

'Pilgrimage should not be a priority'

Here are a number of reasons why pilgrimage is important along with some counter-arguments. Separate them into two categories, those that are for and those that are against the statement. Rank the two piles from which you think is the most significant reason to least significant reason. Explain your most and least choices.



Going on a pilgrimage to Varanasi allows a devotee to bathe in the Ganges – and doing so, according to the Puranas, will take away sins. This leaves a devotee feeling spiritually refreshed.

The money spent through going on pilgrimage would be better spent on helping others, which in turn would gain spiritual benefit through the accumulation of good karma. Acts of kindness to others should be the priority.

Varanasi is one of the holiest cities on earth for Hindus. This city is dedicated to Shiva and through travelling to Varanasi a devotee is able to remain mindful of Shiva and connect with Brahman through him.

A devotee can worship Shiva, Agni and the goddess Ganga from their own home using murtis and through conducting their own aarti ceremony. Attending Varanasi aarti is a waste of time when you can do it at home yourself.

Gangajal, the water from the river Ganges, is considered the most pure and sacred water on Earth and so travelling to Varanasi would allow a devotee to bring some home to use in their puja and personal worship.

Going to Varanasi allows the devotee to observe and take part in Ganga Aarti. This also involves Agni Puja and is an act of collective worship and devotion to Shiva, Agni and the goddess Ganga who is personified through the River Ganges.

Brahmins are at the local mandir to guide one through communal worship and to help translate sacred texts. This will allow the devotee to connect with Brahman, through deities, and use the money saved for another purpose. E.g. charity.

Going on pilgrimage, to any site of sacred significance, allows a devotee to join others from their community in communal worship. It also gives a devotee time away from their busy lives to reflect on spiritual growth.

Aarti and puja's primary purpose is to allow a devotee to connect with Brahman, through Shiva, Agni and Ganga in a personal way. This would be better achieved at home without the distractions of tourists and pilgrims around you.

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Extension:

1. Explain which group of Hindus (Vaishnava or Shaiva) will be most likely to attend Varanasi. Then conduct some research to find out where the other group go.
2. Explain how practices at Varanasi and the other site of pilgrimage differ. Perhaps create a venn diagram on this to help you.
3. There are a number of Hindu holy men at Varanasi (sadhus, aghori and babas). Research and explain why they value Varanasi and why pilgrims value them.

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Agree

(reasons pilgrimage should not be a priority)



Disagree

(reasons pilgrimage should be a priority)



The similarities and differences between practices at two different sites of Hindu pilgrimage.



Vaisnava Site of Pilgrimage

Shaiva Site of Pilgrimage