



Global Journal of Religions (ISSN: 2689-2529)



The Role of Pilgrimage for Peace: A Study in St.Lalibela Rock Hewn Churches

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ABSTRACT

It is common to see thousands of pilgrims, both inside and out, to St. Lalibela Rock hewn churches of Ethiopia. But, it is uncommon to see studies on the role of pilgrimage for peace: much of the researches are focused on the economic importance of pilgrimage tourism in the country. Despite the existence of many religious tourist sites, scholars in Ethiopia gave little or no attention to the importance of pilgrimage for peace. Accordingly, the objective of this article is to investigate the role of pilgrimage for the inner and outer peace of pilgrims to St. Lalibela Rock hewn Churches of Ethiopia. To achieve this objective, the article employed 20 purposively selected pilgrims for in-depth interviews, four key informants (two were Tourism bureau officials of Lalibela town, and the other two were priests of the Church), personal observation and document reviews to collect data. In addition, one FGD, containing eight pilgrim discussants, was held with the pilgrims to elicit group ideas about the issue. Thematic categorization and analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The article revealed that the pilgrimage provides different inner peace for the pilgrims like, purification (healing from sin), relinquishment of self will, relinquishment of separateness, relinquishment of negative feelings, avoiding of the worrying habit, avoiding of the anger habit and the fear habit. Moreover, the article argued that the pilgrims achieved outer peace: upholding human dignity, challenging prejudice and building tolerance, promoting non-violence behavior, resolving and transforming conflicts, sharing of resources, caring not only for other pilgrims but also to the environment, and making inter-personal and inter-communal linkages. The article, therefore, concludes that pilgrimage cultivates both the inner and outer peace for the pilgrims in the study area. Finally, the article recommends that the role of pilgrimage for peace education in general and for the peace of pilgrims in particular need to be studied in other similar sacred places of Ethiopia in addition to their economic importance.

Keywords: Amhara National Regional State, Inner peace, Outer Peace, Pilgrimage, St.Lalibela Rock Hewn Churches,

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How to cite this article:

Belay Asmare. The Role of Pilgrimage for Peace: A Study in St.Lalibela Rock Hewn Churches. Global Journal of Religions, 2020,2:7



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Website: <https://escipub.com/>

Introduction

Pilgrimage has been defined by different scholars. Accordingly, Sykes (1982) defines it as a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. Brandon (1970) in his part defines it as a sum total of three factors: a holy place; attraction of people to this place; and with the aim of obtaining spiritual or material benefit. Turner (1973) argued that pilgrimage is the journey of the soul from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. On the other hand, Crim (1981) defines pilgrimage as a journey to one's local sanctuary. In nutshell, the Brandon's definition of pilgrimage is appropriate for this study for the reason that the research site of the study, st. Lalibela, is a holy place, attraction of people to this place; has spiritual and non-spiritual benefits for the pilgrims.

Traveling to sacred sites is not a new phenomenon (Blackwell, 2007). Thus, the medieval Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the Hajj of two million Muslims each year to Mecca; and the journey of 20 million Hindus each year to the River Ganges are examples of the issue (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Rinschede, 1992). Hence, many scholars agreed that pilgrimage is one of the oldest forms of tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Digance, 2003; Olsen and Timothy, 2006). Nowadays, there are two alternative forms of pilgrimage that can be recognized: religious and secular (Collins - Kreiner, 2010a, 2010b; Hyde and Harnan, 2011; Okamoto, 2015). Accordingly, Collins- Kreiner (2010b), while pilgrims travel for spiritual reasons, tourists travel for more secular reasons. Secular tourists are motivated by architecturally exceptional church buildings, and an important historical association (Nolan and Nolan, 1992).

Religious tourism is a tourist activity through which the tourists seek spiritual grace, looking for the proximity, immersion or contact with the sacred aspects of life (Esteve, 2009). Rinschede (1992) has defined it as the type of tourism in which travelers are motivated either partially or solely for religious reasons. As religious tourism

is becoming one of the most important types of tourism all over the world, there are studies on the role of pilgrimage tourism in the world. Accordingly, as to Taleb Rifai (2015), the role of pilgrimage in the form of religious tourism is one of the most effective tools to foster inclusive and sustainable development. In so doing, he identified three main benefits of religious tourism: it raises awareness of humanity's common heritage and provides resources for preservation, it can contribute to local development and it builds cultural understanding.

As parts of the world, Ethiopia is a country with numerous sacred sites which have a great potential to be included in the worlds' religious tourism map. Hence, thousands of people from inside and out are traveling to religious sites of Ethiopia. However, studies pointed that religious tourism in Ethiopia is problematic. A study by Erimias Kifle (2014) identified poor transport infrastructural development, absence of government attention; settlement, unsuitable church administrative structure, and absence of tourism product development were identified as main challenges that have been hindering religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam, Ethiopia.

In addition, there is another study on the issue of pilgrimage in Lalibela town for the town is a religious paradise, especially for Orthodox Christian fellows as it is a unique replica of Jerusalem, with its 11th-century monolithic rock-hewn churches. The study revealed that pilgrimage tourism is the biggest source of income for the local community and the nation at large (Berhanu, 2018).

In a nutshell, the aforementioned studies focused on the economic implications and challenges for pilgrimage tourism development. However, the role of pilgrimage for peace is not so far a widely discussed dimension. This is where this article makes a contribution. The article brings light to the way pilgrimage can provide peace for pilgrims. Hence, the aim of this paper and its main theoretical contribution is to

investigate the types of peace that the pilgrims achieved from their pilgrimage to the sacred place of St.Lalibela rock hewn churches of Ethiopia. The contribution of pilgrimage for peace developed in this paper might be useful for pilgrims to other sacred sites. Finally, the article has the following question:

- ✓ What is the role of pilgrimage for the inner and outer peace of pilgrims in St.Lalibela Rock Hewn Churches of Ethiopia?

Literature Reviews

Definition of Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage lacks synthesis and holistic conceptualization (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). But, it is being conceived as a journey for religious causes (Barber, 1993). Thus, the history of pilgrimage is associated with the dismiss of Adam from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3); God sends Cain into further exile, away from his home and family as punishment (Genesis 4:1-6) and the journey made by Abrham leaving his home to go in search of a land which God promises to show him (Genesis 12:1-9). Therefore, pilgrimage is found at the heart of the Christian bible and it is a responding to God's calling and promises.

There are two major motives of Pilgrimage: religious and sacred motives. Religious motive is one of the main and most common motives for travel (Olsen and Timothy, 2006; and Gallagher, 2009). Pilgrims undertake a journey of pilgrimage to experience something extraordinary and likely life changing (Digance, 2003; Turner, 1973; Turner and Turner, 1978). The pilgrim seeks to touch and feel the sacred, which embodies their deep religious values (Digance, 2003; Eliade, 1959; 1964; Morinis, 1992; and Smith, 1992). In so doing, many pilgrims seek an encounter with the divine (Ambrosio, 2007; Digance, 2003; Turner, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1978). Thus, religious pilgrimage is often a spiritual quest (Cohen, 1992a; Devereux *et al.*, 2006; Digance, 2003; Turner, 1973).

Some pilgrims try to gain religious merit for their sins (Cohen, 1992b; Digance, 2003; Tomasi, 2002; Turner, 1973). Other pilgrims seek healing from illness or resolution of their worldly problems (Morinis, 1992; Smith, 1992; Tomasi, 2002; Turner, 1973). Others make pilgrimage to experience a holy atmosphere by being close to God (Shuo *et al.*, 2008). Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) put a number of motives amongst religious pilgrims, including, seeking to experience the sacred places; understanding one's spiritual being and; seeking to strengthen one's faith.

There are also non-religious motives for pilgrims. Keeling (2000) argued that spiritual motives are not the only reasons why people make pilgrimage. Thus, people tend to pilgrim to religious sites, for recreational, educational or cultural interests, rather than spiritual reasons (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Shackley, 2002; Smith, 1992, and Vukonić, 1996). Andriotis (2009) argued that people pilgrim to the sacred place for spiritual; secular; cultural; educational and; environmental motives. In sum, it is possible to understand that people have different motives to make pilgrimage to sacred places.

Religious Pilgrimage and Peacemaking

Religion believed to be a source for both violence and non-violent conflict transformation (Appleby, 1996 & 2006, Johnston, 2007; and Abu-Nimer, 2001). This ambiguity portrayed religion a "double-edged sword", with the one edge representing the inclination for violence and the other edge signifying the devotion to peace. It is in this second aspect that I would like to focus on in this article. I argued the role of pilgrimage for peace through a discussion of pilgrims owns experiences who were engaged a journey to st. Lalibela rock hewn churches of Ethiopia. Not only the religion itself but religious sites offer credibility as trusted institutions; a respected set of values; moral warrants to oppose injustice; unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties (Smock, 2008).

Given that pilgrimage can be resourceful to the building of peace, the question arises: what types of peace that pilgrimage to the sacred place provides for pilgrims? This article brief responds to this question by discussing the contents and results of the article role of pilgrimage for the peace of pilgrims in the study area.

The Concept of inner and outer Peace

Peace is being defined in distinctive ways (Richmond, 2008). Thus, there is no ontologically pre-determined concept of peace (Richmond, 2008). Especially, the dimension of inner Peace has been underdeveloped in peace theory (Brantmeier, 2007). This is because of the fact that the study of the human mind as a social science is still in its infancy (Vaughan, 2000). Despite the above confusion, Boulding (2000) defines peace as the main characteristic of a civilized society" and it is not just the absence of war but it is the practice of love.

Boulding identified two types of peace: the inner-peace which is the peace that can take place within the individual. It is peace of mind or soul. This is the freedom of sufferings or mental disturbances such as worry, anxiety, greed, desire, hatred, fear and ill-will. This can be strengthened through our relationship with the Divine. This can be considered as spiritual peace which can be reached by means of prayer and meditation (2000). According to Norman (1966), purification of desire, purification of motives, the freedom from feeling of separateness, reducing of all material

attachments, and curbing negative feelings are the steps for making the inner peace. Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to have emotional healing, to be liberated from their own fear, and avoid worrying (Griffin, 2017).

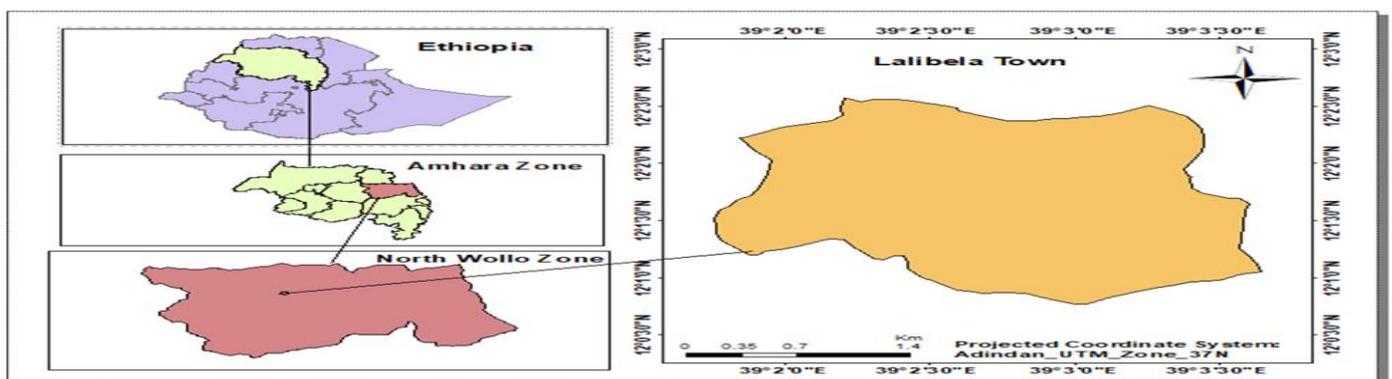
As to Boulding, the second type of peace is the outer peace: It is peace among individuals, societies, nations and the world (2000). According to Loreta and Jasmin (2010), the key manifestations of the outer peace are human dignity, avoiding prejudice, building tolerance, encouraging non-violence, challenging the war system, resolving conflicts, caring for the environment and sharing the earth's resources.

Research Methodology

Description of the Study Area

Lalibela is found in North Wollo Administrative Zone of the Amhara regional state. Administratively, the town of Lalibela was initially governed under the municipality of the Lalibela town administration of Lasta *woreda*. Geographically, Lalibela is situated at 12002'034"N and 39002'611"E, at an altitude of 2480m. The town is 701 km far from Addis Ababa. The present topography in and around Lalibela constitutes valleys and gorges and rugged mountains which include flat-topped plateaus and steep-sided volcanic plugs. Lalibela and its surroundings are therefore, characterized by impressive landscape features in which the natural landscapes of the province host many rock-hewn and built in cave churches which are the most important tourist sites of the country (Birhanu, 2018).

Figure1: Map of study area



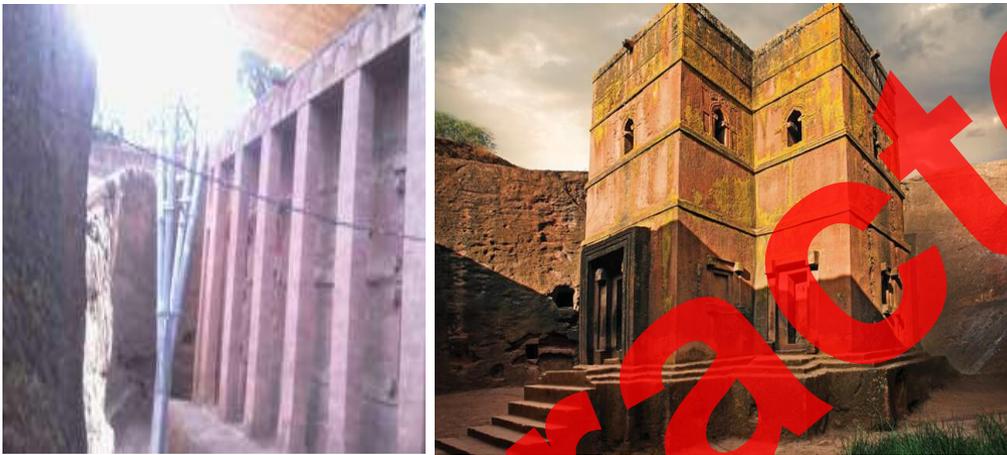
Bete Denagil, Bete Debre Sina, Bete Golgota, Bete Amanuel, Bete Merkorios, Bete Abba Libanos, Bete Gabriel-Rufael and Bete Giyorgis (Birhanu, 2018).

The churches of Lalibela are unique in many ways. They were carved with all their architectural elements out of solid rock, without joining any piece of stone together. Their refined architectural and aesthetic expressions seem almost superhuman. Each one of the churches is different in style and has its own unique features (*ibid*).

The Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela

The Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela are the most impressive 11th century monolithic, semi monolithic and cave churches around. The rock-hewn churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia were one of the first twelve sites to be inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage list in 1978 (UNESCO, 1978). The Rock Hewn Churches are the key attractions for both foreign and domestic visitors. These churches are Bete Medihane Alem, Bete Maryam, Bete Meskel,

Figure 2: Some of the Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela



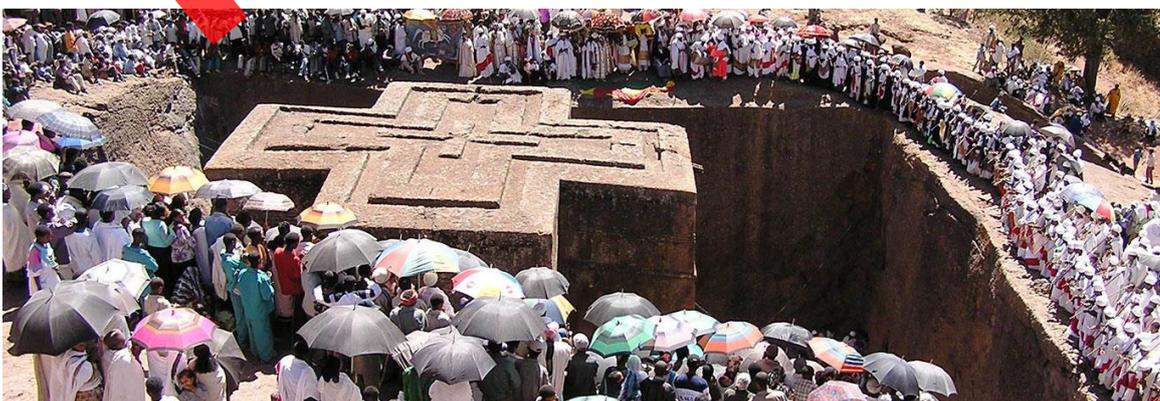
Source: photo by the Author, 2019

Religious Festivals

In Ethiopia, there are many colorful festivals, which have touristic interest. Thus, thousands of pilgrims arrive every year to celebrate Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter from every

corner of Ethiopia and across the world. During these holidays Christians and other tourists from different parts of the world flow towards Lalibela to be part of the celebration and to share the spiritual blessings of the area (Mengistu, 2005).

Figure 3: Easter Festivity in Lalibel Rock Hewn Churches



Source: photo by the Author, 2019

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was applied between December 2018 and April 2019 in the area of st. Lalibela Rock Hewn churches of Ethiopia. The study is concerned with the investigation of the peace of pilgrims as a result of their pilgrimage to the sacred place. The reason for employing this approach is due to its importance of investigating the feelings and experiences of individual pilgrims about the issue.

Research Design, Participants, and Data Sources

The research strategy chosen for this study was a case study so as to explore the peace of pilgrims. Hence, pilgrims from different regions of Ethiopia, religious leaders, and Lalibela Town Culture & Tourism Office experts were the main participants of the study. This research work was basically dependent on primary and secondary data as main sources of information.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The research was conducted during the Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter holidays celebration between December, 2018 and April, 2019. The reason for choosing this period was the fact that the majority of visitors come to this place during this time. To achieve the purpose of this study, sample participants were purposefully selected for interview from the pilgrims. The semi-structured interview was forwarded to a total of twenty (20) pilgrims. The majority (8) were from Amhara region, while 6 participants were Tigri pilgrims, 6 were the Oromo pilgrims. Moreover, a slightly higher number of participants were female (11).

Furthermore, four key informants (two were Tourism bureau officials of Lalibela town, and the other two were priests of the Church), personal observation and document reviews were employed to collect data. In addition, one FGD, containing eight pilgrim discussants was held to elicit group ideas about the issue. Both the interview and FGD guiding questions were

formulated with semi-structured responses in order to obtain diverse but targeted results.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis must be a simultaneous process in a qualitative research (Cresswell, 2003). Thus, the data collected from participants were organized based on the objective of the study and analyzed through thematic analysis. The researcher, therefore, employed thematic method of data analysis with its generic steps.

Results and Discussions

The objective of this study was to investigate the role of pilgrimage for the peace of pilgrims in the study area. To achieve this objective, the researcher reviewed and consulted the existing literature regarding peace, religious teachings, as well as consulting experts' priests, tourism officials, and pilgrims about the types of peace that the pilgrimage provides for pilgrims. To this end, the study identified two major peace of pilgrims: inner and outer peace.

The Role of Pilgrimage for the Inner peace of Pilgrims

The participants of the study explained that their pilgrimage to the st. Lalibela Rock hewn churches provides them with an inner peace via detaching themselves from the material world. Likewise, Kenneth Kraft (1949), inner peace is achieved through detaching the self from the material world. The author further argues that love and compassion are the basis for inner peace.

Moreover, according to Norman (1966), purification of desires and motives, the relinquishment of the feeling of separateness and negative feelings are the steps for making the inner peace. Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to have emotional healing, to be liberated from their own fear, and avoid worrying (Griffin, 2017). Likewise, the participants of this study put the following inner peace as a result of their pilgrimage to st. Lalibela Rock hewn churches of Ethiopia.

Avoiding of Anxiety

It is commonly known that anxiety is one of the enemies of inner peace. Analogously, a priest key informant argued that “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith; and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.” Though anxiety is both a common and serious problem, pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to avoid their anxiety through different mechanisms of God teachings.

The first way is via learning God’s promise of peace during their pilgrimage time. According to a priest, the pilgrims were preached about how Jesus offers His peace to His disciples so they need not be troubled or afraid. Thus, the pilgrims realized that a peace that Jesus provides is a real peace. Therefore, as to the participants, making pilgrimage to st. Lalibel rock hewn churches helped them to be free from their anxiety.

The second way is through learning of God’s solution for peace. The pilgrims were able to learn that they could avoid their anxiety through prioritizing God other than other things. Similarly, as to the participants of the study, making pilgrimage to the sacred place is the manifestation of their prioritizing of God that can help them to avoid anxiety.

The other way of avoiding anxiety was through developing their faith to God via praying. In line with this idea, a priest stated that “praying about everything with a thankful heart helps the pilgrims to be free from anxiety.” The pilgrims, especially who were motivated by religious motives were able to pray about their everything survival with a very thankful heart and that cultivates inner peace for their soul via avoiding anxiety.

In a nutshell, pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to avoid anxiety with the help of God and His promise to the sacred churches. Pilgrimage has reconciled the pilgrims back to the God of peace. It has taught the pilgrims how to enjoy true peace of mind by avoiding anxiety.

Healing from Sin

The pilgrimage helps pilgrims to achieve their inner peace through healing of their sin. A priest in the churches explained that “the Church endowed with divine healing power.” Therefore, by making pilgrimage to the sacred place, the pilgrims believed that they can be clean from their sin through praying and telling the truth for the churches. A priest argued that “sin is the moral depravity that results from wrong acts”. For him, sin is the way of making soul dirty which can be cleaned via making pilgrimage to sacred places and making pray there. Similarly, the pilgrims argued that “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” This shows that how God is merciful in that He always healing us irrespective of our sinful acts if we are going to the sacred places and pray there.

Analogously, as to the participants, why they went to the holy place is to be healed by God. John (3:17) reads that “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” This shows that God come to this sinner world to healed us, now it is our time to go, make pilgrimage, to the sacred place, a place where God’s spirit is manifested, to be healed from our sin.

Relinquishment of Self will

Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to relinquish their self-will. The Bible warns pilgrims that if they do not have self- control, they will be slaves to what controls them. This shows how much controlling one’s self is the very foundation for living a life of selflessness that reflects Jesus and brings glory to God. According to a priest key informant, there are two ways of life: God’s way and Satan’s way. With the help of God’s spirit, we must choose God’s will. Choosing self-will is rebellion against God. A big part of what the pilgrims learn from their pilgrimage is being willing to give up their own self-will and instead make God’s will their own. A pilgrim participant explained the biblical teachings that make him to relinquish his self-will in the following manner:

During my pilgrimage to the rock hewn churches of Lalibela, there were different biblical teachings that make me to relinquish my self-will. Thus, give for the needy, you will be given, nothing is yours in this uncertain world; none of your wealth will follow you at time of your death, and if you have two, give one for the needy. These and other religious teachings at the time of my pilgrimage to the sacred place make me to put my self-will aside and think for others wellbeing which produced high moral satisfaction in the history of my life (a 35 age of pilgrim).

The above explanations depicted that the pilgrimage produced moral satisfaction for the pilgrims via making them to relinquish their self-will due to the lessons they got from the biblical teachings during their pilgrimage time. In turn, this shows how much the pilgrims are opting God's will over their personal will as a result of their pilgrimage to the rock hewn churches of Lalibela.

Relinquishment of Separateness

Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to forget their aloneness. When people are making pilgrimage in groups, they did not feel their separateness. In a pilgrimage, no matter how the pilgrims are not known one another, they simply communicate and are friendly of each other via trusting. A pilgrim from the study area argued in the following way:

I am living alone at my home. Thus, I always feel that I am helpless and separated. However, when I come to here, st. lalibela rock hewn churches, I have forgotten my separateness. Here, people are friendly. All pilgrims are helping one another. We all have the sense of belongingness and oneness. Therefore, the pilgrimage helps me to forget my separateness and cultivates a sense of togetherness with others (a 45 age of woman pilgrim).

On the other hand, a priest argued that "draw near to God and He will draw near to you." It is this what the pilgrims are doing, they draw near to God by making a pilgrimage to the sacred

place and God draws near to them that produces pleasure for the pilgrims by avoiding their sense of separateness. As to the pilgrims, God is a God of relationship and community. That is evident in His very nature. He is the threesome -three in one; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. This signifies that God never leave pilgrims alone but they are designed to be in community with God and with one another.

In a nutshell, making pilgrimage to the rock hewn churches of St. Lalibela provides pilgrims with the ways of avoiding their feeling of separateness. The first way is via connecting with God. During the pilgrimage, the pilgrims were able to read holy books, praying, participating in worship and unity which all makes them to forget their separateness through drawing to God. Secondly, the pilgrimage enables pilgrims to be connected with fellow pilgrims. So, the pilgrims developed trusted friendships that can help them to forget their feeling of separateness.

Relinquishment of Negative Feelings

Making pilgrimage to the sacred site helps pilgrims to avoid pessimistic feelings like disbelief, despair and sadness. Instead the pilgrims are able to produce positive feelings such as faith, hope, love, joy, and peace. Likewise, one of the FGD discussants explained how his pilgrimage to st.Lalibela Rock hewn Churches enabled him to forget his negative feelings in the following manner:

It was during my despair and sadness time that I went to the rock hewn churches of Lalibela. However, my pilgrimage to the sacred place helped me to forget my sadness and despair through developing joy and hope. When I was seeing the rock hewn churches of Lalibela, really, I was surprising, how people in the 11th c can produce these magnificent rock hewn churches? I believed that it is the spirit of God, not of people in the then time can build these saint churches in this abstract and complex standard.

The above explanation shows that the pilgrimage to the sacred place of Lalibela cultivated joy and hope for those who were sad and despair in their lives for different inconveniences. In nutshell, making pilgrimage to the sacred place produced pleasure, surprise and joy for the pilgrims by avoiding sadness and despair.

Avoiding of the Worrying Habit

Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to avoid their worrying habit. A priest argued that “if you have been in the habit of worrying, let go of worry and embrace the peace that Jesus offers you.” The priest further explains worry doesn’t have the power to prevent anything bad from happening in our life. This argument clearly shows that worry is completely useless. Similarly, Matthew (6:25-34) reads that “I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.” This explanation depicted that the heavenly God knows what we people are in need of. Thus, the pilgrims were thought about the ways how to avoid their worrying habit during their pilgrimage.

The first way is praying to stop worrying. The pilgrims realized that they can avoid their worry through trust their God in prayer. The second way was being thankful. Be thankful for the things they have. According to a priest, there is nothing wrong with taking our questions and concerns to God. But we should not go to Him out of anger and demand that He work everything out the way we want. We should humbly go to Him in prayer, with a thankful heart, and ask Him to give us that peace will open our minds to understand and accept His plan. The third way is via understanding that worry is not from God. The pilgrims realized that God is not the source of worry but love and peace. The basis of their worry ultimately comes back to the fact that they are not trusting God. In sum, making pilgrimage to the sacred churches of Lalibela helps the pilgrims to be free from worry through praying to God, thanking God, and by realizing that worry is not from God.

Avoiding of the Anger and the Fear Habit

Making pilgrimage enables the pilgrims to avoid their anger and fear habit which are the sources of sin. Likewise, as to Ephesians (4:26), God commands us not to let anger lead to sin. This preaching helps the pilgrims to work on redirecting their anger. It leads them to solutions instead of bitterness and resentment. Thus, biblical teachings during their pilgrimage helped the pilgrims to replace their anger with love and to do something positive for one’s enemy. Analogously, Romans (12:20), stated that “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink.” This shows how pilgrims were preached to love their enemies and doing positive that in turn provides them with inner peace.

In addition to avoiding their anger habit, making pilgrimage to the sacred place provides the pilgrims with courage and avoids their fear habit. The orthodox Bible commands the disciples not to fear. Accordingly, Isaiah (43:1) stated that “Don’t fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine.” It is in this way that the pilgrims were preached during their pilgrimage time. The Pilgrim FGD discussants argued that “We belong to an all-powerful, all-knowing, victorious father who cares deeply about us.” When we contemplate this truth, the pilgrimage makes the pilgrims to rely on their God and enhances their commitment of believing God that never let them to fear.

Generally, making pilgrimage to st. Lalibela rock hewn churches of Ethiopia cultivates an inner peace for the pilgrims. The pilgrims avoid the enemies of inner peace, discussed above, through making pilgrimage to the sacred place with the help of God’s promise to the holy place. All in all, the pilgrims were able to achieve their inner peace via strengthened their relationship with the divine by making pilgrimage to St.Lalibela rock hewn Churches of Ethiopia.

The Role of Pilgrimage for the Outer Peace of Pilgrims

In addition to the inner peace, there is the outer peace in which the pilgrimage cultivates for the pilgrims in the study area. According to Loreta

and Jasmin (2010), the major themes of outer peace are human dignity, non-prejudice and tolerance, non-violence, challenging the war system, resolving conflicts, caring for the environment, and sharing of the earth's resources. Likewise, the pilgrims in the study area stated that their pilgrimage to the sacred place provides them with the following outer peace.

Upholding Human Dignity

Making pilgrimage helped pilgrims to develop the principle of human dignity. The principle of human dignity is rooted in the belief that God creates human beings in His image. Analogously, pilgrim FGD discussants argued that "Human dignity is an inalienable essential part of every human being and is an intrinsic quality of the human person". Furthermore, a pilgrim interviewee stated that "Human beings are qualitatively different from any other living being in the world because they are capable of knowing and loving God, unlike any other creature. Therefore, we all pilgrims in this sacred place are dignified one another". This shows how belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of human morality.

According to a priest, the foundational concepts for the vision of Human Dignity are emanated from both the Biblical and theological visions of the human person. While the biblical vision of the human person argues the human person is made in the image and likeness of God, the theological vision states that the principle of human dignity rests on a foundation of faith which affirms that God is the source and creator of all life. This signifies how the human person is morally responsible for the protection of human dignity in that doing well and avoiding evil is the quality of us human beings.

In nutshell, the pilgrims in the study area were able to realize the foundation of human dignity through the religious teachings during their pilgrimage time. As mentioned in the above, the pilgrims from different parts of the country were respected and dignified one another via thinking that all humans are created in the image of God

so that no one is better than others and the vice versa is true.

Challenging Prejudice and Building Tolerance

Now days, humans has become increasingly unkind towards those who differ in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, gender and socio-economic class. People are making difference as an excuse for prejudice and discrimination. Despite this reality, the pilgrimage to the sacred place helped pilgrims to avoid prejudice and build the habit of tolerance with other fellow pilgrims. The pilgrimage teaches pilgrims about tolerance of diversity. According to UNESCO (1995), tolerance is the way of acceptance, respect and appreciation of the rich diversity of cultures. Likewise, the pilgrims stated that "our pilgrimage to the rock hewn churches cultivated a lesson of tolerance in which all pilgrims from different ethnic groups and backgrounds are living harmoniously in the pilgrimage site." This signifies how avoiding hateful propaganda towards the different is important to avoid prejudice and build tolerance among pilgrims at the sacred site.

Promoting Non-Violence Behavior

Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to promote non-violence behavior. According to a priest in the study area, people have three options to counter violence. Firstly, people may choose doing nothing about the violence they encounter. But this is not the right option that people should choose. Because doing nothing for violence means perpetuation of the repressive system. Secondly, people may opt responding with violence for violence. This also perpetuates the cycle of violence and hostility. The third option that people must choose is responding violence through non-violence means. This is the preferred way of seeking justice which is recommended by orthodox Christian religious teachings.

As to the FGD discussants, non-violence is the refusal of doing harm to other humans. Similarly, according to Mohandas Gandhi, a person and

his deeds are two different things. Hate the sin but not the sinner. An eye for an eye will make the world blind. Martin Luther, in his part, explains non-violence as the way of defeat the injustice, not people. In the same fashion, the pilgrims argued that “the orthodox bible preaches us if someone slaps your left face, give your right face”. Therefore, this way of preaching makes the pilgrims to be non-violent during their pilgrimage time and even in their post pilgrimage life.

Transforming and Resolving Conflicts

Pilgrimage provides pilgrims with the ways how they can transform and resolve conflicts during their pilgrimage. Thus, the first way is through God’s teaching on marriage. Jesus taught that marriage is to be for life. He gave only one reason to dissolve a marriage, that reason is fornication (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:6-9). In so doing, the pilgrims would be able to resolve their family conflict and develop their commitment to their marriage which could be a big step toward preserving family peace.

Secondly, the pilgrims achieved the teaching of conflict resolution from and by His apostles’ teaching on family. Thus, Husbands are to love and respect their wives (Ephesians 5:25-29). Wives are to love and submit to their husbands (Timothy 2:3-4). Children are to obey and honor their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1). These all biblical verses that the pilgrims were preached at the pilgrimage site increase the commitment of the pilgrims to their families which in turn produces peace and harmony in the home.

The other importance of pilgrimage for the pilgrims was making peace with enemies. The participants explained how Jesus teaches them to make peace with enemies. God showed love toward us when we were His enemies (Romans 5:6-11). Likewise, Martin Luther King argued that “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend.” As to the words of a priest, God loves us if we can love our enemies, not friends. Analogously, as to Gandhi, it is easy enough to be friendly to one’s friends.

But to be friend with your enemy is the essence of true religion. The other is mere business. In nutshell, the above explanations help us to argue that transformed by love, enemies can become friends and the pilgrims were understood loving enemies as God loved them is the best way to have and it is one of a God-like quality that every pilgrim to have.

Sharing of Resources

The pilgrims were taught to share resources with others. Their pilgrimage preaches them that selfishness and a lack of sharing are wrong. Accordingly, true religion is “to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1: 27). Likewise, 1Jhon (3: 17-18) asked if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? These and other verse preaching for the pilgrims helped pilgrims to practically implement the concept of sharing via apportioning their resources what they had for the needy.

In sum, the pilgrims realized that they are bought by the blood of Jesus and be eager to share what He has entrusted to them, whether it is time, energy, or resources that remind them not to set their affections on things of this earth, nor store up treasures that have no eternal value. Thus, the biblical teachings during the pilgrimage time preached pilgrims that sharing keeps humble and frees them from the love of money.

Caring for the Environment

In addition to giving care for the fellow pilgrims, the pilgrimage provides a lesson for the pilgrims to give a due regard for the environment. Thus, Genesis (2:15) reads that “the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” This helps the pilgrims to recognize that all created things belong to God. A priest argued that “God commissions us to rule over the creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances his works so that all creation may fulfill the purposes God intended for it.” This

helped the pilgrims to realize that they must manage the environment not simply for their own benefit but for God's glory.

Thus, there are numerous things that the pilgrims were doing in their pilgrimage time that help protect God's creation, such as respecting the soil, protecting the trees, cleaning and reducing waste at the sacred place. With regard to how man is mandated to take care of other creatures, Genesis (1:25-28) reads in the following way:

God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

From the above explanation, the pilgrims learned that protecting the environment is a God given responsibility. Moreover, this shows that God gives man dominion over all other life on the earth, and has implicit responsibility to keep what was explicitly given to Adam. In nutshell, making pilgrimage to the sacred place cultivates the idea of environmental peace for the pilgrims.

Making Inter-Personal and Inter-Communal Linkages

Pilgrimage cultivates both inter-personal and inter-community linkages among pilgrims. Despite their differences, pilgrims were making inter-personal and inter-communal friendships. This is resulted from the biblical teaching during their journey in which Jesus said that "a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love

one another" (John 13:34). Furthermore, the pilgrimage makes pilgrims to be honest, and open their heart for other fellows in the pilgrimage. This creates real trust of one another which resulted strong inter-personal linkage.

In addition, the pilgrimage helps pilgrims to have an inter-community linkage. The pilgrims in the sacred place were come from different ethnic groups of Ethiopia such as Amhara, Oromo, Tigri etc. This shows pilgrims from different regions and ethnic groups were met together at st. Lalibela Rock Hewn Churches of Ethiopia and celebrating festivities together. Today, there is a contradiction between the Amhara ethnic groups with Tigreans, the Amharas with Oromo peoples due to ethnic based politics in Ethiopia. But, despite these contradictions, those ethnic groups were seen while they pray together, eat together and traveling together at the pilgrimage site. These shows how powerful pilgrimage is in making inter-communal linkages among communities who have certain contradictions.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to explore the role of pilgrimage for the peace of pilgrims at st. Lalibela rock hewn Churches of Ethiopia. Thus, the study revealed that pilgrimage to the sacred place helped pilgrims to achieve their inner peace of different kind. Furthermore, the pilgrims were able to wash their sin via healing in the pilgrimage site. Pilgrimage helps the pilgrims to reconcile with the God of peace. Furthermore, pilgrims were provided with different outer peace as a result of their pilgrimage to the sacred place through religious preaching. In a nutshell, pilgrimage has contributed for the peace of pilgrims via strengthened pilgrims' relationship with the Divine. Therefore, the role of pilgrimage for peace education in general and for the peace of pilgrims in particular needs to be studied in other similar sacred places of Ethiopia.

Limitations of the Study

The study is based on domestic pilgrims in that it did not take in to account the foreign pilgrims in the area. Thus, there might be some other

attributes that are also important for the peace of pilgrims. However, the findings are useful in understanding the implication of pilgrimage for peace in domestic pilgrims.

Further Studies

Further studies can be carried out to explore the political, social, health, cultural and environmental implications of pilgrimage. Furthermore, studies can be done on the role of pilgrimage for inter-ethnic and inter-state peace.

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