



## Messages of “Arba'een Walking” as “Media”

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### **Abstract**

Arba'een Walking is the most unrivaled assembly in the world that can be considered as a Shiite religious symbol. Arba'een Walking has numerous political, cultural and social implications, and today the media function of this movement has continued to have a huge and widespread impact over the centuries since Ashura. This article seeks to answer the key question, "What are the messages of Arba'een Walking as a media outlet?" In this regard, the qualitative method of document analysis was used, and the data have been collected from different sources. According to the findings of the study, the most important political message of the Arba'een Walking is the "unity of the Islamic Ummah". Love for freedom and fighting arrogance as well as maneuvering authority are other political messages of Arba'een. Also, reinforcing the thoughts and affection of the Ahlul-Bayt, the deep connection with Hussein's sayings, as well as the strengthening and promotion of the culture of self-sacrifice are some of Arba'een cultural messages. Order and solidarity, the possibility of transnational solidarity and convergence, transcendental and group solidarity as well as the manifestation of social capital can be defined in the form of Arba'een social messages.

**Keywords:** *Arba'een Walking; Cultural; Media; Message; Political; Social*

### **Introduction**

The Arba'een Walking rituals back to several hundred years ago and is one of the most important symbols of Shiite political culture (Ghafari Hashjin & Aghaei, 1977:1), which focuses on commemoration of the uprising and martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions; This tragedy enjoys very important position among Shiites. During history and depending on political-social evolutions of each era, Arba'een Walking had experienced many ups and downs, and in recent years it has been widely welcomed by Shia due to political changes taking place in Iraq over the past two decades along with the removal of some other obstacles. In addition to the Shiites, the presence of followers of other religions in this unique human assembly has made this walk special and has drawn the attention of regional and global public opinion to itself.

The reason of this attention to the Arba'een Walking, on the one hand, is the widespread presence of pilgrims and on the other hand, the diversity and the number of pilgrims present in it while they are unanimous. In fact, participating in the Arba'een Walking is attending a large and public gathering to renew the covenant with Imam Hussein (AS); in such a situation, a special consensus develops among the people, and this very public gathering besides developing religious unity deepens one's prudence. Because all pilgrims are moving towards a specific destination that is the Imam, and this creates suitable capacity to spread culture of *willayah*, Ashura and martyrdom. (Mosavi et. al., 1397: 130)

In fact, Arba'een Walking which is a cultural and religious phenomenon is a special opportunity and capacity to exchange meanings and ideas within the framework of the eternal movement of Imam Hussein (AS). This privilege is due to the presence of people of various religious, beliefs, ethnicity from different geographical regions.

In other words, Arba'een Walking as a ritual is a huge communication platform which due to its unique broadness and scope, has incredible potentials to create and share cultural, social and political meanings and messages.

Arba'een Walking is the largest human convergence and assembly having various regional and global reflections. In recent years, this unique community has experienced a radical growth and has received serious attention of media and public opinion of the Islamic world and in elite or public circles has shaped various interpretations and perceptions. According to the concept of ritual communication, this walk and pilgrimage have meanings and messages political-, cultural- and social-wise needed to be analyzed.

A review of the literature and theoretical sources related to Arba'een Walking show that this great religious gathering has not been analyzed from these dimensions. Therefore, absence of such studies was a motive carrying out the present research. To this end, the present article aiming at answering the main question of what are the messages of Arba'een Walking as media? Is looking for the answers of the following questions:

1. What are the political messages of the Arba'een Walking as a Media?
2. What are the cultural messages of the Arba'een Walking as a Media?
3. What are the social messages of the Arba'een Walking as a Media?

In answering these questions and in the conceptual framework of research, political, cultural and social messages arising from the Arba'een Walking are discussed. To conduct this research, qualitative method of document analysis has been used (Fasai & Erfan, 1394: 63). In this research method, the researcher collected and analyzed data about events, phenomena and social actors from sources and documents related to Arba'een messages by taking notes. It should be said that understanding the dimensions and meaning of the messages of Arba'een, in turn, can contribute to policymaking and managing this unique religious and humane assembly.

## ***A. Concepts and Conceptual Framework***

### **1. Identity and position of Arba'een Walk**

Religious rituals and practices have meanings and values among Shia and therefore enjoy a unique position. Symbols and rituals of Ashura like pilgrimage of Arba'een, due to the intertwined and historical relation between Imam Hussein (AS) movement and identity of Shia plays a special role in the in the process of acquiring the identity of Shiite followers as a minority in the great Islamic community. A

minority that in different eras historically suffered from being marginalized. Restoring rituals to a very sacred, legitimate and pure source (Imam), signifies importance and main status of these rituals among the Shiite elites. (Giviyan & Amin: 1396: 168).

Despite the presence and sovereignty of the enemies of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and their cruelty to the Shiites and their confrontation with Shiite Symbols and Rites, Arba'een Walking was in practice in the time of Shiite Imams and was supported by the Imams. As history certifies the first walk and pilgrimage to Arba'een was made in the year 61 A. H. by Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Ansari. Of course after that, Imams used each and every opportunity to promote and advertise pilgrimage to Imam Hussein (AS) and they supported it concerning possibilities of that era.

In contemporary history, the pilgrimage of Arba'een by Sheikh Ansari and later by Muḥadith Nuri as a public movement was revived and emphasized. Sheikh Ansari introduced Arba'een Walking and pilgrimage as a symbol and custom for the Shiite followers, but after a while, it was revived by Mirza Hussein Nuri and spread among Shia as a Sunnah and suitable custom. (Imani and bad, 1395: 139) During the Ba'ath period in Iraq, this movement was halted by severe pressure on the Shiites. But since 2003 A. D., after the Ba'athist regime collapsed in Iraq, millions of people go to Imam Hussein's pilgrimage every day in Arba'een in a way that the population of pilgrims only came in 2004 as the first year of liberating Iraq reached approximately 4 million people equal with the Hajj population during the Hajj time. The fact is that the Arba'een Walking which is held annually in the days near to Arba'een day in Iraq has been growing and expanding in recent years due to cultural and political reasons (Giviyan & Amin: 1396: 168).

This number grew surprisingly in the years that followed, to the extent that Karbala hosted a population of about 20 million pilgrims in the years leading up to 2019 A. D., different nationalities from 60 countries without receiving any special facilities from their government or even without receiving common facilities during their stay in Iraq participated in this assembly.

The presence of about 20 million people in Arba'een Day from all over the world with different cultures and nationalities transform this religion ritual and community to the most extraordinary and magnificent human assembly and due to this attracts the attention of elites and world public opinion to itself.

## 2. Arba'een Walking as a Media

Traditional communication sometimes manifests in a "ritual display". Ritual display and religious ceremonies are an essential part of the history and culture of ancient societies. Informal and formal religions since past also included rituals that could have been connected souls and spirits together to the extent that religion can be considered as a combination of rituals and belief. Indeed, rituals are a part of traditional communications that in most cases enjoys a performing manifestation (Giviyan & Amin, 1396: 172).

If we consider communication in the sense of "transfer of meaning", ritual also has the same functionality. In fact, ritual and relationships create meaning and, at the same time, through exchanging and transferring messages, meaning is made. According to Fisk, the media and communication theorist, through the exchange and transmission of the messages meaning are made and also the messages, with the help and assistance of signs are generated, and any amount of similarity and homogeneity is used, the meaning of the messages gets closer (Mir-Abedini, 1388: 44).

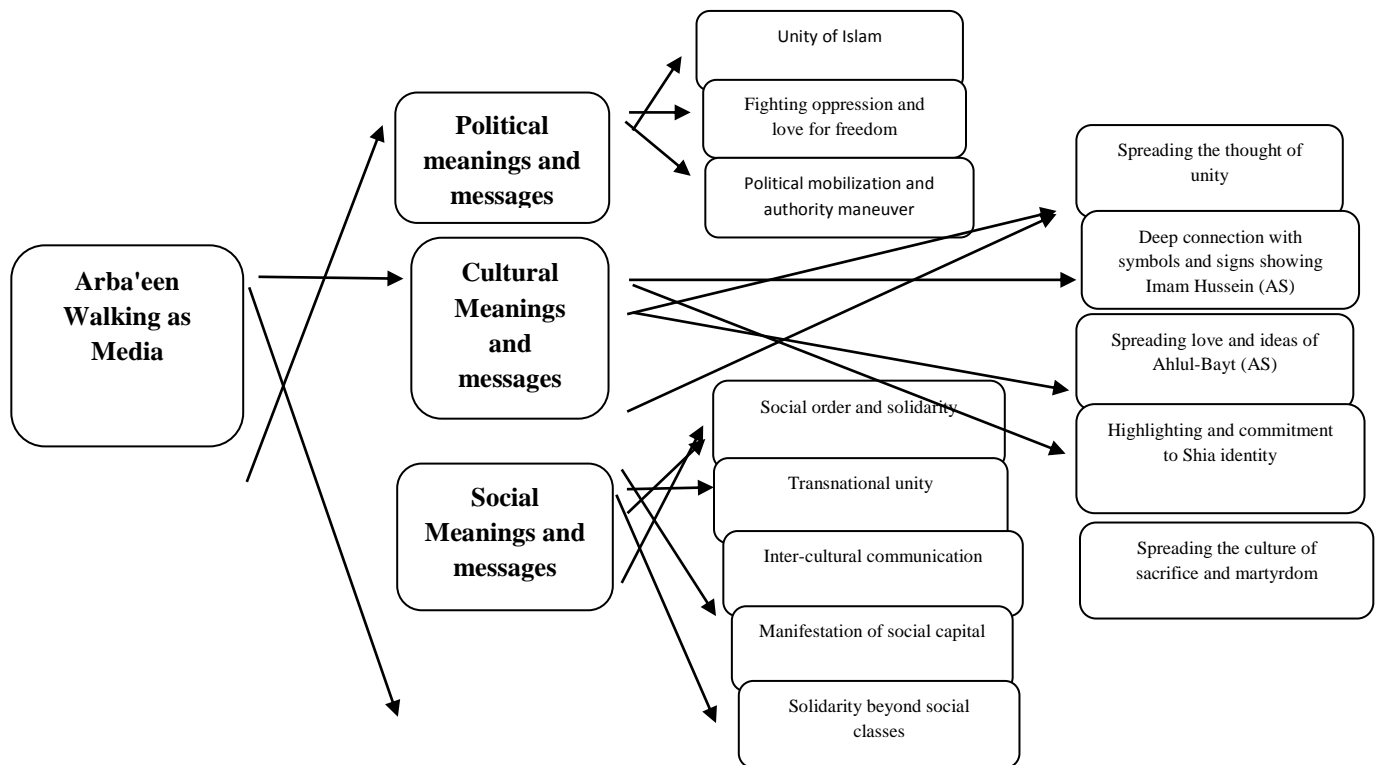
According to Leach, an anthropologist and religious expert, "all forms of ritual are communicational. Rituals in social situations are always considered as symbolic behavior. For this reason, there are always texts written to be read. According to Eric Rothenbuhler, American Relations

Researcher, rituals are voluntary execution of behavior that are appropriately formulated to have symbolic effect on life or to participate in it. In other words, ritual features are something beyond physical and behavioral movements. Communicational attributes that ritual behavior is determined by them are the primordial and quintessential features in order to differentiate ritual as rituals. Accordingly, it is not like that rituals have communicational functions, but it should be said if the rituals do not function communicationally do not function, they never function at all. (Giviyan & Amin, 1396: 169)

Communications and rituals are highly interconnected. The two are interdependent while having so common features and characteristics that even it can be said communication is a form of ritual and ritual a form of communication. In other words, the people involved in the ritual are doing a symbolic exchange. In fact, these individuals are, in the process of communication, using symbols to accomplish social goals (Mir-Abedini, 1388: 30). In other words, rituals and customs are essentially the best channels of communication. Rituals, in fact, are a communicational movement, a communicational message, and also, a communicational channel (Bashir, quoted by Giviyan & Amin, 1396: 173).

As Rothenbuhler puts it, rituals are the most effective form of communication. Accordingly, the pilgrimage of Arba'een as a ritual is of the most important Shiite grounds and opportunities to reproduce "meanings" of life for oneself, creating a chain and a shared network of symbols with similar meanings, identity boundaries and intra- and inter-group relationships and so on (Giviyan & Amin, 1396: 170) Therefore, with regard to the function of Arba'een Walking in creating and transmitting meaning, Arba'een can be seen as a powerful and effective medium, which transfers various messages and meanings in different dimensions. In fact, Arba'een walk is a communicational channel and a movement which influences public opinions and peoples like a massive and influential media.

### 3. Conceptual Framework Model of Arba'een Walking Messages as Media



## ***B. The Political Messages of Arba'een Walking as a Media***

The social emergence of Shiite political culture in Shiite societies, in the forms of Arba'een Walking and walk shows Shiite adherence and deep bond with this culture, and this represents the vibrant Shiite political culture in such communities. It can be said that the Shiites deep commitment to Shiite political culture reflects the rich social capital of Shiite which this social capital is itself the main source of production and boosting sovereignty and soft power for Shia. Hence the emergence of Shiite political culture in a rite-like manner such as Arba'een Walking is a harbinger of Shiite soft power and political mobilization ability and it has a serious role in deterring arrogant powers and securing the interests of the Shia world. In the following some political messages of Arba'een walk-in as a media are pointed out:

### **1. "Unity of the Islamic 'Ummah (Community)" (in the light of affection and devotion to the holy family of Ahlul-Bayt (AS))**

According to the leaders of Islamic unity, understanding and consensus on common doctrinal and intellectual points can be the basis for achieving unity in the Muslim world. For example, factors like God, Prophet, faith, friendship of the Prophet, etc. are fundamental factors that can provide a sufficient and suitable motivation for unity of Muslims (Mehr-nia, 1396: 29). It should be said, the most important message of the largest religious rally in the world is "The unity of the Islamic 'Ummah in the light of love and devotion to Ahlul-Bayt (AS)". Because all Islamic sects have the love of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and therefore a great capacity like the pilgrimage of Arba'een could be at the core of the unity of the Islamic 'Ummah.

In fact, followers of various Islamic sects (and even followers of other religions) religions, have an active presence and participation in this occasion. In this sense, the manifestation of affection for the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in such conditions as Arba'een is a good opportunity for fostering convergence and empathy in the Islamic world (Moradi, 1396: 12). So one can say that one of the most important messages of Arba'een Walking is the message of the "empathy and unity of the Islamic 'Ummah" revolves around a strong axis which is Ahl al-Bayt. What that brings about this empathy and unity is the interest in the Prophet's family. So the presence of different Islamic schools of thought besides each other in Arba'een Walking broadcasts this message to public opinion of the Islamic world that unity and convergence in the Muslim world in the light of love and kindness to the Ahlul-Bayt family (AS) is possible.

### **2. Fighting Arrogance and love of freedom**

The Holy Qur'an in many verses refers to the opposition between the two fronts of disbelief and faith. The front of disbelief and arrogance, as opposed to the front of faith, and the rule of religion and religious symbols societies. The logic of the Qur'an is also indicative of a constant opposition of the Front of Faith with the front of Arrogance (Aqa-Mahdavi & Naderi, 1390: 176). To this end, the anti-arrogance approach in religious and Muslim societies is a continuous and dynamic subject, because arrogance is an active and living issue.

Studying the slogans of Arba'een Walkings also shows freedom, dignity, their spirit in fighting arrogance and their hatred of oppression which are tied with the nature of Arba'een Walk. In fact, similar to the uprising and movement of Imam Hussein (AS) which was for freedom and the rejection of tyranny, this walk is also to protect this uprising and movement and as we have said, the examination of the literature and slogans of Arba'een pilgrims is also evidence of this claim. Arba'een pilgrims by resorting to their Imam's uprising against cruelty of the time, i.e. the rule of Umayyad and Yazid, announced their solidarity with this basic principle in all eras. That is to say, with the revival and observance of the uprising and his martyred Imam's movement in a bed called Arba'een, they emphasize on rejecting

tyranny as a social behavior role model in the present time. On this basis, it can be said that fighting arrogance and having love for freedom are the significant and permanent messages of Arba'een Walk.

### **3. Political mobilization and maneuvering of majesty**

The high level of empathy and presence of several tens of millions at a particular time called Arba'een, is an indicator of the unique capacity of the Shiite school in alignment, organization and mobilizing its followers. Undoubtedly of the most important activities which can do for Arba'een at the present time is Shiite "political mobilization" of over 20 million people from 80 countries (Ghandi & Shakori, 1395: 112) that becomes an example of the mobilizing power of the Islamic world. In other words, Arba'een is an explanation of Shiite collective identity and using religious rituals as sources of power and political activation. The presence of millions of people in Arba'een expresses this message that the Hussein school has a high mobilization capability and this million- people mobilization is a great source of sovereignty and soft power. In fact, the incredible ability of the Shi'ism school to organize and mobilize its followers, derived from a great and unique social capital (i.e. Shiite adherents to the religion, ways and principles of the martyr Imam) and this social capital is the main source and source of sovereignty for the Shiites.

Pilgrimage and commemoration of Arba'een, the greatest and largest gathering of human being in one of the world's most insecure areas, takes the role of a regional powerful trans-governmental actor titled Shia religion; and political-martial-wise is a network of Shi'ite groups in countries of the region that now in the framework of an alliance- with cultural identity- simultaneously is at war against ISIS and Western arrogance, and during recent years represents political remarkable efficiency. In other words, this international event represents the depth of those cultural links that Shia political-martial network in region as a center of sovereignty can be broadly established on it. (Moradi, 1396: 14)

### **C - Cultural messages of Arba'een Walking as a media**

Walk and pilgrimage of Arba'een, the first and foremost, as the most important dimension, is a cultural phenomenon. Seyed al-Shohada (i.e. Imam Hussein) (AS) and Ashura Culture (i.e. dignity, majesty, self-sacrifice, martyrdom) as the central points at this event show that the most important measurement specific for the ritual of Arba'een is referring to this Shi'a original revolutionary "cultural identity". Specifically, because Arba'een with these dimensions has the main capacity for converting to becoming a symbol of Shiite soft power; relying on this culture can produce Islamic, divine, innate literature, and also an appropriate ground to engage in cultural interaction with other cultural circles in the Muslim world (Sunni) and beyond with the oppressed and the freedom-seekers of the world (Ibid: 17). Arba'een from cultural perspective enjoys such a capacity to create transcendental meanings and messages that examining all these meanings and messages is not possible in this study; some of the more significant messages will be offered in the following:

#### **1. Strengthening and emphasizing on unity thought and attitude throughout the Islamic world**

Arba'een, while demonstrating Shi'a unity, due to its deep Islamic identity has not Takfiri or challengeable approaches towards other religions, Sunni, in particular; but it can provide a capacity for Shiite and Sunni interaction over the current problems of the Islamic world through the continuation of Imam Hussein's path.

The presence of Sunnis alongside the Shiites in Arba'een reinforces unity-oriented approach and broadcasts the message of "Shiite and Sunni closeness" worldwide Islam world. Repeated annual presence of Sunnis and Shiites in a context titled Arba'een can even have a significant impact on neutralization of extensive psycho-media programs and activities produced by the West and some

regional dogmatic countries who are seeking to create and intensify Shiite and Sunni divisions and divergences. In this regard, it should be noted that walk and pilgrimage of Arba'een bring about grounds and opportunities for promoting and highlighting this attitude of unity of Shia and Sunnis among the public opinion of the Islamic world.

## **2. Deep connection with whatever reminds Imam Hussein (AS)**

One of the manifestations of Arba'een's presence beyond having commitment to the values of the Hussein' movement is to love its signs. On this basis, participation and cooperation in Arba'een, is somehow keeping his remembrance alive and also declaration of adherence and connection with Hussein's practices such as pilgrimage, mourning and.... Basically observing and attending the Arba'een Walk expresses accompanying and connection message with Hussein. Keeping the remembrance of Hussein alive in a context called Arba'een and highlighting the relationship and connection to him reinforces the capacity for social convergence and companionship in the Muslim world with these means of remembrance. In other words, means to remember Hussein as part of the culture of Shiite societies are endorsed and emphasized in a context called Arba'een.

## **3. Spreading the thought and affection of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS)**

Of course, one of the most obvious and primitive messages of Arba'een Walking is to have empathy and expresses affection for Ahlul-Bayt. On the other hand, the pervasive presence in Arba'een means believing in the discipline and thought of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) as a source of guidance for the Ummah. In fact, the constant and widespread presence of the devotees to the Imam Hussein (AS) in the Walk highlights and conveys the meaning that thought of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and their love in the Islamic world and beyond is alive and active and has the ability to move people.

Emotional presence and expressing affection to Imam Hussein and Ahlul-Bayt (AS) by the pilgrims of Arba'een becomes the consensus center for the reinforcement and revival of love of the Ahlul-Bayt, and constantly, help reproducing the ideas and thoughts of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in Shiite and Islamic societies. In fact, in a context and a framework called Arba'een, while refreshing thought and the discourse of Ahlul-Bayt, devotion and affection to this family, on a large scale, is emphasized and become an institutionalized culture and model.

## **4. Strengthening and spreading culture of sacrifice and martyrdom**

During the history, Shiites have always emphasized on the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom to confront oppression and to advance religious and social goals by resorting to Imam Hussein's movement and uprising against cruelty and tried to keep this culture alive. Indeed, the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom is a central element of the Shiite school. The central purpose of the sacrifice and martyrdom, too, is to liberate mankind from the bondage of the gods of wealth and weapon (Makoe & 'Abbasi, 1390: 177).

Arba'een Walking and commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and his companions in Karbala at first glance, is commemoration of sacrifice on the path of God. Arba'een Walking causes annual and continuous commemoration of sacrifice and martyrdom of Imam and his companions on the path of God. And this honors and promotes culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom in the community and among his followers. In fact, this walk, psychologically and ideologically, causes increasing the readiness of Imam Hussein's followers to sacrifice on the path of God. In other words, the widespread presence of people in Arba'een means approval and the emphasis on the path of self-sacrifice and martyrdom for the advancement and victory of the Right, and this subject in long-term fosters, internalizes and transfers the culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom in the community and in particular will be passed on to future

generations. It must be said that the protection of the movement of Imam and his companions in Karbala endorses and highlights martyrdom and sacrifice as a role model beyond time and places that can, under certain circumstances, be the basis for the individual and collective action of a Muslim to advance and defend the Right.

### **5. Commitment to Shiite identity**

Convergence and presence of Shia from different countries and regions with different languages and cultures in the ritual of Arba'een mean belonging to an identity more beyond ethnic, national ... identity. In other words, the vast participation of Shia of about 80 countries around the world with diverse cultures and races in Arba'een walk represents a deep attachment to Shi'a identity and the priority of this general identity over other identities. Although some secularization process has been pursued for some countries such as Azerbaijan, Iraq etc. by colonialist's governments and powers in recent decades but the widespread Shia presence of these countries in Arba'een somehow highlights and preserves their "Shiite identity" and is a declaration of true adherence. From this point of view, we can say that participation and presence in Arba'een Walking is the manifestation of Shiite identity and highlighting it in comparison to other sub-identities (ethnic, national, etc.).

### ***C- Social Messages of Arba'een Walking as a Media***

Rothenbuhler believes that religion is not merely a form or process of thought, but a form of action (Baqeri et al., 1395: 105). Accordingly, anyone who practices a ritual acknowledges that his behavior is symbolic, effective, and meaningful. In other words, as mentioned earlier based on Rothenbuhler's definition, ritual is to practice behavior which becomes a role model voluntarily in proper way to symbolically influence or participate in serious life (Mir-Abedini, 1388: 30). According to Kuhn, what is symbolically reproduced in the religious community involves the embodiment of the meanings made by individuals from the totality of their social life, as well as their symbolic border line from other communities (Giviyan & Amin, 1396: 170).

From the structuralists' point of view, myths and rituals are the activities and affairs by which societies find harmony and unity, and social order is internalized and expressed due to hidden values in religion. To this end, the discovery of identity bases and influential foundations from within myths and rituals for the advancement of many cultural and social programs (such as development, which its axis is culture), has the potential deserved to receive attention. In particular, when the source of widespread social discipline and serious life as well as participation in macro social affairs potentially depend on the forms and quality of one who uses myths and rituals and their application in the social fields. According to the definition, ritual under the title of "voluntary behavior" to influence symbolically or to participate in life, while not be reduced to the religious rituals and practices is a general phenomenon, and is a behavior that is voluntarily designed and acted by citizens in their daily lives (Baqeri et al, 1395: 101).

In fact, the rituals and practices commemorating Imam Hussein (AS) are the most magnificent and splendid Shiite rituals that take place in a vibrant and dynamic way in social life and have become the source of many developments and norms in personal and social action. Of course, what distinguishes rituals and practices in Shiite society from other societies is not merely the presence of rituals, but features such as their extent, resurgence and social cohesion, their effectiveness, their norm making and role-playing in individual and social actions, and... (Moradi, 1396: 15) In the following, social messages of Arba'een walk are mentioned:



## 1. Social order and solidarity

Emotional concept and correlation of rituals are of the key concepts of Durkheim's social theory which has an effective function in maintaining social order and as a deterrent to restlessness. According to Durkheim, the four main functions of religion, namely: cohesion, discipline, vitality, and happiness, as important social forces, play a key and essential role in maintaining social discipline. In this regard, he argues, religious rituals prepare and train individuals for social life by imposing self-discipline and self-restraint. Religious rituals and practices bring people together and thereby re-affirm their shared relationships and bonds, and therefore reinforce social cohesion and solidarity.

The application of ritual communication can lead to three basic outcomes: the creation of cohesion and integration, the social construction of reality, and the development of shared ideas and beliefs in society (Baqeri et al., 1395: 103). In this respect, rituals such as pilgrimage and Arba'een Walking through the creation of intercultural and intra-cultural communication, while intensifying and enhancing the flow of message and meaning exchange among sides and members (as in other media), it depicts "Shiite social order and solidarity." In fact, millions of people by their presence at this special event and at such a specific date, in the best possible way, display their true solidarity in a symbolic way (Ghafari Hashjin & Aghaei, 1396: 11).

## 2. The possibility of transnational solidarity and convergence

The presence of people of different Islamic and non-Islamic countries in Arba'een Walking is rare or even unique phenomenon, and at no other gathering or ceremony this huge number of people with different religions, opinions and geographies can be seen. As noted earlier, there are hundreds of millions of people from 80 countries participating in this massive march (Ghandi & Shakori, 1395: 112). More importantly, despite the diversity of pilgrims and attendees in Arba'een Walking, they all come together for a common, unified and sympathetic reason. Accordingly, the unity and convergence of people of different religions and nationalities in the Arba'een Walking convey this message and meaning to the global public opinion that "transnational solidarity and convergence" is possible. Solidarity and convergence that can be transcended beyond conventional ethnic, national, etc. boundaries, and create cohesion around a specific cause and purpose.

## 3. Solidarity beyond groups and classes

In Arba'een Walking, there is a certain empathy and unity, and no distinction is seen among Arba'een pilgrims. Because in the spiritual and holy atmosphere of Arba'een, all attendees pursue a common goal, regardless of their status, position, class, and so on, and, in the opposite, they seek superiority and advantage in humbleness. Basically, the intimacy with and joining to the goal which is Imam Hussein (AS) is in harmony and solidarity with his other enthusiasts. Therefore, the atmosphere dominated pilgrims and enthusiasts of Arba'een is a space of solidarity and trans-group and class solidarity and this phenomenon has a serious presence in Arba'een Walking in a way that every listener and viewer of this event the message of unity and empathy surrounding the walk of Arba'een is clearly visible and tangible. In fact, the atmosphere of intimacy, empathy, and unity is of the most prominent features of Arba'een.

## 4. The manifestation of social capital and social networking

Individuals in a community by communicating with each other and keeping this communication can make it possible to work together, and through these connections, they can achieve things that are not possible to be achieved on their own. In fact, people are interconnected through a network and tend to share their values with other members of the network (Ghafari, 1385: 77). It can be said that social capital

consists of components such as trust, common norms and social network. Trust is one of the most important aspects of social relations and it is the basis for cooperation and collaboration among members of a society in different cultural, political and other fields (Zein-Abadi & Salehi, 1387: 10). In fact, social capital forms only when human beings are face to face in a specific social space (virtual or real) and secondly, a relationship is formed among them. So social capital is part of the social relationship and in its essence (Ejtehadi, 1386: 5). It must be said that the inclusive presence of Shiites and other religions in the Arba'een Walking puts forth the perfect manifestation of social capital as it both expresses common norms and represents a coherent and continuous social network. On the other hand, the ritual of Arba'een Walking itself reinforces component of social capital such as social networking, social norms, and so on. In fact, Arba'een Walk, while endorsing and consolidating common norms, generates and reinforces multimillion networks on a large scale and demonstrates its unquestioned ability in making networks to the world.

### **5. Cross-cultural communication in the light of religious tourism**

Inter-cultural communication involves the actual interaction of human beings from different cultures. Accordingly, this form of communication can be defined as the process of exchange of meanings, ideas, and cultural goods among individuals of different cultures (Arzani & Ehtemam, 1394: 91). Accordingly, given the presence of pilgrims from different cultures and nationalities in the walk of Arba'een as a ritual, involving the process of exchange of meanings and thoughts, one can consider these connections as a kind of link among cultures. In other words, due to the widespread presence of people from different countries such as Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Russia and etc., in Arba'een there is an appropriate context and a lot of capacity within the framework of religious tourism for cultural communication and transfer of religious-political concepts to them. In religious tourism such as Arba'een, pilgrims from different countries and cultures embark on this journey to perform religious action (Imani & Bod, 1395: 143).

In fact, considering the concept of intercultural communication and the uniqueness of cultural diversity of pilgrims Arba'een is a pioneer and picture of cross-cultural communication in the light of religious tourism. Even the suffering and suspension for everyday affairs during the religious journey of Arba'een serves as a means of producing meaning for Arba'een pilgrims (Razavi-Zadeh, 1396: 628).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was to identify Arba'een messages as media and answer questions about its social, cultural and political messages as media. According to the findings of the article, Shiites' rituals and practices are rich in meaning and have a prominent status. Ashura symbols and rituals, such as the Arba'een Walking and pilgrimage, have a fundamental role and impact on giving meaning to the Shiites' lives and their identities. Arba'een Walking with its long and checkered history, has received a great deal of attention and participation in recent years. The presence of about 20 million people in this religious ritual from around the world has made it the most unique and important human assembly and has produced important messages and meanings. The transmission of these religious messages has affected elites and world public opinion.

The findings of this study, in response to the triple questions, show that Arba'een Walking in the political dimension has created messages such as "unity of the Islamic Ummah", "fighting arrogance and authority". Also, this walk in the cultural dimension has shaped the meanings and messages such as: "Strengthening thought and unifying attitude", "Promoting culture of self-sacrifice and martyrdom", "Deep connection with Hussein's values" and.... On the other hand, the Arba'een assembly in the social

sphere also produces messages such as "order and solidarity", "transcultural and group solidarity and unity", "intercultural communication". Understanding the messages and meanings arising from the Arba'een Walking can help policy makers and media aligned with the Arba'een develop and reinforce these meanings and messages. Given the multiplicity of meanings and messages of Arba'een walk, it seems that more and specified specialized researches are needed to gain a deeper understanding of Arba'een's political, cultural and social messages in order to focus more on each of them, therefore these meanings and messages can be scrutinized in details.

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