

Festivals and Weddings in India during Corona Pandemic

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Abstract : In India, in particular, festivals are the occasions of celebrations. They create beautiful moments to cherish. Mostly, people pay a visit to their native places to celebrate with their loved ones. So are wedding celebrations. The Covid-19 pandemic came upon us unexpectedly, and to fight it, the festivals and weddings are celebrated unusually. Crowded places are deserted. Mass gatherings are avoided, changes and alterations are made in our rituals and celebrations. The warmth usually people have at their heart during any festival and wedding has disappeared. Some aspects of the celebrations become virtual/digital rather than real -- for instance, digital greetings/invitations, digital conduct of ceremonies by priests, YouTube worship, online/digital cash gifts, and digital audience for weddings. Each festival has different rituals which are followed with the divine nature in every family, but the pandemic warranted some compromises on the traditions. Likewise, a marriage is a beautiful bond between two families where a lot of traditional customs are followed. The wedding ceremonies are colorful and celebrations may extend for several days. People in India spend financial resources to prepare and celebrate weddings. The bride's and the groom's homes are fully decorated with colors, balloons and other decorations. The wedding rituals and celebrations vary by religion, region, preference and the resources of the groom, bride and their families. They can range from one day to multiple-days events. But the Covid-19 pandemic situation changes the mindset of people over ceremonies. This lockdown has affected those weddings and industries that support them and make the people postpone or at times advance without fanfare their 'big day.' People now adopt the protocols, guidelines and safety measures to reduce the risk and minimize the fear during celebrations. The study shall look into: how the pandemic shattered the expectations of people celebrating; problems faced economically by people/service providers who are benefited by the celebrations; and identify the alterations made in the rituals or the practices of our culture for the safety of families. The study shall employ questionnaires, interviews and visual ethnography to collect data. The study found that during a complete lockdown, people have not bought new clothes, sweets, or snacks, as they generally do before a pandemic. Almost all of them kept their celebrations low-key, and some did not celebrate at all. Digital media played a role in keeping the celebration alive, as people used it to wish their friends and families virtually. During partial unlock, the situation was under control, and people began to go out and see a few family and friends. They went shopping and bought new clothes and needs, but they did it while following safety precautions. There is also an equal percentage of people who shopped online. Although people continue to remain disappointed, they were less stressed up as life was returning to normal.

Keywords : covid-19, digital, festivals, India, wedding

Conference Title : ICAIS 2021 : International Conference on Arabic and Islamic Studies

Conference Location : Bali, Indonesia

Conference Dates : October 25-26, 2021