



"ARBAINISM REPRESENTS THE LITERARY FORM OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LITERATURE."

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15751757>

Abstract

The article discusses how composing works in the “Arbain” style has become a well-established tradition in the Islamic world, based on the following hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It also examines the division of such hadith collections into two categories, the theoretical aspects of Arbainism, and its moral and educational purpose.

Keywords:

Forty Hadiths, forty wisdoms, forty masnavis, forty articles, discourses, forty proverbs, expressions, forty revered figures, explanations, Sufism, famous saints, and moral-educational values.

Introduction

Since our country embarked on the path of independent development, numerous changes have been implemented across all fields. In this regard, opportunities have been created to study Islam, particularly its original sources, scientifically and to widely disseminate knowledge about it. The great creators and wise ancestors serve foremost as exemplary models. One such example, without a doubt, is the pursuit of learning and understanding the rulings of Islam. Specifically, the work “Arbain,” devoted to the commentary of hadiths that have become a traditional and educational source among scholars, has remained one of these valuable examples for centuries.

It is known to us that composing works in the “Arbain” style has become a well-established tradition in the Islamic world. This tradition is based on the following hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

من حفظ عن أمّتي أربعين حديثاً من أمر دينها بعثه الله فقيهاً وكُنْتُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ شَافِعاً وَشَهِيداً

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever preserves forty hadiths from my nation regarding matters of their religion, Allah will raise him as a jurist on the Day of Judgment, and I will be his intercessor and witness on that day.” [Note: This hadith is widely narrated by many muhaddiths, including Imam Bayhaqi from Abu Darda and Abu Huraira, Daylami from Ibn Mas’ud and Ibn Abbas, Abu Nu’aym ibn Mas’ud, and Ibn Jawzi from Ali (may Allah be pleased with them).]

The word “Arbain” comes from Arabic “arba’un,” meaning “forty.” It refers to collections of hadith consisting of forty selected sayings. Inspired by this hadith, many muhaddiths and scholars have composed “Arbain” works. These hadith collections can be divided into two categories:

1. Works compiling forty hadiths on a specific theme—for example, those about ethics and manners, virtues of knowledge, the merits of Medina, pilgrimage, or medicine. Navoiy’s “Arbain” belongs to this category, containing hadiths related to ethics and manners.

2. “Arbain” collections expressing the general foundations of Islam. These are not limited to a specific topic. Among this type, the most famous and respected is Imam Nawawi’s “Arbain.” [Hasankhon and Husainkhon Yahyo Abdulmajid. Navoiydan chu topqaylar navoe. – Tashkent: Hilol-nashr, 2014. – p. 60.]

“Arbainism” is the literary form of religious and spiritual works written based on forty hadiths [Karimov S. The tradition of Arbainism in Uzbek literature // Journal of Literary Studies. – 2022. – No. 3. – p. 47]. In Eastern literature, the tradition of “arbainism” represents a distinct poetic and religious-aesthetic direction. This tradition mainly developed within Islamic Sufism, moral-educational, and wisdom literature. The term “arbainism” usually refers to literary-religious works consisting of forty articles, hadiths, sayings, wisdoms, or biographical accounts.

In Eastern literature, “arbain” works are widespread, especially in Persian-Tajik and Turkic literatures. These collections typically take the following forms:

Forty Hadiths – translations and commentaries of hadiths

Forty Wisdoms – moral and instructive wise sayings

Forty Masnavis – forty masnavis written on a single theme

Forty Articles or maqolat – explanations of forty articles or phrases

Accounts about forty revered persons – biographies of famous saints in Sufism

Examples:

Imam Nawawi compiled a collection of forty hadiths known as “Arba'in an-Nawawiyya.”

Alisher Navoiy, although not precisely an “arbain,” in his “Nasoyim ul-muhabbat,” provides extensive information about many Sufi figures.

The theoretical aspects of arbainism are based on several key concepts:

Symbolic meaning of numbers:

The number forty symbolizes purification, perfection, and maturity in Islamic Sufism.

The number forty frequently appears in the Qur’an and hadith, e.g., Prophet Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai, Noah’s ark floated for forty days in the flood, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received revelation at age forty, and he prayed for forty days in the cave of Hira on Mount Nur.

Moral and educational purpose:

Arbain collections often call people to good character, piety, wisdom, and patience.

Therefore, such works are often read as textbooks or guides for advice.

Influence of Sufism:

Sufi ideas, such as the purification of the soul, cleansing of the heart, and attainment of knowledge, play a central role in arbain collections.

Didactic and aesthetic style:

Works in this genre may be written in poetic forms (masnavi, ghazal, rubai) or prose (stories, articles, didactic letters).

These works often have multiple layers of meaning—both apparent and hidden.

Arbainism is one of the genres in Eastern literature that combines religious, moral, and philosophical content, promoting spiritual maturity. It emerged from the harmony of Sufi thought, science, and literary creativity. Even today, this genre is studied as a cultural and spiritual heritage.

In Eastern literature, the tradition of “arbainism,” the poetic expression of forty hadiths, is a unique religious-aesthetic direction mainly developed within Islamic Sufism and moral

literature. The term originates from the Arabic “arba’un” meaning “forty,” referring to works written in the form of forty hadiths, wisdoms, or articles. The “Arba’in” by Hazrat Abdurahman Jami in Persian is considered the beginning of this tradition. Jami presented forty hadiths in poetic form. Alisher Navoiy translated Jami’s work into Turkic and created his own “Arba’in” with the aim of introducing religious wisdoms to the general public who did not know Arabic. He expressed the meanings of the hadiths in a simple and understandable manner.

The theoretical foundations of arbainism are based on the following:

Symbolic meaning of numbers: In Islamic Sufism, the number forty symbolizes purification and perfection; therefore, forty hadiths or wisdoms are selected in arbain works.

Moral-spiritual purpose: The main aim is to educate people morally, teach religious knowledge, and achieve spiritual purification.

Poetic form: Expressing hadiths in poetic form facilitates memorization and helps disseminate them widely.

Sufi influence: Arbain works discuss Sufi ideas such as purifying the soul and cleansing the heart.

The tradition of arbainism is widespread in Eastern literature and holds great religious and artistic importance. Through this tradition:

Religious wisdom is conveyed in an easily understandable and memorable form.

Ideas of moral education and spiritual purification are widely promoted.

Religious and moral knowledge is presented to society through poetry.

The tradition of arbainism is also reflected in the works of poets like Alisher Navoiy, whose writings express the meanings of hadiths in poetic form, demonstrating the continuity of this tradition. We present our reflections on this topic in a table. This way, the reader can easily grasp and consolidate the information in their mind.

(Table 1).

Section	Description / Content	Examples / Notes
1. Post-Independence Changes	Since independence, scientific research on Islam, especially its original sources, has expanded. Opportunities to study and popularize Islam increased.	Great creators and wise ancestors serve as role models.
2. Definition of Arbain Style	Religious-spiritual works based on forty hadiths. “Arbain” comes from Arabic “arba’un,” meaning “forty.”	The Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) famous hadith: “Whoever preserves forty hadiths from my nation regarding their religion...”
3. Types of Arbain Works	1) Forty hadiths on a specific theme (ethics, knowledge, pilgrimage, medicine, etc.) 2) Arbain expressing general Islamic principles	Navoiy’s “Arbain” belongs to the first group (ethics and manners). Imam Nawawi’s “Arbain” is the most famous of the second type.
4. Tradition of	A poetic and religious-aesthetic genre	Works contain forty articles,

Section	Description / Content	Examples / Notes
Arbainism	in Eastern literature, mostly developed within Islamic Sufism, moral-educational, and wisdom literature.	hadiths, sayings, wisdoms, or biographies of revered persons.
5. Forms of Arbain Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forty Hadiths (translations and commentaries) - Forty Wisdoms (moral teachings) - Forty Masnavis (poems on one theme) - Forty Articles (explanations) - Accounts of Forty Saints (biographies) 	Imam Nawawi: "Arba'in an-Nawawiyya" Alisher Navoiy: "Nasoyim ul-muhabbat"
6. Theoretical Foundations	<p style="text-align: center;">Symbolic meaning of numbers: 40 symbolizes purification and perfection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moral-educational purpose: promoting virtue, piety, patience - Sufi influence: soul purification, heart cleansing - Didactic-aesthetic style: poetic or prose, multi-layered meanings 	Number 40 in Quran and Hadith: Moses 40 days, Noah's flood 40 days, Prophet received revelation at 40 years, prayed 40 days in Hira cave
7. Cultural and Spiritual Role	A genre combining religious, moral, and philosophical content, born from the harmony of Sufi thought, science, and literary creativity.	Studied today as valuable cultural and spiritual heritage.
8. Development of Arbain Tradition	Hazrat Abdurahman Jami (Persian) wrote "Arba'in" in poetic form - Alisher Navoiy translated it into Turkic and created his own "Arba'in"	Goal: to make religious wisdom accessible to non-Arabic speakers
9. Main Purpose of Arbainism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moral education - Teaching religious knowledge - Spiritual purification 	Poetry helps memorization and wide dissemination
10. Poetic and Didactic Styles	Can be masnavi, ghazal, rubai, story, article, didactic letter; works often have both explicit and hidden meanings	Using poetry to convey religious and ethical teachings
11. Prominent Arbain Authors	Imam Nawawi, Hazrat Jami, Alisher Navoiy	Imam Nawawi's "Arba'in an-Nawawiyya" Alisher Navoiy's "Nasoyim ul-muhabbat"



The tradition of composing “Arbain” works, collections of forty hadiths or wisdoms, has a long-standing and significant role in Islamic and Eastern literary cultures. Rooted in the prophetic hadith encouraging the preservation of forty religious sayings, this genre blends religious, moral, and philosophical teachings in both poetic and prose forms. Symbolically linked to the number forty, which represents spiritual purification and maturity, these works aim to educate, spiritually uplift, and promote ethical behavior. Influenced heavily by Sufism, arbain collections often discuss soul purification and spiritual knowledge, making them important cultural and educational tools. The tradition has been maintained and enriched by prominent scholars and poets like Imam Nawawi, Hazrat Jami, and Alisher Navoiy, ensuring its relevance as both a spiritual guide and a literary art form. Today, arbainism continues to be studied as a valuable cultural and religious heritage that bridges literary creativity with spiritual wisdom.

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