

MOSQUES IN ENHANCING THE RELIGIOSITY AMONG THE MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This main purpose of this paper is to investigate the mosques' performance in enhancing Islamic religiosity and spiritual advancement. The study primarily used the analyses of the quantitative data obtained from 218 respondents through survey administered among the randomly selected mosques in Sri Lanka. The field observation and review of the textual resources were used as supplementary. The findings reveal that the mosques are mostly spiritually vital, and playing traditional role in enhancing Islamic religiosity in a minority context. In this sense, the prayers and rituals are main programmes of the mosques. The attendance of the Muslims to the daily and Friday obligatory prayers is gradually increasing. The Muslim women also participate in tarawih and 'id prayers. Apart from some ritual practices such as qur'an recitation and i'tikaf, there is controversial opinion about most of rituals, particularly: mawlid, collective dhikr/ratib, Bukhari majlis and kanduri.

Keywords: Islamic religiosity, Mosque in Sri Lanka, Islamic rituals

Introduction

Religiosity is a concept about religious orientation and involvement in a great level as being very or too religious, or reminding a follower of religious behaviour. It forms as a foundation for a person to implement the good of religious values in all aspects of his or her life. Religiosity is acknowledged to be amongst the most important cultural force and pertinent factor most likely to influence human behaviours (Mokhlis, 2009; Essoo & Dibb, 2004). The history evidences that religion is one of the most universal and influential social institutions that can assert a considerable amount of influence on the follower/believer's attitude, values and behaviours, both at the individual and the societal level. Religion can also influence one's material life and attitude towards the consumption of goods and services (Shah Alam et al., 2011; Battour et al., 2014; Batson et al., 1993). Religion refers to one's devotion to God or a certain faith while religiosity is defined as the degree to which an individual commits to a particular religion (Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012) or to a religious group (Essoo & Dibb, 2004). Therefore, similarly the religiosity contributes to the advancement and development of life of all humanity and shapes an individual's emotional experience, cognition and psychological wellbeing and that, in turn, affects the consumption choices which the individual makes (Shah Alam et al., 2011).

The religious beliefs, attending religious services, being involved in activities sponsored by faith-based organizations, praying etc. are generally considered elements that form the basis of religiosity (Bridges and Moore, 2002). The religiosity therefore can be measured by using two main dimensions – belief and practice (Batson et al., 1993; Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012). Marks and Dollahite (2001) also pointed out that religious beliefs consist of personal and internal

beliefs, framings, meanings and perspectives of religion. These may be demonstrated inward by respective individuals or they may be expressed outwardly as observable expressions of faith as exhibited through behaviours such as scripture studies, praying, specific traditional practices and religious rituals. While belief is the first predictor for providing a framework to make sense of one's life (Morgan & Fastides, 2009). The Religious Orientation Scale introduced by Allport (1950) conceptualises intrinsic and extrinsic religion as the main dimension in measuring religiosity. These two dimensions represent different aspects of motivation for the believer. High intrinsic believers practise religion for its own sake; high extrinsic believers use religion as an avenue to a social or personal end (King & Crowther, 2004). Most researchers (Battour et al., 2014) agree with the two dimensions of measuring religiosity: religious belief and religious practice.

Based on various *qur'anic* references and prophetic field model, the whole life of a Muslim is coded by the will and commands of Allah. The strength of a Muslim's commitment to his or her life in accordance with these commands refer to his level of religiosity. Moreover, Islam postulates a theory of spiritual development on the human personality, as he is an appointed vicegerent in this world with certain authority and responsibilities. Since the body and spirit interact to form the human personality, the Islamic approach for treatment of any type of ailment –physical, or spiritual- is holistic. The former is workshop or factory of latter with the sole object of allowing the soul to use it to fulfil the will of Allah. Nasr said that “To realize its full meaning is to reach the highest degree of spirituality, to act perfectly according to His will, to love only the beloved, and to know all that can be known. It is to gain sanctity and attain the crown of spiritual poverty” (Nasr, 2008). The principle of *tawhid* and its credo is that: ‘there is no God but Allah only’ remains at the root of Islamic religiosity thus *tawhid* determines all its multifarious dimensions and forms. It was indicated by Nasr that “In a profound sense, Islamic spirituality is nothing other than the realization of *tawhid*. Its study is nothing other than tracing the impact in depth of *tawhid* upon the life, actions, art, and thought of that segment of the human race which makes up the Islamic people *ummah*” (Nasr, 2008).

The rituals and practices that precisely prescribed in the *qur'an* and established by prophetic model constitutes ways, by which, primarily concern is leading to inner dimension and then the soul achieve nearness to Allah.¹ They also aim to become embellished by the divine quality through attainment of virtues. As it was explained by Ibrahim Doi (2008), the spiritual merits of the actions (*acmal*) of Muslims on the basis of values and norms are established by the *qur'an* and the *sunnah*. The most important of such values and norms is *taqwa*, which denotes a quality that is absolutely essential for the personality of every conscientious Muslim and comprises both the love and the fear of God. More exactly, *taqwa* refers to a constant awareness of a person, and it further produces in him an intense love for God combined with reverence, so that he wants to do only what is pleasing to God and tries to avoid what is displeasing to God. In this firm *taqwa* brings not only love for God but also brings about love for Muslim brotherhood and love for all mankind, which in turn generates efficient moral power leading to peace between man and his Creator as well as between man and man.

¹ Many *Qur'anic* verses and prophet sayings indicate that these good deeds lead to this stage. For instance, *Al-Qur'an*: saba': 37; Al-kahf:110; Al-baqarah:153; Al-fajr:27.

2. Research Method

This study aims to measure performance of mosque in enhancing Islamic religiosity based on dimensions of Islamic ritual practices. Although, this research is primarily based on the quantitative approach, but it does not advocate the exclusive use of either the extreme quantitative techniques. In this study, the mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative techniques have been employed in these ways: offset, completeness, explanation, illustration and diversity of views as it is discussed by the literature (Bryman, 2008). This paper looks into the practices of Sri Lankan mosques in order to develop Islamic religiosity in its minority context. The most visible expression of a Muslim's religiosity is performing the five obligatory prayers 'between a person and Kufr (disbelief) is abandoning the prayer.' (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 5, Hadith 1131). Additionally, for the male Muslim, performing these prayers in the mosque is obligatory and thus an important evidence of his religiosity. Mainly, the survey data obtained from 218 respondents of 400 sampled mosque is represented by a range of responses to the questions on their practices. Moreover, each of these practices is described and analyzed under broad categories: Islamic prayer and rituals, and extended practices. These survey responses are further analyzed and cross-referenced comparing with field observation, records and textual sources.

3. Results and Discussion

Basically, the main programmes of Sri Lankan mosques seems to provide religious services such as the daily five times prayers, Friday prayer, *tarāwīh* (night prayers in the month of *Ramaḍān*), *īd al-fīṭr* and *īd al-aḍḥa* prayers. This obviously emphasizes that most important function of a mosque is to accommodate prayers. Although other devotional ritual activities like reciting the *qur'ān*, *i'tikāf*, collective *dhikr*, *Mawlid al-Rasūl*, *kanduri*, *Bukhāri* reciting etc. are also traditionally carried out in the mosque and there is a strong controversy surrounding these forms of activities among certain sectarian viewers.

3.1 Congregational prayers:

All the mosques affirm that the main activity for all types of mosques is the performance of congregational prayers daily five times. The theoretical explanation for this phenomenon can be traced to that the prayer which is known as *ṣalāt* in Arabic forms is part of the *ibādat* or cultic obligations and it is an extremely important act for a Muslim. This *ṣalāt* can be divided into two major types: the *fard* or obligatory ones and the *sunnah* or the supererogatory prayers. *ṣalāt* can also be categorized into those to be performed individually and those to be performed in congregation. The five daily *ṣalāts* are considered as obligatory to be performed by all Muslims and to be performed collectively at least by few Muslims in a community. According to Muslim jurists, the five times daily prayers must be established by at least two members of the community to absolve the rest of the Muslims in that community from the sin of not performing the congregational prayer. Therefore, all the mosques are keen in conducting *ṣalāt* in congregation most probably under an appointed *imām* because most of the Muslims consider on unique excellence of the congregational prayer (*ṣalāt al-jāmā'i*) as great praiseworthy in Islam.² This is

² They refer to many prophet sayings recorded in *ḥadīth* books. Two of them are particularly famous. One "the prayer which performed in congregation is worth twenty-five of his prayers in his home or in the market place." (Bukhari, kitab(k) Ṣalāt, 87). Other, the prophet contemplated personally burning down the houses of those were not present at the prayer of congregation. Bukhari, kitab (k) adhan, 111-13; Muslim, kitab (k) ṣalāt. 72-6.

to fulfill main objective in establishing a mosque and a way to realize and achieve what is meant by the *qur'ānic* verse “(Lit is such a Light) in houses, which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honour; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again)”³.

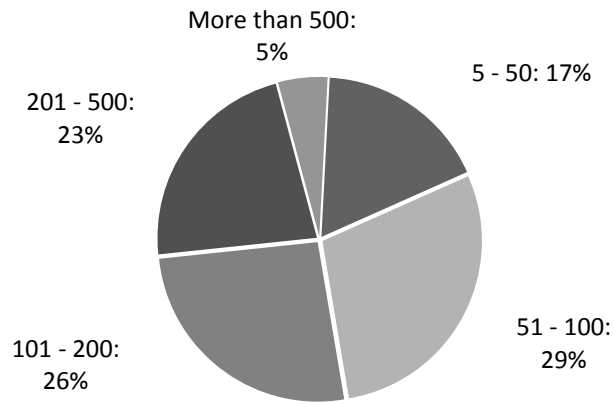


Figure1 The total attendance for five times congregational prayers

Source: Survey

All five time *ṣalāt* are held daily at all of the mosques. They were asked about attendance at *ṣalāt*. Typical attendance at all five *ṣalāt* ranges from 5 to 1,200 people including mostly men and children. Average attendance at daily *ṣalāt* is 171.7 people, and the median (midpoint) is 125. The figure 1 shows the frequency of five categories of five time congregational prayers attendance. At more than a half of mosque (29+26 percent), typical attendance at congregational payers is between 51 to 200 persons. Slightly less than of quarter of mosques (23 percent) are attended by more than 200 to 500 worshipers. At five percent of the mosques, attendance is typically over 500 persons. Comparatively the *jum'ah* mosques have a record of more attendance (Mean 183) for daily prayers then other mosques (ordinary mosques: 157 and *Takkiyyah*: 110). It is also important to note that general mosques that are non-affiliated with any sect are leading in attracting more attendants (215 mean).

During the past one year, most of the mosques (93%) have experienced an increase in regular attendees. The main reason that they report is multifold: first is the increase of *da'wah* activities among Muslims in recent past by *da'wah* movements. Particularly *Tablīgh* movement's personal appeal to invite peoples to the mosque seems to be an effective mean. Moreover, some mosques are conducting special *bayān*, classes and other *targhīb* program. For instance they are delivering handbills and booklets to advance the religious awareness and motivate people to perform *ṣalāt* in congregation. The impressive *Kuṭbah* by qualified *imām* is also reported to effect on the attendance. Population growth, new settlement and internal displacement to the safer zones due to natural and communal disasters in war-tone Sri Lanka has increased the number of worshipers in mosques on these areas in a short time. Extension of mosque building, installing infra-structures, establishment of shopping centers near the mosques also contribute to the increase in attendance. On the contrary, the few mosques that experienced decrease in prayers attendance report that establishment of other mosques in nearby surrounding, lack of *da'wah* activities; foreign employment and location of the mosques in disaster area as the reasons behind the decrease. The Muslim women attendance in mosque to perform daily prayers is very rare practice in Sri Lanka.

³ al-Qur'ān, Al-Nūr 24: 36

Only very few mosques located in travel route provide facility for Muslim women to perform their prayers probably on their individual.

The Friday prayer and sermon (*Kuṭbah*) is the fixed weekly activity in the *jum`ah* mosque and also in very few *Takkiyyas*. On Fridays, Muslim men gather at the mosque for Friday’s congregational prayer that replaces the *ṣalāt al-zuhr* on that day and as it is obligatory only for Muslim men. They listen to a sermon and perform the prayer immediately after it. Attendance of the Friday congregational prayer is strongly recommended by the Sunni Muslim law of schools. The *Shāfi`* school is holding a ruling that at least forty Muslims must be present in the mosque in order to make Friday worship to be valid. In Muslim society traditionally the absence of adult males from the Friday congregational prayers is regarded as disruptive of social as well religious harmony. It has been already noted that in the legally most of the Muslims are followers of *shāfi`ī* school of jurisprudence. According to this school, the Muslims believe that forty mature inhabitants are required for a valid *jum`ah* prayer. Therefore, in a situation when this required number is lacking, they offer *zuhr ṣalāt* in addition to the *jum`ah ṣalāt* as a precaution. Furthermore, it can be observed the considerable number of Muslims takes part in the *ṣalāt*, rather than the *khuṭbah*. As a result of that they generally assume that *ṣalāt* is the central act of Friday worship as it is termed *ṣalāt al-jum`ah*. Furthermore, someone who enters the mosque after the *khuṭbah* and happened to him to perform only the *ṣalāt*. He is still considered to complete a valid Friday worship.

The typical Friday attendance at *jum`ah* prayer ranges from 65 to 6,000 persons, with a mean of 1063 in all the responding mosques. Therefore, the median (midpoint) *jum`ah* attendance is 700. In other words, exact quarter number of total mosques report of 200 to 500 attendees, whereas similar number of this mosque reports of 500 to 1000 persons attendee. Typical Friday attendance in ten percent of the mosques is 200 or fewer people. However, 1000 or more Muslims participate on typical Friday worship in considerable number of mosque (40%). Almost all the *jum`ah* attendees (except 3 percent) are male adults and children because there is a strong belief that the Friday prayer is incumbent on all members of the male community, as the *qur`ān* says “O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew”

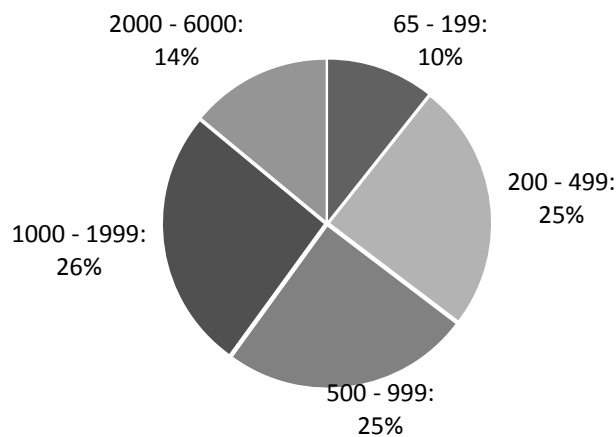


Figure2: At a typical *jum`ah* prayer, the total attendance

Source: Survey

Sri Lankan mosque’s programs are fixed annually by the *tarāwīh* and the *‘īd* prayers. The *tarāwīh* is a kind of *sunnah* or supererogatory prayers that can be performed congregationally or individually. During *tarāwīh* congregational prayers long sections of the *qur’ān* are recited is strongly recommended and widely practiced in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, Muslims perform this prayer in high esteem with precaution, mainly in congregation shortly after *‘isha* prayer during the month of *Ramaḍān*. They perform in *taslimah*, each containing two *rak’ah*; after an every four *rak’ah* a pause is held, hence the name *tarāwīh* which mean pauses. In mosque, people assemble in groups ranging from 21 to 2800 persons including men, women and children. They perform the prayer behind a permanent *imām* or behind a specially arranged *qāri*. There is average of the performer is 290 persons. It is also to be noted that the issue and distribution in the total number of *rak’ah* between 8 and 20, encourages the attendees to perform this prayer in their sectarian mosque. It is important to note that women are also allowed to attend the *tarāwīh* prayers in congregation in the mosque. The findings show in two third of mosques (66.5 percent), women make their *tarāwīh* with an average of 121.7. Mostly they pray behind a curtain, in lesser extent in upstairs or another room. The women praying behind a curtain or in another room is becoming more widely spread practice.

In the morning of the *‘īd* day after *Ramaḍān* Muslims gather again to perform the non-obligatory congregational *‘īd* prayer which is accompanied by the delivery of the short sermon. A similar *‘īd* prayer is performed during the *haji* celebration. Attendance for *‘īd* prayer ranges from 50 to 9000 persons, with an average of 1391. In slightly less than two third of the mosques (61%) women also join in this prayer with an average of 410 women. The average attendance for each congregational prayers varies in the mosques according to their affiliation as below table 1 presents.

Table1: Average attendance in mosque for each congregational prayer by its affiliation

Affiliation	Daily Prayer		Jum’ah Prayer		Tarāwīh Prayers			‘īd Prayers		
	Male	Children	Male	Children	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Tablīgh Jamā’at	96	26	681	127	115	88	37	730	337	147
Madhhab Shāfi	112	29	981	168	138	104	38	931	340	158
Non, General	178	37	1012	201	167	140	51	1134	503	214
Tawhīd Jamā’at	115	28	924	206	156	123	64	1191	548	278
Tarīgah	258	49	711	203	430	251	119	1050	218	181
Others	186	43	850	65	183	130	59	294	300	138

Source: Survey

Besides these fixed prayers there are occasional prayers that may be performed in congregation according to special circumstances. The eclipse prayer is performed whenever there is a lunar or solar eclipse. The *hajāt* prayer is performed as a special request by the community to ask Allah Almighty for rain or to avoid a calamity. Funeral prayers are performed mostly at the mosques those are located nearby to *maqbarah*, even though there is controversy in this issue whether the mosque is the best place for the performance of the funeral prayer.

This indicates that Sri Lankan mosques as they are mostly considered as house of worship and serve to contribute to Muslims through the congregational prayers. It can undoubtedly be accepted that prayer is an effective mechanism for the spiritual development. The initial understanding about nature of prayer is derived from Islamic textual resources, that describe that *ṣalāt* as an institution, consisting of a repeated series of set text to be recited with precisely fixed movements of the body at prescribed times which is something specific. It begins with the proclamation of the formula 'Allah is great' (*takbīr*) and ends with salutation with the phrase 'peace be upon you' (*taslīm*).⁴

Yet prayer is quite an essence of Islam. There is no other duty which can be compared with it in terms of scope and intensity. Moreover, there is no trait which marks a true Muslim as does his sincerity in devotion. The prayer is the highest form of worship, an outward expression of a believer's faith in God and a practical sign of obedience to the command of God. It therefore, opens the Muslims the gateway to the spirituality. It provides him or her an opportunity to enjoy the ecstasy as a known saying describes it the ascension (*mi'raj*) of believers. Through which a man can attain real greatness and perfection as it inculcates the love of God, fear of God, piety (*taqwah*) and purification (*tazkiyah*) of the soul. It further develops neat and clean habits in Muslims. Profoundly the prayer is the first essential of Islam that reflects in religious, social, cultural, political and moral objectives.

It is now noteworthy to consider social aspect of prayer and its implication in relation to community leadership. The institution of prayer not only helps in building individual character but also assists in building a whole structure of community organization and social discipline as it is one of the requirements for leadership. Really an individual discipline and individual character alone cannot produce any tangible results unless organized on a social and community level. Further, it can be said that without prayers, the social system of Islam cannot be established on a sound footing. The social object of prayers, however, is accomplished through its congregational form. According to Muhammad Iqbal "The real objective of prayer, however, is better achieved when the act of prayer becomes congregational. The spirit of all true prayer is social" (Iqbal, 1977). It is therefore, in any Muslim community the obligatory prayers must be established in congregation. There is a related question to be addressed here that there is an implication concerns the relationship between congregational prayer and leadership. Some Sunnis argue that prophet had indicated his reliance upon Abu Bakr as successor in leadership of *ummatic* society in many ways; he had called upon Abu Bakr to lead prayers that is a highly visible role, always virtually undertaken, when possible. Historically, the *imām* of the prayer has always been playing a leadership role in his local Muslim community.

⁴ as a ritual worship comprising of both recitations and physical actions which begins with the *takbīr* and ends with *salām*. in Al-Sayyid *sabiq, fiqh al-sunnah*, vol 1, al-Qahirah :Maktabah Dar al-Turath, 1988.

There is a great virtue and goodness in congregational prayers. Some of these are of a social and collective nature. These daily and weekly gathering for prayer in a mosque have many benefits for individual as well as for the community. They unite them; enforce brotherhood; help them to develop bond of love and affection between them; ensure spirit of equality; develop mutual understanding; teach respect for other people and their rights; and make them tolerant and broad minded. Usually a congregation preserves an association of Muslims who are animated by the same aspiration, concentrate on a single object and open up their inner selves to the working of a single impulse. An individual, however disciplined, cannot achieve his ideal unless the people among whom he lives cooperate with him in attaining it. Especially the congregational daily prayer keeps this organization alive and working and never lets it get rusty or ineffective. A *qur'ānic* verse⁵ indicates that a weakness in this organization shatters the whole superstructure of its social system and gradually destroys the Muslim community. It is therefore, absolutely necessary that all of those who want to worship and obey God must organize themselves into one solid block. They must unite and help each other to achieve this objective. They must unite and must have unity in word and in deed, which is absolutely indispensable for their struggle against the forces of evil in this world.

Social gathering on various occasions is a natural phenomenon in the life of organized communities. Islam recognizes this aspect and provides with ample opportunities through daily prayers, Friday prayer, *tarawīh* and annual *'īd* prayers. The congregation prayers force the Muslim to interact within community, to be concerned about the welfare of others and to help those who in need, thus, encourage their effort in planning for the development of the community. The link to the community is first established by the marked preference for prayer performed communally. It is remarkable that even in prayers, modalities are retained which relate intrinsically to a congregational prayer. This analysis is cooperated with the close link between *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*. These two practices are prescribed or approved of together at least 25 times. Ultimately the *zakāt*, enjoins especially in the *qur'ān*, takes on the precise meaning of a communal tax. Mention of this obligatory tax alongside ritual prayer is further evidence of the communal importance and finality of latter. Therefore, the institution of prayer cements their personal, social and cultural relationship and gradually creates and strengthens their co-operation in economics as well as other field of social activities. The communal nature of the prayer is expressed and realized to its ultimate extent in the mosque.

In Sri Lankan experience, it is observed that the *ṣalāt* provides a way through which the Muslims have faith in prayers in conformity with the contents of their beliefs or else the faith may disappear. Through an individual *ṣalāt* as well as in the congregational prayer the Muslims can preserve their identity and can safeguard against the distractions of their personal life and against the united forces of evil and the challenges. Furthermore there is a visible expression of the unity of the community manifests itself in the performance of the *ṣalāt* in congregation in rows behind an *imām* (leader). The *ṣalāt* appears to serve as a generally prominent intersection of community members bringing together all residents and overriding other distinctions, when they join in congregation. In which they must translate multiple, and normally separable, ordering by rank, age, gender and wealth into a single, public social arrangement. In praying together at one Friday mosque in a

⁵ al-Qur'ān, Maryam 19:59

village or town, there is an opportunity to uphold the principle of the unity of the overall community, that symbolically manifested. Whenever and wherever Muslims face a threat, they assemble in Friday prayer to react. This indicates some of the social meanings attached to this obligatory *ṣalāt* performance. It remains moralistic in tone on annual *ʿīd* prayers become distinctly social. It involves a total reconciliation of the members of families and villages through a celebration of the Almighty of Allah. *ṣalāt tarāwīth* also is an effort at social rejuvenation.

However, it is appropriate to indicate here that sectarian trend among Muslims mostly pertaining to question of their *madhhab* (school of thought). Most of Muslims would say that he or she is a *shāfiʿī* and thus he or she prefers to perform the *ṣalāt* in accordance to *Shāfiʿī*. This paves the way to differences emerge in manners of conducting/performing the *ṣalāt*. Especially the differences are obvious in the following matters namely: the gestures performed during the *ṣalāt*; recitation of the text within the units; the perception of what is and is not obligatory; and to a degree to which that is so, a various chapters in this matter. Although, the *Shāfiʿī* is predominant in Sri Lanka, there are *Hanafis* also present in a small extent. They have also built-large mosques which conducts Friday prayers. The main differences between the *Sunni* sects generally reflect their respective perceptions of the prophet's *ḥadīth*.⁶ Furthermore, in Sri Lanka some groups are found to be swayed by the reformist thought. As they are rebuffed by the rest of the community, decided to build their own mosques in which to perform the *ṣalāt* in their own way. Their main argument is renewing and reconstructing correct procedure for the *ṣalāt* and other acts of worship as it is established by authentic Islamic sources. The issues of a *ṣalāt* have led to these deeply felt and long-lasting local disputes.

3.2 *Qurʾān* Recitation

From the responses to the survey, a nearly less than two third of the mosques (60%) has recitation of *qurʾān* is one of their mosque's activities. It can be observed that Muslims in Sri Lanka feel that mosque is the most appropriate and sacred place where this activity is to be performed. It seems that they have been inspired by some views of religious scholars. They argue that the recitation of the *qurʾān* in whatever condition, is most blessed by God when it is performed in the mosque. This is might be a reason for many Muslims go to the mosque in order to recite the *qurʾān* individually. They used to recite *qurʾān* before or after prayers particularly after *ṣubh* prayers and between *maghrib* and *ʿisha* prayers, thinking that they have performed a ritual of high merit. To fulfill this purpose, mosque preserves to have many copies (*mushāf*) of *al-qurʾān* in their prayer hall. Moreover, the month of *Ramaḍān* is considered as the best occasion to recite the *qurʾān* by virtue of the month's sacredness and as multiplied rewards of amal. Some mosques arrange collective recitation of the *qurʾān* one juz each night, mostly after *tarāwīth* prayer. For this a group of 10 – 20 persons sit together in a circle and each recites a portion from the particular *juz* 'u.

⁶ The source of such differences, however, is way the prophet himself is believed to have performed the prayer. The manner of its recitation, and its other ritual accompaniments, were historically established in two phases. The first was an ordination which took place during the life of the prophet, when the foundational dimensions of the *ṣalāt* were consolidated. Muslim schools of jurisprudence draw their legitimacy from this period. The second phase was interpretative: the four Sunni jurists after whom the sects are named, essentially interpreted the Islamic sources available to them in accordance with what they believed to have been the example and directives of the prophet based on accounts transmitted 'in a chain' for well over the century.

There is no doubt that the act of *qur'ānic* recitation with prayerful attention is praiseworthy. There are countless "*Aḥādīth*" (Prophetic sayings) in describing numerous benefits for *qur'ānic* reader, that enunciate every letter and word, believing they will be rewarded for each recited letter with ten blessings⁷. The recitation also gains comfort from the soothing rhythm of the verses which has an effect of creating peace and tranquility in a distressed mind and heart. The prophet had also said about the importance of its recitation of the *qur'ān* in a congregation. But the Muslim who is able only to recite without understanding the meaning is at the lowest level of worshipping God because he or she is unable to derive much benefit from the recitation. The effort to understand *qur'ān* is a very essence of the spirit of Islam.

Other than as a place for *qur'ān* recitation, the mosque is known among the Muslims as a place for private speculation and mediation that is known as *i'tikāf* that literally means the act of staying in the mosque for a prescribed period of time. This practice is a form of devotion to Allah mostly seeking the *lailat al-qadr*. Muslims usually curry this practice to seek this night in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān. There is a firm opinion as regards to the place of *i'tikāf* which is to be performed in a *jum'ah* mosque. Therefore, *jum'ah* mosques seem to provide basic facilities for this activity. However, there is a minor opinion of that this practice of *i'tikāf* is to be performed only in three Holy mosques of Islam. Thus the mosques that are affiliated with this group seem most likely not to recommend and encourage Muslims to perform it in their mosques. This opinion finds little support among Muslims.

3.3 Other Major Rituals

Sri Lankan mosques are conducting traditional rituals namely: ceremony of *Mawlid*, collective *dhikr* or *rātib*, *kanduri* and *Bhukhāri Majlis*. But they do not go without their share of controversy. The debate is longstanding one, as some scholars and reformamist movements attempt to prove the rituals themselves are traditional, rather than Islamic and these practices apparently crossed the border of Islamic fundamental and spoiled the organized religion. Always there was a heated argument and sharp debate in Sri Lanka between *salafi* groups and *ṭarīqah ṣūfi* orders on these practices. The former vigorously oppose it and consider it to be a *bid'ah*. Indeed, it received a strong opposition from *Tawhīd* movements, while deriving its arguments for their opposition to the practices mainly from Ibn Taymiyyah, inspired the growth of non-or anti- mystical Islam throughout the Islamic world and of the opposition to the reference of the prophet, including these rituals.

It seems to be that these practices are losing general recognition in Sri Lanka, partially in consequence of *salafi* thought spread and influence. The surveyed data indicate that some mosques report to continue these rituals (*Kanduri*: 23%, *Mawlid*: 21%, Collective *dhikr* or *rātib*: 29% and recitation of *Bhukhāri sharīf*: 13%). However, these rituals are fixed activities of almost all *ṭarīqah* mosques. For instance, the famous mosque: Al Maṣjidul Bukhary (*Takkiyah*) elaborates its programs as follows,

⁷ "Whoever reads a letter from the Book of Allah, he will have a reward. And that reward will be multiplied by ten. I am not saying that "Alif, Lām, Mīm" is a letter, rather I am saying that "Alif" is a letter, "lām" is a letter and "mīm" is a letter." al-Tirmadhī, Sunan, kitab (k) thawab al-qur'ān, 16.

Conducting of five time prayers. Tareeqa foundation of Quadiriya sect. Recitals of Jalaliya Raathib every Jumai Raath day(Friday). Main *Kanduri* in the month of Shawwal in cherished memory of His Holiness Al Quthub Seyyed Moulal Bukhary Thangal (R.A.) Weekly Raathib recitals, Monday nights - *Arrviya*, Sunday Mornings - *Burdah*, Monthly relevant Moulids. Main function Annual *Kanduri* in the month of Shawwal.

Table2: Ritual practice of mosque, by type and affiliation

Categories	<i>Qur'ānic</i> Recitation	<i>Mawlid</i>	Collective <i>Dhikr/Ratib</i>	<i>Bukhāri</i> <i>Majlis</i>	<i>Kanduri</i>
<i>Type</i>					
<i>Jum'ah</i> Mosque	62%	18%	30%	16%	23%
<i>Takkiyyahh</i>	42%	29%	23%	10%	19%
Ordinary Mosque	69%	19%	31%	0%	19%
<i>Zaviyah</i>	100%	100%	100%	0%	67%
Other Types	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Affiliation</i>					
<i>Tablīgh</i>	62%	20%	27%	10%	22%
<i>Jamā'at</i>					
<i>Madhhab Shāfi</i>	56%	31%	33%	13%	31%
Non, General	56%	10%	28%	13%	18%
<i>Tawhīd Jamā'at</i>	78%	0%	0%	8%	0%
<i>Tarīqah</i>	55%	73%	55%	18%	18%
Affiliated to others	86%	14%	57%	0%	0%
All mosques	60%	20%	29%	13%	23%

Source: Survey

3.3.1 *Mawlid*: The ceremony of the *mawlid* is considered one of the forms to remark the celebration and observation on the birthday (*Milād*) of the prophet as a holyday. The *mawlid* is usually a cosmopolitan event, organized by the committee members such as giving an oration in local language, usually, speaking of the virtues of the prophet. In content, the *mawlid* is recitation of a poetic biography of the prophet, interspersed with prayers. The most popular text in Arabic is that is known in Sri Lanka as '*Subhana Mawlid*'. Its recitation takes various forms: from an abridged version of selected chapters to a longer version where each chapter is punctuated by *qaṣīdah*, poems in praise of the prophet, recited in Arabic. Further the recitation of a *Mawlid* of a panegyric poem of a legendary character. These poems normally follow a standard sequence of introductory praises to God, an invocation, a description of the creation of '*al-nur al-muhammadi*', then proceed through various stages and digression to the actual physical birth, which is preceded by an account of a miraculous announcement to his mother, that she is bearing the prophet. The *Mawlid* rituals are performed to receive a share of its blessings '*lil-tabarruk*', in the hope or faith that man's needs will therefore, be met more easily and surely, that lot of man on earth will be lightened, that his prospect in the present and future life will be bright. According to traditionally accepted view, the

birth day of prophet is Monday, 12th *rabi-ul-Awwal*, third month of the Islamic calendar. It is an official holiday in Sri Lanka, when national *milād* celebrations are held. *Mawlid* as a central of celebrations is recited in Sri Lankan mosques mostly between *maghrib* and *'isha* prayers of the day. In some mosques this recitation is performed from the first to twelfth of this month.

3.3.2 Collective *Dhikr/Ratib*: The *qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* prescribe *dhikr* as a something of tremendous importance for all Muslims. Islamic scholars agree to a wider scope of the meaning of *dhikr* and specific formulas of Allah's praise. Al-Sayyid Sabiq records the definition of *dhikr* which include gatherings of academic discussions on matter pertaining to Islam. The world has come to stand for recitations of certain fixed phrases in a given order. In *ṣūfī* orders, the *dhikr* is possible the most frequent form of rite. Traditionally they have projected it as the *raison d'être* of all Islamic ritual, and it has emerged in its most developed ritual expression as a distinctively *ṣūfī* practice.

Therefore, among the *ṭarīqas*, there is a tradition, that of collective *dhikr* (aloud). They recommend at least for a long time sessions (*ḥadra*) or circles (*ḥalqa*) of collective *dhikr*. The later is solitary *dhikr* in its liturgico-technical form, with prescribed attitudes regulating the respiratory rhythm as well as physical posture. Physical posture during the *dhikr* varies with the *ṭarīqas*. Uniformly, the ritual of *dhikr* is a ceremony that consists of reading and chanting, rhythmic swaying, and a respiratory exercise that results in hyperventilation which often leads to unconsciousness. This ritual which ends after about three hours' duration are held at the mosques in a fixed day or days, mostly on Friday throughout the year, and also to mark an annual cycle of significant dates. These include the commemoration of birth of the founders of *ṭarīqas*. Sometimes it usually lasts all night for these occasion, as well as musical accompaniment and food.

The *ratibs* present the appearance of a kind of parody on certain form of collective *dhikr*. These *ratibs* are not strictly enjoined by the religious law, but some of them are recommended by the *ṣūfī* orders, while others appertain to the systems established by the founders of certain *ṭarīqa* or school of mysticism. In an occasion, devotees assemble in a mosque far into the night for the *dhikr* known as *rātib*, chanting the praises of Allah with voices that increase gradually in volume till they rise to a shout and from shout to a bellow. This *rātib* composes the words and rules as to the movements of the body and the postures which were to accompany them. There is a belief that the noise and motion to be powerful agents for producing the desired state of mystic transport. In place of the words of the *shahadah*, of the names or pronounces such as '*Hu*' and '*He*' to designate Allah, senseless sounds are introduced which bear scarcely any resemblance to their originals. The votaries first sit in a half-kneeling posture, which they subsequently change for a standing one; they twist their bodies into all kinds of contortions, shaking their heads too and fro till they become giddy, and shouting a medley of such sounds as '*ha hu hai*' etc. This goes on till their bodies become bathed with perspiration, and they often attain to a state of unnatural excitement, which is by no means diminished by the custom observed in some places of extinguishing the lights. Noisy to an extreme degree is the usual scene of its performance. The assembled devotees recite their *dhikr* first sitting down, then standing and finally leaping madly; from two to four of those who present act as leaders and cry some phrases, the rest responding. By some *ṭarīqas*, it is performed by companies of from 15-20 men. Presently the loud speakers are used to perform this ritual.

3.3.3 *Bhukhāri Majlis*: Recital of *bukhāri sharīf* is known as '*Bukhari Majlis*'. The ritual is held in the mosque to recite the *Sahīh* of *al-Bukhāri* as it is commonly referred to as, is one of the six

major *ḥadīth* collections of *Sunni* Islam by Muhammad Ibn Ismail *al-Bukhāri* (810-870). Usually, this famous *ḥadīth* book is just being recited from the beginning to the end for 30 or 40 days of probably during months of Jamathul-Ahir and Rajab. Some of the local *Mawlawis* (religious scholars) or Arabic college students involve in this rite by rotation after *aṣar* prayer. In few mosques, this is followed by oratorical speech on topic related to *Al-Bukhāri* or on particular *ḥadīths* collected in his book. Instead of *Sahīh Bukhāri* very few mosques conduct the ceremony of reciting *Sahīh al-Muslim*, which is another one of the six major collections of the *ḥadīth*.

3.3.4 Kanduri: the annual feast festivals that marked with special foodstuffs and ceremonies are known as '*Kanduri*' among some Muslims in Sri Lanka. A feast ceremony is usually observed in honour of the personages or occasions. This rice ritual even though is not part of broadly distributed and generally accepted Islamic ritual repertoire, held at few mosques (mostly shrine mosques) that are under the influence of *ṭarīqas*. For instance, the Mashayikumar kanduri at shrine mosque of at Dharga town, held over a century in commemorating Magdumi who is believed as a saint. Sometime it is held with flag-hoisting ceremony (*kodi etram*) but the collective recitation or *dhikr/rātib* is central of the events. As it is observed the *mawlid*, *Bhukhāri* or other ceremonies are holding for duration and they mostly concluded by this *Kanduri* feast. For instance the famous Maligasenai *Bhukhāri Takkiyyah* mosque is holding *Bhukhāri* Majlis last 130 years. The ceremony which commences on 27th *Jamatul Akhir* lasts 30 days before concluding with a grand *kanduri* feast (*tamaam periya kandiri*) under its spiritual guide belong to *qadiriyyah* order.

4. Conclusion

The paper investigated the mosque practices in enhancing Islamic religiosity and spiritual development among the individuals and the community. The mosques most likely seem to be influenced by customary habit of viewing the mosque as house of worship. Therefore, the mosques are mostly treated as spiritually vital, playing traditional role in preserving the Muslim identity and enhancing Islamic religiosity in a minority context. In this sense, the prayers and rituals are main programs of the mosques. Therefore, they conducted usual kind of congregation prayers. The attendance of the Muslims to the daily and Friday prayers is reasonable and it is reported that gradually increasing. The Muslim women also participate in *tarawih* and '*id* prayers. Apart from some ritual practices such as *qur'an* recitation and *i'tikaf*, there is controversial opinion about most of rituals, particularly: *mawlid*, collective *dhikr/ratib*, *Bukhari majlis* and *kanduri*. This resulted in decline of overall performance of mosques in these practices. However, *Tariqah* mosques and *zaviyas* are keen to continue these rituals.

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