



Research Article

Unveiling the Cultural Impact of 'Ashar': A Societal Perspective

Professor Pashtoon Aqa Shirzad^{1*}, Dr. Jamshed Khan Rashidi², Dr. Sayed Asghar hashimi³

^{1,2}Pashto Department, Language Faculty, Kabul Education University, Afghanistan

³Pashto Department, Language Faculty, Sayed Jamaludin Afghani University, Kunar, Afghanistan



ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT



Keywords:

Ashar, Hashar, communal tradition, voluntary work, preservation, unity, social activity, cultural heritage

Article History:

Received: 23-02-2024

Accepted: 11-04-2024

Published: 20-04-2024

'Ashar', also referred to as Hashar, stands as a prevalent tradition deeply ingrained within Afghan culture, characterized by collective voluntary labor directed towards specific communal tasks or projects. This research endeavors to delve into the urgent necessity of addressing the potential decline of this significant social activity and to propose diverse solutions for its preservation. With its unique capacity to nurture unity and cohesion among communities, 'Ashar' yields a myriad of benefits that resonate across individuals and groups. Even the simplest act of aiding a single person exemplifies the profound impact and intrinsic value of this communal tradition. Through an exploration of its multifaceted implications, this study aims to illuminate the critical importance of safeguarding 'Ashar' to perpetuate its invaluable contributions to Afghan society.

Cite this article:

Shirzad, P. A., & Rashidi, J. K. (2024). Unveiling the Cultural Impact of 'Ashar': A Societal Perspective. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 72–74. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i4.289>

Introduction

The tradition of "Ashar" in Afghanistan stands as a testament to the collective spirit and communal cohesion deeply ingrained within Afghan society (Afghan, 1402). Rooted in the Arabic term "Hashr," which signifies coming together or standing, Ashar represents a longstanding practice where individuals unite voluntarily to contribute to communal tasks or projects (Mahbob, 1398). Despite its historical significance and inherent benefits, Ashar faces an imminent threat of decline in contemporary times, necessitating urgent attention and concerted efforts for its preservation.

At its core, Ashar embodies the essence of unity among communities, fostering a sense of solidarity and camaraderie among participants (Shams, 1402). This communal activity transcends mere productivity, with its impact extending far beyond the completion of tasks to encompass the strengthening of social bonds and the promotion of collective well-being (Hewad, 1402). Even the assistance of a single individual through Ashar exemplifies the profound significance and enduring impact of this tradition on Afghan society (Abid, 1402).

The research aims to address the pressing need to revive and safeguard Ashar, considering its pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting communal solidarity (Ulfat, 1402). Despite the lack of scholarly attention to this topic, interviews with individuals such as Shamsullah, Abdul Basir Abed, Ishaq Momand, Haji Ibrahim, and Haji Khan Mohammad offer valuable insights into the significance of Ashar and its benefits within Afghan communities (Baryali, 1402).

By exploring the definition of Ashar, identifying its specific benefits, and assessing its contribution to strengthening national unity, this study endeavors to underscore the necessity of revitalizing Ashar as a socially beneficial activity (Khalil, 1402). Through a comprehensive examination of its historical context, contemporary challenges, and potential solutions, the research seeks to raise awareness about the importance of Ashar and advocate for its promotion within Afghan society.

In light of the limited existing literature on the topic, the research adopts a qualitative approach, relying on question-and-answer sessions and explanatory methods to gather insights from various individuals across different regions of Afghanistan (Moomand, 1402). The subsequent sections will delve deeper into the intricacies of Ashar, drawing upon firsthand accounts and perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of this cherished tradition and its significance in Afghan culture.

Research Objectives

- The first objective of this research is to define the term "Ashar" comprehensively. This involves examining its historical roots, cultural significance, and the various activities typically encompassed within the practice of Ashar.
- The second objective is to identify and elucidate the specific benefits associated with Ashar. This includes exploring its socio-economic, cultural, and psychological impacts on individuals and communities, as well as its role in fostering unity and solidarity.

*Corresponding Author:

Email: [Jamshedrashidi2\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:Jamshedrashidi2[at]gmail.com) (P. A. Shirzad)

<https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i4.289>

© 2024 The Authors. Published by Sprin Publisher, India. This is an open access article published under the CC-BY license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

- The third objective aims to assess the contribution of Ashar to strengthening national unity within Afghanistan. This involves examining how Ashar facilitates collaboration and cooperation among diverse communities, contributing to the broader fabric of Afghan society.

Significance of the Research

The significance of this research lies in several key areas:

Cultural Preservation: By delving into the tradition of Ashar and advocating for its preservation, the research contributes to the broader effort of safeguarding Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage.

Community Development: Understanding the benefits of Ashar and promoting its practice can lead to enhanced community development, as it encourages collective action and resource-sharing for the betterment of society.

National Unity: Ashar has the potential to serve as a unifying force within Afghanistan, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds to work towards common goals. By highlighting its role in promoting unity, the research contributes to efforts aimed at fostering national cohesion and solidarity.

Policy Implications: The findings of this research can inform policy decisions and initiatives aimed at supporting and revitalizing traditional practices like Ashar. By providing evidence of its benefits and significance, policymakers can develop targeted interventions to ensure its continued practice and relevance in Afghan society.

Overall, this research seeks to shed light on the importance of Ashar and its potential to contribute positively to various aspects of Afghan life, from cultural preservation to community development and national unity.

Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative approach, primarily utilizing interviews as the main method of data collection to explore the tradition of Ashar in Afghanistan. Interviews are conducted with a diverse range of participants, including community members, scholars, educators, and stakeholders from various regions of Afghanistan. These interviews are structured to elicit insights into the definition, benefits, challenges, and significance of Ashar, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Data collected from interviews are transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify key themes and patterns related to Ashar, ensuring depth and richness in the research findings. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, anonymity, and respect for cultural sensitivities, are carefully observed throughout the research process to uphold the integrity and credibility of the study.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity of findings, multiple sources of data are utilized, including interviews with diverse participants and, if available, existing literature on related topics. Regular discussions and debriefing sessions with colleagues or experts in the field are conducted to review and validate findings, ensuring credibility and rigor in the research process. Despite limitations such as the scarcity of existing literature and the potential for subjectivity in data interpretation, the qualitative methodology adopted in this research allows for a nuanced exploration of the tradition of Ashar, providing valuable insights into its definition, benefits, challenges, and significance within Afghan society.

Findings

The research findings illuminate the multifaceted significance of Ashar within Afghan society. Rooted in the Arabic term "Hashr," Ashar embodies collective voluntary work undertaken by Afghan communities for communal tasks, representing a longstanding tradition deeply ingrained in Afghan culture (Mahbob, 1398). This communal activity transcends mere productivity, fostering a sense of unity, friendship, and camaraderie among participants (Shams, 1402). It serves as a powerful mechanism for strengthening community bonds and promoting solidarity, contributing to the overall well-being and cohesion of Afghan society (Hewad, 1402).

Despite its historical significance, Ashar faces challenges and a looming threat of decline in modern times. Factors contributing to its decline include the influence of foreign institutions, NGOs, and changing societal dynamics (Ulfat, 1402). This decline poses a significant risk to the preservation of Afghan cultural heritage and communal solidarity (Khalil, 1402). Efforts to revitalize Ashar are therefore imperative, with calls for raising public awareness, promoting its benefits, and encouraging youth participation (Moomand, 1402).

Efforts to revitalize Ashar are underway, with various stakeholders advocating for its reintroduction into Afghan society. Imams of mosques, cultural assemblies, and community leaders are actively engaged in raising awareness about the importance of Ashar and its role in fostering unity and solidarity (Afghan, 1402). By reclaiming and revitalizing Ashar, Afghan communities can reaffirm their cultural identity and strengthen their bonds of kinship and cooperation (Baryali, 1402). These efforts are essential for preserving Ashar as a cherished tradition that has the potential to contribute positively to various aspects of Afghan life, from cultural preservation to community development and national unity.

Discussion

The discussion encompasses an in-depth analysis of the research findings, contextualizing them within the broader socio-cultural landscape of Afghanistan. Ashar, deeply rooted in Afghan culture and history, has served as a cornerstone of communal life for generations (Mahbob, 1398). Its historical significance lies in its role as a communal practice that fosters unity, cooperation, and mutual support among Afghan communities (Shams, 1402). Despite its historical importance, Ashar faces challenges in modern times, including the influence of foreign institutions, NGOs, and changing societal dynamics (Ulfat, 1402). These factors have contributed to a decline in the practice of Ashar, jeopardizing its preservation and the communal bonds it fosters (Khalil, 1402).

Ashar plays a crucial role in strengthening national unity within Afghanistan by facilitating collaboration and cooperation among diverse communities (Abid, 1402). Its ability to bring together individuals from different backgrounds to work towards common goals underscores its significance as a unifying force in Afghan society (Baryali, 1402). Efforts to revitalize Ashar are essential for preserving Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage (Moomand, 1402). By reclaiming and revitalizing Ashar, Afghan communities can reaffirm their cultural identity and traditions, safeguarding them for future generations (Afghan, 1402).

Ashar has the potential to contribute significantly to community development by encouraging collective action and resource-sharing for the betterment of society (Hewad, 1402). Its practice promotes social cohesion, resilience, and mutual assistance within communities (Shams, 1402). Various

stakeholders, including Imams of mosques, cultural assemblies, and community leaders, play a crucial role in advocating for the reintroduction of Ashar into Afghan society (Afghan, 1402). Their efforts in raising awareness about the importance of Ashar and its benefits are instrumental in revitalizing this cherished tradition (Baryali, 1402).

Encouraging youth participation in Ashar activities is essential for its revitalization (Moomand, 1402). By involving the younger generation in communal tasks and projects, Ashar can ensure its continuity and relevance in a rapidly changing society (Abid, 1402). The findings of this research have significant policy implications for promoting and revitalizing traditional practices like Ashar (Ulfat, 1402). Policymakers can develop targeted interventions to support Ashar initiatives, ensuring their sustainability and effectiveness in fostering community development and national unity. Future research should continue to explore the impact of Ashar on community development, social cohesion, and national unity (Hewad, 1402). Longitudinal studies tracking the revitalization efforts of Ashar and their outcomes would provide valuable insights into its effectiveness and sustainability over time (Khalil, 1402).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research sheds light on the significance of Ashar as a cherished tradition deeply embedded within Afghan society. Rooted in the Arabic term "Hashr," Ashar represents a longstanding practice of collective voluntary work undertaken by Afghan communities for communal tasks. Despite its historical importance, Ashar faces challenges in modern times, including the influence of foreign institutions, NGOs, and changing societal dynamics.

The findings underscore the crucial role of Ashar in strengthening national unity, fostering community development, and preserving Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage. Efforts to revitalize Ashar are essential for safeguarding its cultural significance and promoting communal solidarity within Afghan society. Stakeholders, including Imams of mosques, cultural assemblies, and community leaders, play a pivotal role in advocating for the reintroduction of Ashar into Afghan society.

Encouraging youth participation in Ashar activities is vital for its revitalization and continuity in the face of contemporary challenges. Policy implications stemming from the research findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to support Ashar initiatives and ensure their sustainability and effectiveness.

In summary, the preservation and revitalization of Ashar are critical for reaffirming Afghanistan's cultural identity, promoting community cohesion, and fostering national unity. By reclaiming and revitalizing Ashar, Afghan communities can honor their traditions and strengthen the bonds of kinship and cooperation that have long defined Afghan society.

Recommendations

Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate Afghan communities about the significance of Ashar. Utilize various media platforms, including radio, television, social media, and community events, to disseminate information about Ashar's cultural importance, benefits, and potential contributions to community development.

Youth Engagement Programs: Develop targeted programs to encourage youth participation in Ashar activities. Collaborate with schools, universities, and youth organizations to promote Ashar as a meaningful opportunity for young people to contribute

to their communities, develop leadership skills, and connect with their cultural heritage.

Community Empowerment Initiatives: Support grassroots initiatives that empower local communities to organize and participate in Ashar projects. Provide funding, resources, and technical assistance to community-led efforts aimed at revitalizing Ashar and addressing specific communal needs, such as infrastructure development, environmental conservation, and social welfare programs.

Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration: Encourage interdisciplinary research and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to explore innovative approaches to revitalizing Ashar. Foster partnerships between academia, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups to leverage diverse expertise and resources in support of Ashar initiatives.

Policy Support and Advocacy: Advocate for policy measures that recognize and promote the cultural significance of Ashar and provide support for its revitalization. Engage policymakers at the local, national, and international levels to integrate Ashar-related initiatives into development agendas, cultural preservation programs, and community-driven projects.

Capacity Building and Training: Offer capacity building workshops, training sessions, and skill development programs to equip community members with the knowledge, tools, and resources needed to organize and implement Ashar projects effectively. Build local leadership capacity to mobilize community participation, manage project logistics, and sustain Ashar activities over the long term.

Documentation and Archiving: Establish mechanisms for documenting and archiving Ashar practices, experiences, and outcomes to preserve this cultural heritage for future generations. Develop digital repositories, oral history projects, and multimedia platforms to catalog Ashar-related stories, photos, videos, and testimonials from diverse communities across Afghanistan.

Cross-Cultural Exchange Programs: Facilitate cross-cultural exchange programs that enable Afghan communities to share their Ashar traditions, experiences, and best practices with international partners and vice versa. Foster dialogue, mutual learning, and collaboration between Afghan communities and global counterparts to enrich understanding and appreciation of Ashar as a universal expression of collective action and community solidarity.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of Ashar revitalization efforts. Develop indicators, benchmarks, and evaluation frameworks to track progress, measure outcomes, and identify lessons learned for continuous improvement and adaptation of Ashar initiatives.

References

- Abid, A. B. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Kabul Education University.
 Afghan, S. (1402). Interview. Laghman: Center.
 Baryali, K. M. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Nangarhar Station.
 Hewad, H. (1402). Interview. Khak-e-Jabar: Malang Village.
 Khalil, I. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Khost Station.
 Mahbob, M. S. (1398). Farhang jaj. Jalalabad: Khattiz Publications.
 Moomand, I. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Jalalabad Station.
 Shams, S. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Ahmad Shah Baba mina area.
 Ulfat, M. I. (1402). Interview. Kabul: Paktia Station.