

The Walk of Allegiance – Arbæen

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Abstract

This paper explores the profound connection between cultural identity and the preservation of stories and rituals, focusing on the enduring significance of Imam Hussain's martyrdom in Islamic history. Stories serve as vessels of values, meaning, and wisdom, while rituals ensure their continuity across generations. The paper delves into the narrative of Imam Hussain ibn Ali, a pivotal figure in Islamic tradition, whose stand against tyranny and commitment to justice have left an indelible mark on the collective memory of lower Mesopotamians.

Imam Hussain's story, particularly the Battle of Karbala, symbolizes resistance against oppression and is commemorated through numerous rituals, such as the Ashura and the Arbæen pilgrimage. These rituals not only preserve historical events but also inspire contemporary acts of generosity, solidarity, and moral rectitude. The paper highlights how the geography and historical experiences of Mesopotamia have shaped a culture of resilience and resistance, with Imam Hussain's martyrdom becoming a catalyst for a rich tradition of ceremonial remembrance.

Through an in-depth analysis of the Arbæen pilgrimage, the largest annual peaceful demonstration in the world, the paper illustrates how this ritual transcends religious, racial, and socioeconomic barriers, uniting millions in a collective stand against injustice. The pilgrimage is a testament to the enduring power of rituals in keeping history alive and vibrant in the collective consciousness, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among participants. By examining personal experiences and the sociopolitical impact of these rituals, the paper underscores the transformative and unifying potential of cultural narratives and commemorative practices.

Keywords: Cultural Preservation, Rituals, Imam Hussain, Battle of Karbala, Iraq, Mesopotamian Culture, Collective Memory, Social Justice, Resistance, Martyrdom, Ashura, Arbaeen Pilgrimage, Cultural Rituals, Symbolism in Rituals, Pilgrimage Practices, Cultural Identity, Sacred Traditions

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To understand a culture, listen to its stories and tune in to its rituals. Traditional stories are embedded with values, they convey meaning and purpose, they pass on knowledge and wisdom, and they are timeless. Stories conserve cultures, thus every culture has stories to tell. Rituals, on the other hand, are the means by which stories are kept alive across time. Rituals connect the past to the present, they are the handover of that meaning, purpose, and wisdom from generation to generation, thus stories transcend generations. Every culture, all over the world, has rituals to keep their stories alive. The story of the Passover has been kept alive through the Jewish Passover feast and rituals. The story of Jesus's Last Supper with his disciples has been kept alive through the Holy Communion in Christian churches. The story of Imam Hussain and the tragedy of Prophet Mohammed's family are kept alive through the numerous rituals in Iraq.

Who is Hussain?

Imam Hussain ibn Ali, born in 626 AD, is a pivotal figure in Islamic history. He was the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. His life and martyrdom are deeply significant in Islamic tradition and are commemorated annually during Muharram, particularly on the day of Ashura.

Imam Hussain's life is marked by his steadfast commitment to justice and truth. After the death of his brother Hasan, Hussain became the head of the Prophet's household. During this period, the Umayyad dynasty, under Yazid ibn Muawiyah, sought to consolidate power and demanded Hussain's allegiance. Hussain's refusal to pledge loyalty to Yazid was rooted in his belief that Yazid's leadership was unjust and his actions un-Islamic.

In 680 AD, Hussain and his small band of followers, numbering around 72 men, women, and children, left Medina for Kufa, where the people had invited him to lead them in opposition to Yazid. However, en route to Kufa, they were intercepted by Yazid's forces and forced to camp in

the plains of Karbala. Despite being vastly outnumbered and deprived of water, Hussain and his followers refused to capitulate.

The Battle of Karbala on the 10th of Muharram is a defining moment in Islamic history. Imam Hussain and his companions fought bravely, but they were ultimately massacred. Hussain himself was killed, his body mutilated, and his head severed and sent to Yazid as a trophy. This event is mourned deeply within the Muslim community, symbolizing the eternal struggle against tyranny and oppression.

Imam Hussain's martyrdom is not only a historical event but also a profound symbol of sacrifice and resistance. Hussain's stand against Yazid represents the fight for justice, the refusal to submit to corrupt authority, and the importance of standing up for one's principles, even in the face of certain death.

His legacy endures through the rituals of Ashura, where millions of Muslims participate in mourning processions, reenactments of the Battle of Karbala, and various forms of devotional practices. Hussain's story transcends religious boundaries and is seen as a universal message of courage, integrity, and resistance against injustice.

The Battle of Karbala in Iraq rituals

Mesopotamia is a land of extensive antiquity, full of the most extreme examples of the very best and worst of human nature. It has been the birthplace, graveyard, and prized possession of countless civilizations, faiths, and empires. Its fertile soil, abundance of resources, two massive rivers surrounded with picturesque palm trees, and central location connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa made it an integral way station of the Silk Road. From the time the first known civilization established itself here, the Sumerians, it did not take long for it to bloom into a vibrant cultural center full of markets, exotic goods, ideas, inventions, faiths, and stories. Stories such as the quest for an eternal life of Gilgamesh, the birth legend of King Sargon of Akkad, the oldest promulgation laws in the history of Hammurabi, the military might of Nebuchadnezzar, the conquest of Alexander the Great of Mesopotamia and beyond, and countless more. Despite this rich history, the story of Imam Hussain is the one that is still alive in Iraq's culture today. But why is that?

It is a well-known fact that the geography and topography of the land play a significant role in shaping people's culture. Mesopotamia's geography is as much a blessing as it is a curse. Its

undeniable geostrategic significance and flat plains made it both desirable and vulnerable. It has been the battlefield of countless empires vying to control it. As such, the people of Mesopotamia are no strangers to invaders, and oppression, and remain ever vigilant against foreign influence. Therefore, historically, the Mesopotamian society is a defense-intensive society¹. As a result of constant imperial conquests over millennia, there has evolved a resilient culture of resistance that is embedded into the mainstream culture and identity of Mesopotamians. Imam Hussain's martyrdom became the catalyzing event, the symbolic story, that solidified that cultural heritage into a spirit of endurance culminating in an institutionalized resistance. Resistance to imperial and intellectual subjugation is a rich culture of rituals, ceremonies, feasts, and daily practices and customs interwoven with ancient formal education that keeps the Karbala tragedy and the message of Imam Hussain alive in the collective memory and collective consciousness of the people to resist oppression and injustice.

The story of Imam Hussain in Karbala had a profound impact in shaping the culture of lower Mesopotamians to its minutest details. For example, one of the many heartbreaking stories of Karbala that became ingrained into Mesopotamian collective consciousness and memory is the stories of thirst that befell Imam Hussain and his family- especially the cries of children for water. Today, anywhere in Iraq, if a stranger asks for water, people will rush to offer water at no charge, and they will not accept payment or compensation of any kind in return. The offer of water is usually accompanied by the words: "Drink and curse Hussain's thirst." There is a sense of duty to quench others' thirst in Mesopotamian tradition and custom. The thirst of Imam Hussain and his children is what people remember as soon as a person ask for water, the thirst of the Prophet's family and children, and their cries for water are alive in people's consciousness and their collective memory, not during a specific occasion but year-round.

Rituals keep such customs and traditions alive in the collective memory. Rituals are reenactments of the memory of key events in the history of a group. Rituals are connections across time with ancestors². The tragedy of Karbala carries the emotional resonance as if it happened just

¹ Gellner, E. (1983). *Muslim Society*. Cambridge Press. Page 20 Gellner writes: "Labor-intensive societies tend to be hierarchical; defense-intensive one's tends to be egalitarian."

² Sheldrake, R. on London Real. <https://londonreal.tv/rupert-sheldrake-science-spiritual-practices>. Retrieved on Dec. 10th, 2020.

the other day, not in ancient times. In Iraq, Imam Hussain's struggle against literal impossible odds is almost exclusively understood through a contemporary lens. Always being related to what is happening socially and politically today.

There are various rituals to commemorate Imam Hussain's struggle against tyranny. This paper will present the walk of allegiance.

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The martyrdom of Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Imam Hussain, and his family became an integral part of the collective memory for the people of lower Mesopotamia and a framework for resistance throughout history, it became a "symbol of sacrifice in the struggle for justice and truth against wrongdoing and falsehood." Nearly 1,400 years ago, the martyrdom of Imam Hussain sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world and started a commemorative tradition of rituals rarely matched in human history. In Mesopotamia, written history has existed for five thousand years, however, history preserved through rituals have proven to be far more powerful and enduring.

Rituals have the power to keep history alive and vibrant in the people's collective memory, rather than just being recorded in books. Each year, in tribute to the tragedy of the prophet's family, millions participate in the walk to Imam Hussain's shrine in Karbala to pledge allegiance. Nowadays, people of all religions, races, nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds, and denominations, participate in the walk of allegiance. Even churches of various denominations, including the Vatican in Rome, send delegations to offer their condolences for Imam Hussain. Public mourning processions from all over the world walk to Imam Hussain's shrine on his day. Over twenty million pilgrims walked to Karbala in 2019, the largest annual pilgrimage in human history, yet it is not a story of numbers, it is a story of purpose.

It is the largest peaceful demonstration for social justice, moral rectitude, and ruler legitimacy which are the core messages of Imam Hussain and his companions' martyrdom. A mass mobilization against oppression, injustice, and tyranny. The largest annual walk on earth yet it is not mandatory. There are no religious requirements to walk to Karbala. It is a spiritual walk for self-discovery, to connect with the sacred side of ones' self, to seek the divine's forgiveness, to search for meaning and purpose, to atone for past sins, and most importantly, for the devout, to renew their allegiance to Imam Hussein and to succor social justice and political legitimacy.

This last point is, and was, the heart of the matter throughout Mesopotamian history, and it is what kept the walk alive for hundreds of years despite the brutal oppression and persecution of pilgrims that occurred over the history of this ritual. A ritual that crosses all barriers; cultural, national, socioeconomic, racial, and religious. It diffuses any differences between people, it sets a common compass for all to share. That might sound like an exaggeration, yet the only way to prove it is to experience it by participating in the walk. There are no words, pictures, or videos that can relay the magnitude of this walk. I will try here to share with you some personal experiences of the walk of 2019, hoping to give you a glimpse of it through my words. It is just about impossible to document the magnitude of this pilgrimage.

Every year, millions of pilgrims walk to Karbala in solidarity with Imam Hussain over the course of two weeks. Pilgrims travel from cities as far as Basra, Kuwait, Abadan, and even places in Iran and India, walking for days and weeks on a network of routes all converge on Karbala. This spiritual journey, similar to “The Way of Saint James” to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, the pilgrimage to Canterbury in England, the “Inca Trail to Machu Picchu” in Peru, or the “Mount Kailash Pilgrimage” in Tibet, differs in its immense scale.

The journey to Karbala, known as Arbäeen or the Fortieth, occurs 40 days after the tragedy at Karbala nearly 1,400 years ago. Various explanations exist for this timing: some believe it marks the return of Imam Hussain's family to Karbala after being held captive in Damascus, while others connect it to the 40-day mourning period in Islamic tradition. Despite these interpretations, Arbäeen is the largest pilgrimage in Islam, surpassing even the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which draws over two million pilgrims each year. In contrast, the pilgrimage to Karbala exceeds twenty million pilgrims annually—more than half of Iraq's total population. This makes the journey to Karbala the largest ritual in the Islamic world by a significant margin. Many may be surprised to learn that the largest pilgrimage in the Islamic world is not the journey to Mecca, but rather the walk to Karbala in solidarity with Imam Hussain's fight against injustice, oppression, and a quest for moral and social justice.

As it has been throughout history, today's annual march in Karbala of millions symbolizes a defiance against tyranny and imperial influence in the region, echoing Imam Hussain's refusal to submit to the Umayyad empire. This ritual is rich with symbolism that extends beyond its historical

origins. It represents not just a ceremonial display, but a grassroots mobilization—a collective stance against oppression and tyranny. This is why it was strictly prohibited during Saddam Hussein's regime and by many other tyrants before him.

Time Collapses, and Past and Present Become One

A sea of people walking in one direction, where the destination seemed very clear, with a sense of solemnness that surpassed the boundaries of time and space. It feels as if time collapses into itself or disappears altogether, and all are in Karbala of year 680, past and present become one. One with those historical moments. As if the fourteen-hundred-year gap had vanished. For the pilgrims, Karbala is just around the corner, if all can just walk a bit faster if all can be a bit stronger, if all can muster a bit more courage, if all can help each other and be one powerful army, they might just catch up with Imam Hussain's caravan before it gets surrounded by Yazid's army. That is how it feels walking to Karbala. Instantaneously, the presence of the past in the collective memory brings the pilgrims face to face with distant events, where years vanish in an instant along the walk to Karbala, as if all were then and there, here and now. This is the experience almost every pilgrim speaks of. The importance of these rituals “cannot be overestimated, for it is in these rituals that the moods and motivations that are induced in the believers by the symbol of Hussain's martyrdom surface. And it is in these rituals that the world as lived, and the world as imagined are fused together.” (Nakash, 1993, P. 161-181)

Robert Sheldrake, in his book, *Science and Spiritual Practices*, writes: “The purpose of many rituals is to connect participants with the original event that the ritual commemorates, and also to link them with all those who have participated in the custom in the past. Rituals cross time, bringing the past into the present.” (Sheldrake, 2018, P. 113). It might be expected that the walk to Karbala would evoke grief and sorrow, given the nature of rituals associated with the Karbala tragedy, however, this is not the case. People walk with urgency and haste as if Imam Hussain is calling for their help right now, right there, in Karbala. They march with valor as if they were rushing to succor Imam Hussain and his companions, to rescue his small caravan, prevent the massacre, and protect the prophet's family and the children from becoming prisoners of the Caliph, Yazid.

Along the way

Along both sides of the road, thousands of pavilions offer services to the pilgrims free of charge: water, food, medical services, medicines, phone chargers, places to sleep, foot massages, new shoes or slippers, places for prayer, machine washers to wash pilgrims' clothes, furthermore, if someone loses their money, he/she will be compensated for their losses. Pilgrims who participate in the walk have nothing on their minds but the destination and the mission, everything is taken care of and paid for in the name of Imam Hussain. A pilgrim does not need to bring money. All along the walk to Karbala, there is no need for money because there are no commercial activities, everything is offered free of charge. Everything along the way is not only free of charge but it is given with the utmost intense and persistent generosity. More persistent than a pushy salesperson except nothing is being sold, only given to those passing by on their way to Imam Hussain. That might sound unbelievable considering the scale of the operation, over twenty million people are on the move for an average of two weeks.

Young people stand attentively at the entrances of each pavilion along the road, respectfully inviting pilgrims to be their guests, to eat, to rest, to sleep, or to have their clothes washed. They consider it a blessing when a pilgrim accepts their invitation. Also, residents of the houses along the walk usually open their homes to the pilgrims. The services offered include food, water, places to sleep, and any other help the pilgrims might need. Their compensation is God's blessing.

The ethos behind these trials of generosity is that Imam Hussain's sacrifice, over a thousand years ago, his cry is still being heard loud and clear today the world over, he gave everything expecting no earthly reward in return, consequently, the servants of the pilgrimage to Karbala serve under the same spirit. People give generously and insistently; they do not expect compensation and are indignant at the suggestion thereof. They give for the sake of giving and do not expect recognition or appreciation from others. It is considered a great honor to serve the pilgrims, and to be a servant of Imam Hussain is the ultimate honor. Even poor families, who have very little to offer, often save all year to purchase as much food so that they may serve the pilgrims of Imam Hussain.

To join the walk is to revive and relive the events of Karbala in one's consciousness. Some of the sights an observer might encounter along the walk to Karbala are people on wheelchairs, families with children, young men and women, older people- everyone moving at a brisk pace. Many carry big flags with sayings and pictures that depict the events of Karbala. Those flags glorify the walk with reverence. Many carry pictures of their own martyred family members; pictures laminated and attached to their backpacks of young men and women who were killed in the various wars in the region. Some carry framed large pictures of martyrs on poles, others wear shirts with pictures of martyrs printed on them. People walk as if there was a great mission awaiting them at the end of the path, a path to eternity. It is difficult to describe the feeling of the walk, but anyone who has participated in it would agree that it has a transcendent and transformative quality. The walk to Karbala is the largest annual mobilization of people on the face of planet Earth. Despite the tragic events it is inspired by, there is no sense of grief or sadness, only courage and gallantry.

It is hard to believe that over twenty million people walk to one destination without a single quarrel, argument, or disagreement. An atmosphere of compassion, friendliness, and kindheartedness. People are in a giving and forgiving mood, they are walking to aid their beloved Imam Hussain, and they are in a hurry, yet they are attentive to each other's needs. Little girls standing in the middle of the walk, carrying a big spray bottle and spraying people with cool rosewater. A man carrying a large tray of cash. It is not held out asking for donations- quite the opposite- it is held out for people who need cash to take some. An older man holding a large box in one hand, his other hand extended with ice cream cones, giving to passersby. Another offers bottles of cold water. Yet, another is sitting in the middle of the walk with a big tray on top of his head filled with fresh dates. When a pilgrim takes from these people, they are grateful, because they are given a chance to be of service in commemoration of the thirst and hunger of the Prophet's family. These routes to Karbala are showcases of the most extreme examples of human generosity. One pilgrim even described it as, humanity as it is intended to be.

Chants, songs, and poetry are recited along the road to Karbala. Songs that unify the language of music with the language of politics. Songs that spoke of moral rectitude. The most famous: "Hussain in our consciousness, we believe in you" is a special song to commemorate Imam Hussain's example and message. Some of the songs critically speak to the political situation

in the region and the world at large by relating it to the tragedy of Karbala. In between songs, every once in a while, a call: “HUSSAIN UNITE US”, is heard loud and clear on the microphones. All boundaries, classifications, borders, and dividing lines among people disappear. Hussain Unites the oppressed throughout time and space.

Ashura is the day of the massacre of Prophet Mohammed’s family (PBUT) represented by Imam Hussain, his family, and his companions, therefore, the chants “Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala” along the way with Songs of beautiful poetry repeated for days with rhythm, accompanied with chest beating as if to engrave the message on the pilgrim’s heart. This whole experience engrains in the pilgrim’s mind and consciousness a critical lens by which all propaganda broadcasted through the media is filtered, that is one of the reasons colonial and imperialist propaganda does not work in the region, and that is the reason all tyrants who reigned over Mesopotamia prohibited the commemoration of the tragedy of Karbala. Tyrants understood the awakening power this ritual has on people’s minds and consciousness. The United States and its allies spend a tremendous amount of money on propaganda in the region in vain. These rituals and many others are the curriculum of resistance in its informal aspect. The formal aspect will be covered in the next chapter.

Feeding and caring for twenty million people for two weeks or more is an enormous undertaking of near unimaginable scale and cost. Where does this money come from? Who plans and manages this walk? The answer is surprisingly simple: the money comes from everyone, from the people who believe it is their duty to keep alive the message of Imam Hussain of moral justice and his stand against oppression. People from all walks of life donate; some donate millions of dollars and others work all year round to save a little money to participate in the service of the walk, in their mind, serving the pilgrims of Imam Hussain is the ultimate blessing and honor. Hussain is alive in people’s consciousness and collective memory, which makes money a non-issue. Indeed, donations for the walk to Imam Hussain are estimated at 500 million dollars annually, which exceeds what is needed for the pilgrimage services for the two weeks of the walk. The surplus of donations is distributed to help poor families, orphans, medical care for the sick, and displaced families as a result of the wars in the region.³

³ Alrammahi, H. الزياره الاربعينيه , Page 45-49.

Studies by Dimitris Xygalatas, et al. (2011, 2013, 2014), a renowned anthropologist, and his team, suggest a direct correlation between pain or hardship endured during a ritual and feelings of euphoria and togetherness after the ritual concludes. One experiment found that the more arduous the ritual was for an individual, the more likely that same individual was to give greater sums of money to charity afterward.

However, the most challenging task is the management and supervision of such a massive event. It is important to stress that the walk is not a state-sponsored ritual, and there isn't a designated entity to manage or supervise it all. This historical event is alive by the generous contributions of everyone and by the supervision of no one. Yes, the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units guard the safety of the pilgrims on all routes to Karbala. However, the main virtue that makes this whole endeavor possible is allegiance to Imam Hussain.

The final ceremony at the shrine of Imam Hussain is an elaborate one. At this point it becomes a highly organized ritual, every detail is highly guarded by the management office of Imam Hussain's shrine. If a pilgrim wants to enter Imam Hussain's shrine on the Arbaeen – the 40th day - he/she must be affiliated with a procession. Every group forms a public mourning procession, under which they represent either a country, institute, city, region, tribe, or family. The size of the processions varies, some processions comprise hundreds of people, others are small groups, some are men only, others are women only, but most are mixed. At this point, the shrine management is involved in organizing, coordinating, and controlling the passage of people through the shrine to offer their allegiance and condolences. This process entails the coordination of the movement of millions of people through the arcades of the shrine within one day, the day of Arbaeen.

In 2019 on October 20th, eleven thousand public mourning processions participated in the ceremony according to Karbala TV⁴. Press TV reported that over fifteen million people converged on the holy city of Karbala that day⁵. Mourning processions came from all over the world, each carrying the flag of their country or the flag of the organization or group they represent whereas some carried pictures of their own martyrs. The Christian mourning procession carried large

⁴ Karbala TV live podcast on Oct. 20th, 2019. www.karbala-tv.net/live.php

⁵ Press TV. www.presstv.com/Detail/2019/10/21/609183/Arbaeen-walk-2019-numbers-records Retrieved on Jan. 19th, 2020.

wooden crosses covered with black clothes instead of flags. The chant of each procession repeated to a rhythm as they entered from the courtyard to the arcades, the cadence is kept through the beating of hands-on chests to the rhythm. Each procession offered their salutation in their own tradition, in their own language and manner, then continue through the arcade and out to the courtyard.

According to many pilgrims and servants of the walk to Karbala, the walk is a transformative experience whether the participant is a pilgrim or a pilgrimage servant. The songs and the poetry stay in the minds and hearts of the pilgrims for a long time, and the experience provides them with a renewed lens to see the world through. It is a transformative experience that brings measurable physical and mental benefits. These effects are not unique to Karbala's pilgrimage, multiple anthropological, social, and psychological studies confirm the transformative effect of pilgrimage practice (Schnell and Pali, 2013, P. 887-902)

Imam Hussain is often referred to as the "Prince of Martyrs," and his martyrdom remains vivid in the collective memory of the people of lower Mesopotamia. This epic tale is perpetually alive, epitomized by the saying, "Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala," symbolizing the timeless struggle between good and evil. Consequently, an essential part of retelling the tragedy of Karbala is to interweave it with contemporary events in people's lives, whether they pertain to social, political, or ethical issues.

According to Rupert Sheldrake, "Rituals define the identities of those who participate in them and connect participants with those who have gone before and those who will come after." (Sheldrake, 2018, P. 115). By performing these rituals, individual members of a society strengthen, reinforce, and renew their solidarity as a cohesive whole. For the duration of a ritual, the line between the individual and society as a whole blur, people take on a group identity, a collective identity. These rituals are the informal education that almost every person in southern Iraq grew up with, they supersede any formal education in schools or media propaganda.

Emile Durkheim, in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, referred to the feeling of oneness of all involved as "the collective effervescence". This is not mere conjecture, there is considerable scientific research to back up this claim. Dimitris Xygalatas, et al. (2011, 2013, 2014), set out to measure this perceived "collective effervescence". During various

strenuous rituals, Xygalatas, et al. (2011, 2013, 2014) and his team had participants wear heart monitors as the ritual commenced. Interestingly, the heart monitors revealed an incredible degree of synchronicity amongst all participants, regardless of the activity each individual was doing. Strongly suggesting that Durkheim's "collective effervescence" was more than merely a subjective emotion felt by individuals, but rather a measurable biological phenomenon that takes place during rituals.

The walk to Karbala is one of the rituals in lower Mesopotamia that are connected to Imam Hussain's martyrdom. However, In Iraq, yearlong various rituals are done in neighborhoods and homes in commemoration of Imam Hussain such as Hussainia ceremonies – Mejlis (plural of Mejlis).

Conclusion

The Arbaeen pilgrimage is more than a religious observance; it is a powerful symbol of resistance, unity, and social justice. Rooted in the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), this ritual transcends religious, racial, and national boundaries, uniting millions in a massive demonstration of moral rectitude and defiance against oppression. The enduring legacy of Imam Hussain's sacrifice continues to resonate deeply within the collective memory of Mesopotamian culture, shaping its identity and traditions.

The walk to Karbala, undertaken by millions each year, is a profound spiritual journey that fosters self-discovery, community solidarity, and a reaffirmation of allegiance to the values Imam Hussain stood for. It is a testament to the transformative power of rituals in preserving history and instilling a sense of purpose and resilience in those who participate. The Arbaeen pilgrimage, with its unparalleled scale and significance, stands as a living testament to the enduring human spirit's quest for justice and truth.

In essence, the Arbaeen pilgrimage is a powerful reminder that the fight against tyranny and injustice is timeless. It underscores the importance of standing up for one's principles, even in the face of insurmountable odds. As millions continue to walk to Karbala each year, they keep alive the memory of Imam Hussain's sacrifice and the universal message of courage, integrity, and resistance against oppression. Through this ritual, the story of Karbala remains vibrantly alive, inspiring generations to uphold the values of justice and righteousness.

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