

Can “Gurudwara-Model” Work for Covid-19 Quarantine?

Running Title: Gurudwara Model for Quarantine

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Abstract:

Article describes the role Gurudwaras can play during such Pandemics. Historically, Gurudwaras play important part in doing social service. Gurudwaras can be prepared to provide space to individuals that can ensure social distancing. Additionally there is availability of free food in the form of 'Langar'. Moreover, religious environment is good for mental health. (This Viewpoint was submitted to Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 27 March, 2020)

Recently, a 21-day country wide lock down has been imposed (with curfew in few states and shoot at sight order in the State of Telangana).

Some experts argue that imposition of bans and curfews is not a good option for countries such as India where support services are not available. People need basic amenities like food to survive. A complete lockdown creates panic in the population due to lack of such services. On paper, administrative orders do not ban essential services; however, in actual practice everything gets banned. It has been observed in the past few days since lock-down, that local police was forcing the chemist shops and essential commodity shops to close the shops. Arrangements to meet the needs of the community were not

in place; as it takes time for the administration to organize everything.

When curfew relaxation is given for some time, or whenever people are able to breach the lockdown, then there is a panic-rush to procure such items. Furthermore, people enter the shops through backdoors. This creates overcrowding – an ideal ground for person to person transmission, which defeats the basic purpose for which the curfew was imposed.

In such a situation, it needs to be debated if the Gurudwara model can come to the rescue.

What is Gurudwara?

Gurudwaras are religious places of the Sikh Community, who are known for their dedication to serve the mankind.

Gurudwaras are generally very neat and clean and free food (Guru ka langar) is served here around the clock. Devotion is to such an extent that all devotees, irrespective of their socio-economic or socio-political status, take pride in offering services that may range from serving food to cleaning floors. There is a vast network of gurudwaras at national and international level.

What is the Gurudwara Model?

A gurudwara at Anandpur Sahib (a city in north India) has come up with an innovative idea. Here all rooms have been allotted to quarantine the contacts of suspected patients. The gurudwara is being prepared to comply with all standard instructions of Government of India, in terms of hygiene; sanitation; avoiding gatherings; maintaining a distance of one metre even within the rooms, and at the places of partaking their parasadas (food). The Gurudwara Management Committee will depute enough 'sewadars' (support staff) so that room service can be provided. To avoid overcrowding, the 'Sangat' (persons under quarantine) will not be allowed to visit the place of worship. However, they will be able to listen to the soothing/calming serene sounds of all 'kirtanas' and 'shabads' (religious hymns and preaching). This model is likely to ensure the following:

1. Mental peace / stress relief
2. Social support / camaraderie
3. Basic facilities like food, etc. (usually all gurudwaras have a sufficient stock of raw materials)
4. Fulfillment of the basic objective of quarantine

Furthermore, a closed-circuit television (CCTV) based monitoring can also be done.

The hallmark of using this approach is that this model has successfully worked in times of crises, globally.

Additionally, gurudwaras can arrange for daily monitoring of the signs and symptoms; testing if required; and take appropriate action with the help of nodal health team of the area involved in handling the COVID-19 outbreak.

All such places should also submit daily report to the administration, after daily health screening.

What Should Gurudwaras NOT do?

All such places should not allow the general public to enter. Patients, who qualify as suspects or confirmed COVID-19 cases; who require isolation and not quarantine should not be allowed. Any attempt to gather the quarantined persons for media publicity should be strongly banned.

Picture of a Gurudwara Building, showing Good Greenery and Ambience



Picture of a Room with Beds having good inter-bed distance



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