

Muharram Procession

Who are these people?

They are Muslims called Shias who follow the family of the holy prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and their teachings. The word “Shia” means follower.

Why are they wearing black?

Black clothes are a sign of mourning and grief which they experience due to the events of Ashura.

Why are they beating their chest?

This is simply one of the many ways people mourn and remember this momentous tragedy of Ashura.

What is Ashura?

A significant day in Islamic tradition, where Imam Hussain (a.s.), the grandson of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him.) and his family were brutally martyred in 680 A.D. Imam Hussain (a.s) had sacrificed his life to maintain God’s unity, justice, and equality among fellow human beings. His movement therefore is not just for the Muslims rather for all of mankind.

Why are they taking out this procession now?

The procession serves to commemorate and mourn the martyrdom and great sacrifices made by Imam Hussain (a.s.), his companions and family in the name of humanity and justice on the Day of Ashura. It has nothing to do with current political activities or movements rather it is only about the remembrance of the greatest defender of human virtue. It is His message that millions gather every year to spread and bring awareness to it. Many Christians, Hindus, Mandaeans and even irreligious people commemorate Ashura across the entire world.

What are they chanting?

“Labbayk Ya Hussain” is an Arabic phrase which means: We are at your service, oh Hussain (a.s.)! It serves to reaffirm our commitment to the message and movement propagated by the Imam.

Which Nationality do they belong to?

The mourners of Imam Hussain (a.s.) come from a wide range of nationalities and cultures. So, this procession is not of a national or ethnic nature, rather it is a universal movement.

Why are the flags red and black?

The red and black flags are meant to underline the intense sadness and mourning of these days once again.

Why was the Imam Hussain and his family martyred on the Day of Ashura?

The ruler of the Muslim empire was a wicked, corrupt, nepotistic, and sinful man called Yazid. He wanted Imam Hussain (a.s) to give a pledge of allegiance however due to the illegitimacy and cruelty of Yazid’s rule, Imam Hussain (a.s.) refused. The Imam was then forced to leave his home in Medina, and he set off for a city in Iraq called Kufa. But the cowardly and merciless army of Yazid intercepted his caravan at Karbala and martyred all the male companions and family because the Imam was a man of principle who would not be intimidated by evil and strove only for justice and humanity.

What is Karbala?

Karbala is the place where the martyrdom took place and is now regarded as a holy place and a place of pilgrimage. It is located 105 km south of Baghdad in Iraq. The yearly commemoration is the largest peaceful gathering in the world.

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