

**Bridging Faith and Borders: Unravelling the
Transformative Role of Women in the Arbaeen Pilgrimage**

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Abstract

The Arbaeen pilgrimage stands as one of the most significant and largest annual gatherings in the world, yet its understanding and recognition outside of Shia Islam remains limited. This paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of the Arbaeen pilgrimage, tracing its origins, evolution, and contemporary significance within the context of Shia Islam. Arbaeen marks the fortieth day after the martyrdom of Husain ibn Ali (a.s), grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in the Battle of Karbala, symbolising the eternal struggle between good and evil and serving as a pinnacle of self-sacrifice in Shia tradition.

Drawing upon historical narratives and religious texts, this research explores the sacred significance of the Arbaeen in Islam and its association with the commemoration of Imam Husain (a.s). It examines the institutionalization of the Arbaeen pilgrimage by Shia Imams, particularly during the post-Umayyad period, and its transformation into a large-scale public gathering despite initial suppression under regimes like that of Saddam Hussein.

The principal aim of this paper is to situate the participation of women in this pilgrimage, who through their participation inverse the logic of patriarchal structures which allegedly prevent them from being at the forefront. They not only participate in this pilgrimage but play a pivotal role in assisting their fellow pilgrims in the completion of the pilgrimage. In doing so, the paper also investigates the logistical aspects of the Arbaeen pilgrimage, such as the routes taken by pilgrims, the provision of free services and accommodations, and the security measures implemented to ensure safety amidst potential sectarian violence. Moreover, it analyses the political dimensions of the pilgrimage,

including its revival after the fall of Saddam Hussein and its role in symbolizing Shia defiance against terrorist oppression and extremism.

Furthermore, this research examines the Arbaeen pilgrimage as a site of solidarity and contention within the Shia community, reflecting both unity against external threats and internal rivalries. By synthesizing historical accounts, contemporary reports, and scholarly analysis, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the Arbaeen pilgrimage as a religious, cultural, and socio-political phenomenon with global implications within the Islamic world.

Keywords-Arbaeen pilgrimage, Sacred Significance, Solidarity, Women participation, Socio-political Phenomenon.

Introduction

The martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s) remains a poignant and timeless symbol of the struggle for righteousness and justice. In the face of Yazeed's tyranny, Hussain Ibn Ali (a.s) emerged as a beacon of humanity, championing the cause of the oppressed and embodying the principles of truth and integrity. Even though centuries have passed, the legacy of the seventy-two martyrs of Karbala endures, inspiring people around the world to uphold Hussain's (a.s) teachings and defend the oppressed.

The Arbaeen pilgrimage holds profound significance within Shia culture, serving as a sacred journey of devotion and love to honour Imam Hussain's (a.s) sacrifice. Pilgrims from diverse backgrounds and beliefs converge on Karbala, united in their reverence for Hussain (a.s) and his message. This pilgrimage transcends boundaries of nationality, religion, and sect, symbolizing the universal appeal of Hussain's (a.s) legacy as a unifying force

for humanity.

People of all ages and walks of life participate in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, demonstrating the inclusive nature of Hussain's (a.s) message. Women, children, the elderly, and those with physical challenges make the journey to Imam Hussain's (a.s) shrine, highlighting the universal significance of his sacrifice.

The Arbaeen pilgrimage is not merely a religious ritual but a manifestation of deeply rooted Shia values, reflecting the teachings of the Imams and the principles of compassion, justice, and solidarity. Through their pilgrimage, participants become witnesses and protectors of Hussain's (a.s) martyrdom, embodying the spirit of Hussainiyat - a school of thought that advocates for justice and opposes oppression.

In essence, the Arbaeen pilgrimage serves as a powerful expression of faith, unity, and devotion, reaffirming the enduring legacy of Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions. It is a testament to the timeless resonance of Hussain's message and his unwavering commitment to truth and righteousness in the face of adversity.

Significance of Ziyarat in Shia Islam

Ziyarat, rooted in Arabic, encompasses a profound spiritual journey that extends beyond mere physical travel. At its core, it involves visiting sacred sites, particularly the shrines of revered religious figures like prophets, saints, and martyrs. However, Ziyarat is not just about reaching a destination; it's about connecting with the divine presence associated with these sites.

For Shia Muslims, Ziyarat holds deep significance as a spiritual pilgrimage to the shrines of the Holy Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt

(the family of the Prophet). It symbolizes a journey of faith where believers seek inspiration, purification, and guidance from these revered personalities of Islam. Through Ziyarat, individuals aim to cleanse themselves physically and spiritually, reflecting on their lives and seeking forgiveness for their shortcomings.

The rewards for undertaking Ziyarat, especially visiting the shrine of Imam Hussain (a.s), are believed to be immense, with promises of paradise for those who embark on this pilgrimage. During the sacred month of Rajab, believers are encouraged to undertake this blessed journey, drawing closer to the divine and seeking blessings from the holy shrines.

Ziyarat goes beyond a mere physical journey; it's a transformative experience that touches the soul of the pilgrim. It serves as a reminder of the eternal connection between believers and the divine presence of the Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt. As individuals embark on this sacred journey, they seek spiritual nourishment, guidance, and blessings, enriching their faith and strengthening their connection with God.

In the company of these holy personalities, believers find solace, inspiration, and a renewed sense of purpose, reaffirming their commitment to the path of righteousness. Thus, Ziyarat is not just a ritual but a deeply meaningful practice that deepens one's faith and spirituality.

Significance of Arbaeen Ziyarat

Arbaeen Ziyarat holds profound significance within Shia Islam, particularly among followers of the Ahlul-Bayt. Arbaeen marks the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s), the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), at the Battle of Karbala. The pilgrimage to Imam Hussain's (a.s) shrine in Karbala on Arbaeen is one of the largest annual gatherings in the world,

drawing millions of pilgrims from various parts of the globe.

The significance of Arbaeen Ziyarat lies in several aspects:

Commemoration and Remembrance: Arbaeen Ziyarat is a solemn occasion to honour and remember the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions, who stood against tyranny and injustice. It serves as a powerful reminder of the values of justice, righteousness, and selflessness upheld by Imam Hussain (a.s), inspiring believers to emulate his virtues in their own lives.

Spiritual Renewal and Reflection: The pilgrimage to Karbala on Arbaeen provides a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal and reflection. Pilgrims engage in acts of worship, recitation of prayers, and reflection on the teachings of the Ahlul-Bayt. The journey fosters a deep connection with the spiritual legacy of Imam Hussain (a.s) and encourages believers to recommit themselves to the path of righteousness and piety.

Unity and Solidarity: Arbaeen Ziyarat is a symbol of unity and solidarity among Shia Muslims and beyond. Regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or social status, millions of pilgrims come together in a display of solidarity, demonstrating the universal appeal of Imam Hussain's message of justice and compassion. The pilgrimage fosters a sense of community and brotherhood, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Witness to Resistance: Arbaeen Ziyarat also serves as a powerful expression of resistance against oppression and tyranny. The sheer magnitude of the pilgrimage, despite challenges and obstacles, reaffirms the enduring relevance of Imam Hussain's struggle and the continued

demand for justice and freedom in the face of adversity.

Overall, Arbaeen Ziyarat is a deeply significant and spiritually enriching event that reinforces the enduring legacy of Imam Hussain (a.s) and the principles for which he sacrificed his life. It is a testament to the resilience, devotion, and unwavering commitment of believers to uphold the values of justice, compassion, and righteousness.

Importance of Arbaeen Pilgrimage in Shia Imams Hadiths

The significance of visiting the shrine of Imam Hussain (a.s) and the rewards associated with it are emphasized in numerous hadiths narrated by Shia Imams. These hadiths highlight the spiritual benefits and blessings bestowed upon pilgrims who undertake the journey to Imam Hussain's (a.s) shrine, particularly during the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

Imam Baqir (a.s) underscores the abundance of rewards granted by Allah (swt) to the pilgrims of Imam Hussain (a.s), suggesting that if people truly understood the magnitude of these rewards, they would be overwhelmed with excitement and enthusiasm. Imam Sadiq (a.s) further emphasizes the divine blessings bestowed upon those who visit the shrine of Imam Hussain (a.s), equating the rewards to those performing both Hajj and Umrah, two significant pilgrimages to the Kaaba.

Moreover, Imam Sadiq (a.s) stresses the importance of visiting the grave of the oppressed, referring to Imam Hussain (a.s), and highlights the significance of this act for those seeking paradise as their ultimate abode. The hadith attributed to Imam Hassan al-Askari (a.s) identifies visiting the shrine of Imam Hussain (a.s) on Arbaeen as one of the signs of faith, alongside other religious practices. This underscores the importance of the Arbaeen pilgrimage in Shia Islam, drawing millions of devotees from various faith backgrounds to pay homage to Imam Hussain (a.s).

The Arbaeen pilgrimage serves as a manifestation of the teachings and values upheld by Imam Hussain (a.s), particularly the principles of help, dedication, and resistance against oppression and tyranny. The generosity and communal spirit displayed by the Iraqi people during this pilgrimage exemplify the ideals of Imam Hussain's message, fostering a society characterized by unity, compassion, and solidarity.

Imam Hussain's (a.s) sacrifice serves as a powerful example for humanity, highlighting the importance of standing against injustice and oppression, regardless of one's background or status. His legacy inspires individuals to strive for a world characterized by peace, justice, and compassion, where every individual is valued and respected.

Ultimately, the lessons derived from Imam Hussain's sacrifice and the Arbaeen pilgrimage transcend religious and cultural boundaries, offering a universal message of hope, resilience, and the pursuit of righteousness.

The History of Arbaeen

The historical significance of the Arbaeen pilgrimage, particularly in Shia culture, is deeply rooted in the commemoration of Imam Hussain's (a.s) sacrifice at the Battle of Karbala. The journey to Karbala to pay homage to Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions has evolved into a cornerstone of Shia faith and a manifestation of profound devotion and love.

Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, a companion of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), is believed to be one of the earliest pilgrims to visit the grave of Imam Hussain (a.s). His pilgrimage symbolizes the enduring reverence and devotion shown by followers of the Ahlul-Bayt towards Imam Hussain (a.s) and his legacy.

The Arbaeen pilgrimage draws devotees from diverse backgrounds, including men, women, children, the elderly, and the physically challenged, transcending boundaries of nationality, religion, and sect. It serves as a unifying force, bringing together people from different ideologies under the banner of Imam Hussain's (a.s) message of justice and compassion.

Many pilgrims undertake the journey to Karbala on foot, walking long distances from cities like Najaf to reach the shrine of Imam Hussain (a.s). This physical exertion is seen as a testament to their love and devotion, guided by the spiritual pull of "Ishq Hussain," the love for Imam Hussain (a.s).

The hospitality extended by the people of Iraq towards pilgrims during the Arbaeen pilgrimage is noteworthy. Iraqi families open their homes and provide food, shelter, and other necessities to the visitors, considering it an honour to serve the pilgrims of Imam Hussain. This generosity reflects the spirit of selflessness and compassion embodied by Imam Hussain himself.

Women play a significant role in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, actively participating in providing services to pilgrims alongside men and children. Their involvement challenges societal norms and promotes the assimilation of women into communal activities, breaking barriers of gender inequality.

Overall, the Arbaeen pilgrimage is not just a physical journey but a spiritual experience filled with devotion, love, and solidarity. It symbolizes the timeless legacy of Imam Hussain and his eternal message of standing against oppression and injustice, inspiring millions of believers worldwide to uphold the values of compassion, unity, and selflessness.

Lady Zeinab (AS) as a Beacon of Arbaeen Tradition

Hazrat Zainab (a.s) indeed transcends her familial roles to become a symbol of resilience, courage, and empowerment for all women. Her unwavering commitment to justice and truth, even in the face of adversity, serves as a timeless inspiration.

Following her release from captivity by Yazid, Zainab (a.s) returned to Karbala on the day of Arbaeen, hoping to find some trace of her beloved brother Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions. Despite the devastation of the battlefield, Zainab (a.s) carried with her the belief that one day a shrine would be erected in honour of Hussain and his followers, a place where people could pay homage to their sacrifice.

Over time, despite attempts by rulers to suppress the memory of Hussain and destroy his shrine, the number of pilgrims visiting Karbala continued to grow. Zainab's (a.s) faith and perseverance, coupled with the enduring love and devotion of Hussain's (a.s) Shia followers, ensured that his legacy would not be forgotten.

The pilgrimage to Imam Hussain's (a.s) shrine on Arbaeen is a testament to Zainab's (a.s) enduring influence and the universal appeal of Hussain's (a.s) message of justice and compassion. It is a reminder that the sacrifices made by Hussain and his companions continue to resonate across generations, inspiring people from all walks of life to stand against oppression and uphold the values of truth, righteousness, and humanity.

Review of Literature:

Manveer Singh, "Arbaeen - Heaven on Earth (Arbaeen Ziyarat)" (2020): Singh's book provides a firsthand account of the author's

experience during the Arbaeen pilgrimage in 2019, documenting the journey from Najaf to Karbala. Through vivid imagery and personal reflections, Singh captures the spiritual essence of the pilgrimage, emphasizing acts of service and solidarity among pilgrims. The book serves as a testament to the transformative power of the pilgrimage experience and the profound impact it has on participants.

Umme Salma Mujtaba Husein, “A phenomenological study of Arbaeen foot pilgrimage in Iraq” (2018): Husein’s study explores the motivations and experiences of foot pilgrims during the Arbaeen pilgrimage, employing a phenomenological approach. The findings highlight the significance of perpetual rituals and societal concerns as driving factors for participants. The study underscores the religious, bodily, and humanitarian aspects of the pilgrimage experience, offering insights for future planning and policy development.

Ian Reader, “Pilgrimage growth in the modern world: Meanings and implications” (2007): Reader’s article examines the contemporary growth of pilgrimages worldwide, with a focus on examples from diverse religious traditions. The article highlights the modern factors contributing to pilgrimage growth, including the emergence of new pilgrimage sites and the repudiation of organized religion by some modern pilgrims. The reader’s analysis sheds light on the evolving nature of pilgrimage practices in the modern era.

Soodeh Mansouri, “Arbaeen Walk: From Sectarian Ritual to Global Pilgrimage Modification in Interpretation & Function” (2024): Mansouri’s text explores the evolution of the Arbaeen pilgrimage from a sectarian ritual to a global phenomenon with cultural, socio-political, and religious significance. The text traces the historical context of the pilgrimage and its transformation following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Mansouri argues that the pilgrimage’s immense scale and inclusivity reflect its

broader cultural, social, and political dimensions.

Tahereh Khazaei, Mohammadtaghi Karami Ghahi, “From De Ritualization to Ritualization: The Arbaeen Walk Based on the Experience of Female Iranian Pilgrims” (2024): Khazaei and Ghahi’s paper examines the Arbaeen pilgrimage from the perspective of female Iranian pilgrims, employing thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. The study identifies key themes, including the pilgrim’s body, identification with historical suffering, and the feeling of sin. The paper highlights the ritualization of the Arbaeen pilgrimage and its significance for participants.

Alex Shams, “The Politics of Arbaeen: Transcending Militarized Urbanism in Iraq’s Shrine Cities” (2023): Shams’ article explores the political dimensions of the Arbaeen pilgrimage in post-invasion Iraq, emphasizing its role as a space of solidarity and resistance. The article contrasts the militarized urbanism imposed by external forces with the inclusive ethos of the pilgrimage. Shams argues that Arbaeen offers a vision of alternative urbanism grounded in equality and communal care.

Sophia Rose Arjana, “Pilgrimage in Islam: Traditional and Modern Practices” (2017): Arjana’s work expands the discourse on Islamic pilgrimage beyond the traditional focus on Hajj, highlighting the significance of lesser-known pilgrimages like Arbaeen. By exploring diverse pilgrimage practices within Islam, Arjana challenges common assumptions and promotes inclusivity in scholarly discourse. Her work enriches our understanding of the diverse religious expressions within Islam.

Overall, the reviewed literature offers valuable insights into the Arbaeen pilgrimage, spanning from personal narratives to scholarly analyses. These works collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the pilgrimage’s significance, its evolution over time, and its broader

socio-political implications.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study aimed to comprehensively investigate the participation of women in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, focusing on their roles, experiences, and the broader significance of their involvement. The principal aim was to challenge patriarchal structures by highlighting the active participation of women in this religious journey and to understand the dynamics of their engagement. The study utilized qualitative methods, primarily through in-depth interviews with 50 Shia Muslim women who had undertaken the Arbaeen pilgrimage on foot from Najaf to Karbala.

Sampling Strategy: Purposive sampling was employed to gather information from women aged between 20 and 55, belonging to the middle class, and who had participated in the Arbaeen pilgrimage at least once or at most four times. The selection criteria aimed to capture diverse perspectives while ensuring a focus on women with direct experience of the pilgrimage.

Data Collection: Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in Lucknow and Delhi, focusing on participants' motivations, challenges, roles during the pilgrimage, experiences of assisting fellow pilgrims, interactions with other female pilgrims, and reflections on the significance of the journey. The qualitative approach allowed for a detailed exploration of participants' narratives and perspectives, enriching the understanding of their lived experiences.

Analysis and Key Findings of Research

The following section presents a detailed examination of the data gathered during the research study, aiming to identify and uncover insights and trends relevant to my research question that shed light on my research objectives. These are-

1-Why did you go on the Arbaeen pilgrimage?

Response-Shia women participate in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, alongside men, due to its profound religious, cultural, and spiritual significance in Shia Islam. Honouring the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (a.s), the pilgrimage serves as a devout expression of faith and a commemoration of his sacrifice. Additionally, it fosters a sense of community and solidarity among Shia Muslims, providing women with a platform to connect with fellow believers and strengthen their bonds within the faith. Beyond communal unity, the pilgrimage offers an opportunity for spiritual purification, reflection, and the seeking of blessings and intercession, aligning with the core tenets of Shia belief and practice. Therefore, women partake in the Arbaeen pilgrimage to engage deeply with their religious heritage, nurture their spiritual growth, and reaffirm their devotion to Imam Hussein (a.s) and the Shia tradition.

2-Did you face any kind of difficulty while doing the Arbaeen pilgrimage?

Response: The spiritual significance of the pilgrimage, and the devotion of participants often serve as sources of strength, enabling women to overcome obstacles and fully engage in this deeply meaningful religious journey.

3-What was your role as a woman in this pilgrimage?

Response: The role of women in the Arbaeen pilgrimage is multifaceted and significant. While the specific roles may vary depending on cultural and personal circumstances, women play essential roles in various aspects of the pilgrimage. Overall, women play diverse and integral roles in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, contributing to its spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions while embodying the values of faith, compassion, and solidarity.

4-How many old women or physically weak women did you help in this pilgrimage?

Response: It is common for volunteers and fellow pilgrims to offer assistance to those in need, including older individuals and those with physical limitations. This assistance may range from providing physical support, such as helping them walk or navigate crowded areas, to offering emotional support and ensuring their well-being throughout the journey. The spirit of communal support and solidarity during the Arbaeen pilgrimage often results in many women, regardless of age or physical condition, receiving the help they need to participate in this significant religious event.

5-How did you feel about helping women?

Response: Women pilgrims who assist others during the Arbaeen pilgrimage likely experience a sense of fulfilment, empathy, and solidarity. By offering support to fellow pilgrims, especially women who may be older or physically weak, they embody the values of compassion and community central to the pilgrimage experience. This act

of service allows them to connect with others on a deeper level, fostering bonds of empathy and understanding across diverse backgrounds and circumstances. Additionally, assisting others may strengthen their sense of purpose and spirituality, as they actively embody the teachings of compassion and selflessness inherent in the pilgrimage journey. Overall, helping women during the Arbaeen pilgrimage is likely to evoke feelings of empathy, solidarity, and spiritual fulfilment among women pilgrims, enriching their own experience of the pilgrimage.

6-Would you like to give some message to the upcoming pilgrims?

Response: The message from women who have participated in the Arbaeen pilgrimage have emphasizes the importance of embracing the journey with compassion, resilience, and a commitment to spreading peace and unity. Top of Form

7-Did you interact with female pilgrims from another country?

Response: Yes, women pilgrims often interact with female pilgrims from other countries during the Arbaeen walk. The pilgrimage to Karbala for Arbaeen attracts millions of Shia Muslims from around the world, creating a diverse and vibrant community of pilgrims. Women from different countries may come together during the journey, sharing stories, experiences, and prayers as they walk towards the holy city of Karbala. These interactions foster a sense of camaraderie, unity, and solidarity among female pilgrims, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences. Such exchanges can be deeply enriching, allowing

women to connect with others who share their faith and devotion to Imam Hussein, strengthening their bonds as members of the global Shia Muslim **community**.

8-Do you think Hazrat Zainab (a.s) had any contribution for this form of Arbaeen?

Response: Women pilgrims of Arbaeen often recognize Hazrat Zainab's (a.s) significant contribution to the commemoration and preservation of the tragedy of Karbala, which plays a crucial role in the observance of Arbaeen. Hazrat Zainab (a.s), the sister of Imam Hussein (a.s), played a pivotal role in conveying the message of Karbala to the wider Muslim community through her eloquent sermons and steadfastness in the face of adversity. Her courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to justice have inspired generations of Shia Muslims, including women pilgrims participating in the Arbaeen pilgrimage. Many women pilgrims see Hazrat Zainab (a.s) as a symbol of female empowerment and leadership, whose actions and teachings continue to resonate profoundly during the Arbaeen pilgrimage and beyond. Therefore, they acknowledge her enduring influence on the commemoration of Arbaeen and the perpetuation of the values of truth, justice, and devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet Muhammad).

9-Did you feel excluded from any front in the Arbaeen pilgrimage being a woman?

Response: While women pilgrims play significant roles in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, there may be instances where they feel excluded or face challenges due to their gender. In some contexts, cultural norms or logistical limitations may result in women having less visibility or

access to certain areas during the pilgrimage. For example, crowded spaces or limited facilities could present challenges for women in terms of safety, comfort, or accessibility. Additionally, there may be instances where women's voices and perspectives are not fully represented or heard within the broader pilgrimage community. Despite these challenges, many women pilgrims actively participate in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, finding ways to navigate and overcome obstacles while contributing meaningfully to the commemoration of Imam Hussein's martyrdom. Efforts to address gender inclusivity and ensure the full participation of women in all aspects of the pilgrimage experience are ongoing and important for fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment for all pilgrims.

10-How many kilometres did you walk in a day?

Response: The distance women walk each day during the Arbaeen pilgrimage from Najaf to Karbala can vary depending on various factors, including their physical condition, pace, and rest stops. The distance between Najaf and Karbala is approximately 80 kilo meters (about 50 miles), and the pilgrimage typically takes several days to complete on foot. Some women may walk shorter distances each day, while others may cover longer distances, depending on their circumstances and preferences. Additionally, factors such as weather conditions and crowd density along the route can also influence the pace of the pilgrimage. Overall, women pilgrims often undertake a challenging journey, walking significant distances each day to reach their destination in Karbala and participate in the commemoration of Arbaeen.

11-Did you help each other in the Mowkib?

Response: Yes, women pilgrims often help each other in Mowkib (rest areas) during the Arbaeen pilgrimage. Mowkibs are temporary camps or facilities set up along the pilgrimage route where pilgrims can rest, eat, and receive various services. In these communal spaces, women pilgrims may offer assistance to one another in various ways, such as sharing food and water, providing emotional support, helping with basic needs, and looking out for each other's well-being. The spirit of solidarity and mutual support is an integral part of the Arbaeen pilgrimage experience, and women pilgrims frequently engage in acts of kindness and cooperation within the Mowkib as they journey together towards Karbala.

12-What message does Arbaeen give you?

1. **Response:** Arbaeen carries several powerful messages for women participating in the pilgrimage:
2. **Strength in adversity:** Arbaeen commemorates the resilience and steadfastness of Imam Hussein (a.s) and his companions in the face of oppression and injustice. For women, this serves as a reminder of their strength and resilience in overcoming challenges and standing firm in the face of adversity.
3. **Community and solidarity:** The massive turnout for Arbaeen demonstrates the power of communal unity and solidarity. Women participating in the pilgrimage are reminded of the strength that comes from coming together with fellow believers, supporting one another, and fostering a sense of community.

4. Empowerment and agency: Arbaeen celebrates the legacy of figures like Hazrat Zainab (a.s), who played a crucial role in preserving and propagating the message of Karbala. Women are inspired to embrace their own agency and leadership roles, recognizing their ability to make meaningful contributions to their communities and society at large.

5. Spiritual devotion: Arbaeen is a deeply spiritual experience for participants, offering an opportunity for reflection, prayer, and connection with the Divine. Women are encouraged to deepen their spiritual practice and devotion, drawing inspiration from the teachings and sacrifices of Imam Hussein (a.s) and his family.

6. Social justice and compassion: The message of Arbaeen extends beyond religious boundaries to encompass themes of social justice, compassion, and empathy. Women pilgrims are called to embody these values in their interactions with others, advocating for justice and compassion in their communities and the wider world.

7. Overall, Arbaeen provides women with a powerful platform for spiritual growth, communal solidarity, and empowerment, while also imparting timeless lessons of resilience, compassion, and social justice. Top of Form Bottom of Form

13-What is the social, cultural, and political significance of the Arbaeen pilgrimage for women in the contemporary era?

1. Response: In the contemporary era, the Arbaeen pilgrimage continues to hold significant social, cultural, and political significance

for women. I have gathered the responses from women as follows:

2. Social significance: Arbaeen serves as a powerful platform for women to connect, bond, and express their religious devotion in a communal setting. In an increasingly interconnected world, the pilgrimage offers women the opportunity to form diverse networks, share experiences, and build solidarity across cultural and geographical boundaries. It provides a space for women to assert their agency, voice their concerns, and advocate for issues that are important to them within the context of their faith community.

3. Cultural significance: Arbaeen remains deeply ingrained in Shia Islamic culture and tradition, serving as a means of preserving and transmitting religious and cultural heritage to future generations. In the contemporary era, women play an active role in shaping and evolving the cultural practices associated with the pilgrimage, incorporating new forms of expression, technology, and communication into the tradition. The pilgrimage serves as a dynamic cultural phenomenon that continues to evolve and adapt to changing social and technological landscapes while retaining its core spiritual and historical significance.

4. Political significance: In the contemporary era, the Arbaeen pilgrimage has become increasingly politicized, with participants using the event as a platform for political expression and activism. Women, like men, engage in political discourse and advocacy during the pilgrimage, raising awareness about social justice issues, human rights violations, and political oppression affecting their communities. The sheer scale and visibility of the Arbaeen pilgrimage make it a potent tool for political mobiliza-

tion and protest, challenging existing power structures and advocating for change.

5. Overall, in the contemporary era, the Arbaeen pilgrimage continues to serve as a multifaceted phenomenon with profound social, cultural, and political significance for women. It provides a space for women to assert their identities, express their beliefs, and advocate for their rights within the context of their religious community, while also contributing to broader social and political movements for change.

14-What aspect of the Arbaeen pilgrimage would you like to explore further?

Response: One intriguing aspect of the Arbaeen pilgrimage is the diverse participation of people from various backgrounds, religions, and cultures. It's fascinating to explore how individuals from different parts of the world come together to pay homage to Imam Hussain (a.s) and participate in this deeply spiritual journey. Additionally, the logistical aspects of organizing such a massive pilgrimage, including accommodation, transportation, and crowd management, offer insights into the dedication and effort put forth by both pilgrims and local communities.

Significance of present Research:

The research methodology and analysis offer valuable insights into the participation of women in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, shedding light on their roles, experiences, and the broader significance of their involvement. By citing the narratives of women pilgrims, the study enriches our understanding of their contributions to this religious tradition and underscores the need for gender-inclusive approaches in religious practices and rituals.

The research underscores the importance of recognizing and amplifying the voices and experiences of women in religious practices traditionally dominated by patriarchal structures. By challenging gender norms and actively participating in the Arbaeen pilgrimage, women assert their agency, resilience, and commitment to their faith. Moreover, the study highlights the broader social, cultural, and political significance of the pilgrimage for women in the contemporary era, serving as a platform for cultural expression, solidarity, and activism.

Conclusion

The Arbaeen pilgrimage represents more than a mere religious journey; it symbolizes a profound testament to the enduring legacy of Imam Hussain (a.s) and the timeless values he embodied. As Shia Muslims converge on Karbala to honour his sacrifice, they also manifest the principles of unity, compassion, and resistance against oppression that Imam Hussain exemplified.

Women, in particular, play a crucial role in perpetuating these values during the pilgrimage. Their acts of solidarity and compassion transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, reflecting the universal message

of Imam Hussain’s sacrifice. Through their selfless assistance to fellow pilgrims, irrespective of differences, women embody the essence of the pilgrimage—an embodiment of unity and communal support.

Central to the pilgrimage narrative is the defiance against oppression, epitomized by Imam Hussain’s (a.s) stand at Karbala. His message resonates universally, inspiring individuals to confront injustice and uphold the sanctity of human life. This ethos of resistance against tyranny is not confined to history but reverberates through contemporary struggles for justice and equality worldwide.

Lady Zeinab (a.s), Imam Hussain’s (a.s) sister, emerges as a timeless symbol of resilience and activism. Her unwavering courage in the face of adversity serves as a beacon for women, reminding them of their potential to effect societal change and uphold principles of justice and enlightenment.

In conclusion, the Arbaeen pilgrimage transcends religious boundaries to embody universal values of compassion, unity, and resistance against oppression. It stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Imam Hussain and the timeless message he imparted—an ethos that continues to inspire individuals worldwide to strive for a more just, compassionate, and united world.

Labbaik Ya Hussain

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