an end to the spread of coronavirus attended services in person less often and watched religious services online or on TV instead of in person [5].According to Time magazine that churches services have acheived a great level of attendance in the covid-19 outbreak [6].As to wheather the crisis had an effect on long term personal religious life ,19/of the Americans said that their faith has strengthened and 3/said that it got worse[4].In a survey conducted in late May and early June 2020by the American Enterprise Institite ,60/of the Americans are of veiw that they or someone im theirhousehold might get covid -19, but response differed demographically ,however 69/ of Black Protestants and 42/ of the white Evangelicals worried about infection, when it comes to weighing the public health risk of returning to normal economic activity ,a majority of Black Protestants

(84/) and Hispanic Catholics 70/ said they would prioritize public health ,while a majority of White Evangelicals(65/) and white Mainline Protestant and white Catholics (52/) prioritized economy[7].

In United Kingdom Christian denominations including the Anglicans ,Catholic ,Methodist,Baptist,Reformed and Presbyterian churches ,published guidelines on adopting worship on light of the pandemic[8].

On 30th November 2020, one of the pastors at the California megachurch water of life died of covid -19.He had recently been leading outdoor services after the governors banned indoor services[9].World Council of Churches General secretary Olav Fykse Tveit announced that " This situation calls on our solidarity and accountability,mindfulness, care and wisdom for our signs of faith ,hope and love [10]. Amidst the covid -19 pandemic ,some churches continue to operate their food pantries that are offering bags filled with meat and toilet paper rolls for families on need [11].The National Cathedral of United States which belongs to the Episcopal church donated over five thousand N95 surgical masks to hospitals of Washington ,D,which were in shortage during the covid -19 pandemic [12],Whereas other churches such as church of Highlands an Evangelical christian megachurch ,have offered free covid -19test in their parking lots.Over200 churches and civil society organisation , including Caritas and the Jesuit Refugee service have called on the government of Greece to restore access to asylum for refugees,especially the 42000 who are trapped and living in "Horroric Conditions" in the GREECE island [13].Many churches have been ringing their church bells five times a day for the liturgy of the Hours as a call to prayers amidst the coronavirus outbreak [14].In Spain many cities cancelled their Semana Santa festivities, normally large events with parades and significant tourism spending by mid march as a result of the pandemic , in Seville it was the first time that the event has been cancelled since 1933[15].The churches leaders across the Europe urged for solidarity and prudence in response to covid-19 pandemic .Catholic mass in some of the European countries were completely halted ,where as in some parts smaller groups continued to congregate .To avoid disease particularly in elderly weakened or with potential risk the Bishops conference suspended all talks ,concerts and catechesis on church premises in Spain.In Poland ,the Bishops conference cancelled its March Plenary .

Islam

There is great concern that gathering and travel particularly during Ramzan,Eid al fitr and Eid al Azha ,virus may be hard to control[16]. Congregation for Taraweeh prayers during Ramzan were cancelled in several countries as mosques were shut worldwide[17]. Senior scholars council from Saudi Arabia urged the Muslim world in general to prepare for Ramzan while abiding the precautionary and preventive health measures regarding acts of worship, which includes avoiding gathering such as iftar and sehri meals [18]. The Great Mosque of Saudi Arabia was closed for Umrah visitors and banned touching Kaaba on 5th March ,after which it was partially reopened on 7th March.On 5th March the Saudi Government takes further steps towards the Great Mosque of Mecca and Masjid- al - Nabawi in Madina ,which included a temporary closure of the Great Mosque for sterilization purpose[19].On 20th March both Mosques were closed to the public and closure continued throughout Ramzan.Haj pilgrimage were banned and pilgrims were restricted for Saudi Arabian or those already in Saudi Arabia between the age of 20 and 50 years.They were required to agree to follow strict protocols including quarantine before and after the Haj[20].

Islamic society of North America ,Muslim Medical Association of Canada and Imams recommended the suspension of Friday congregational prayers .In United Kingdom mosque suspended congregational prayers .The Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany said that due to loss of daily prayers

and Friday prayers a considerable proportion of donations were cancelled and no suitable replacement has been found [21]. Religious leaders in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have strongly urged people to pray in their homes and avoid going to mosques for regular and Friday prayers. All the shrines throughout the world were closed and most of the countries even Friday prayers were suspended. In the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan various precautionary measures were followed even during the festival seasons during the lockdown period [22].

Jainism

Mahavir Jayanti, the major festival of Jains associated with the birth of Lord Mahavira that falls on 6th April 2020 is usually celebrated by taking out large processions has been cancelled throughout the country [23].

Judaism

The gatherings of thousands of Jews were restricted on the request of Israel's chief rabbis David Lau and Yitzhak Yosef and to avoid the visiting the holy site, only few people continued praying their [24]. Many gatherings related to the Jewish celebration of Purim and Passover were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic [25] whereas Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein suspended South Africa Synagogues and the Chief Rabbi in the United Kingdom advised the suspension of Jewish worship in Synagogues [26].

Hinduism

The Hindu festivals like Holi were celebrated with cautions, whereas other Hindu festivals such as Navaratri, Ram Navami, Hanuman Jayanti and various Hindu regional New Year days such as Nyepi, Vasakhi, Ugadi, Bohag Vishu, Gudi Padwa, Panch Sankranti etc. were celebrated at home due to strict lockdown [27]. The festival of Panguni Uthiram which is usually associated with processions was cancelled due to this pandemic [28]. Nepal government has given permission to only 25 pilgrims at once in the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu (Nepal) [26]. The celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi was also widely impacted in India. In Mumbai, which is the epicentre of the festival saw a muted version of the said festival [29]. With the possibility of sounding the 2nd wave in the country the festival of Holi on 29th March 2021 was met with large crowds with many of them floating health and safety guidelines such as social distancing [30].

Sikkism

The Sikh Centre of New York got involved in social services and prepared more than 30,000 home-cooked meals for Americans in self-isolation amid the coronavirus outbreak. The Sikh Coalition recommended the cancelling of services at gurdwaras [31]. Besides many Sikh gurdwaras have suspended the offering of free food to gurdwara visitors and decided to broadcast the reading of scriptures on live stream. The Central Sikh Gurdwara Board has recommended that elderly Sikhs stay at home, though it has permitted weddings that have been scheduled to proceed [32].

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee offered a helping hand to treat coronavirus positive patients at its hospitals. Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee provides its room to hospital staff as they were facing harassment at the hands of landlords and neighbours [33].

Buddhism

Thailand's Sangha Supreme Council has ordered all temples under its jurisdiction both in the country as well as overseas to suspend all religious rituals for the Visakha Bucha Day to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease. The cultural corpus of Korean Buddhism, which allows visitors to experience monastic life in one hundred and thirty seven temples has suspended that programme [34]. American Buddhist churches have cancelled services for the spring High holiday and other events at many of their temples [35]. The Dalai Lama expressed in a Time magazine article that there is a need to fight the crisis with compassion. The Buddhist spiritual leader emphasized from the Buddhist perspective have the capacity to control anger and greed [36]. According to his views outbreak of this terrible coronavirus has shown that no one will be spared by this virus. At the same time also reminds us that the compassionate or constructive act whether working in hospitals or just observing social distance has the potential to help many [37]. This situation has great potential to help each of us to reduce one selfish behaviour and attitude and increase our generosity in support of each other, and must help each other during this time of crisis.

Conclusion

Religious events are traditionally characterised by mass of people meeting in specific environment to pray or meditate. Frequently these events are long lasting and held in close space, some rituals also include physical contact such as hand shaking in "Sign of Peace" in Catholic churches. Therefore such events bear a substantial risk of SARS-COV-2 spread within a community. In terms of pandemic difficult months awaits us. To tackle it an alliance between science, politics and citizen is needed. To reach the later and actively involve them in this process, we need a multicultural approach that takes account of human life, no matter what religion they belong.

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