

Abdul Waheed Qureshi\*

Ubaid Ullah†

Ayesha Butt‡

p-ISSN: 2663-3299

e-ISSN: 2663-3841

L-ISSN: 2663-3299

Vol. V, No. I (Winter 2020)

Page: 29 – 37

## Spiritual Abuse: A Critical Analysis of Ali and Brenton's *Iranian Nights*

### Abstract:

*The current research is a critical study of the play Iranian Nights (1989) and it has been tried to explain how certain religious fanatics use religion as their weapon to safeguard their interests. Perspectives of different prominent thinkers like Hughes (2015), Shulman (2016), Schultz (2016), and Black (2015), regarding spiritual abuse, religious intolerance, extremism, and sectarianism, etc. provided the necessary conceptual framework for the research in hand. The data was analyzed keeping in view the parameters of narrative analysis which enabled the researchers to interpret meanings beyond the textual fabrication of narration. It was concluded that spiritual abuse was the result of the narrowmindedness and intolerant behavior of the religious fanatics in the shape of Caliphs, Mullahs, and Kazis. These characters manipulated religious ideals and defamed the religion of Islam in the name of reformation.*

### Key Words:

Abuse; Extremism; Fanatic; Intolerance; Manipulation

### Introduction

Religion is regarded as the faith in the existence of the Deity/deities and the practices associated with any of the creeds. However, it can also be used as a tool to manipulate the faith of its practitioners by those who enjoy religious authority. Religion has been misused to instigate the behavior of the believers in their discomfort or that of the believers of other religions. [Ebrahim \(2014\)](#) by proclaiming: "I put people before gods. I respect believers of all kinds and work to promote interfaith dialogue, but my whole life I've seen religion used as a weapon, and I'm putting all weapons down", asserts that to create harmony among religions, one must respect all the religions and their fundamental teachings alike. Only, in that case, a future dialogue for having any universal harmony among all religions can be achieved. Religion should not be treated as a tool to misguide people and to distract their attention from the true teachings of their respective religions. Instead, religion should be regarded as a way to guide people to make them understand universal ideologies in the best possible way as it can bring harmony and prosperity among communities. But nowadays, religion has been used by some people for their personal benefits which is alarming to the society. In the words of [Marx \(1967\)](#): "Religion is the Opium of People" (p. 1).

Marx wants to convey the idea that religion is harmful and doomed because it is used by the people in (religious) power to maintain inequality and placid uncertainty. The upper-class

use religion to maintain their social status in society by allowing for the notion of divine-distribution through the oppressing ideals of the status quo by assuring them that their present state is pre-written as theirs (upper class) i.e. God wants them to be like this and that they will get rewards in the life hereafter. So, religious abuse is how people in some (religious) power misuse religious teaching and impose constructed ideologies on the common masses for their benefits. They commercialize religion to maintain unequal power relations in society. [Engela \(2019\)](#) is of the view that religion is one's own internal, personal, and psychological contentment with the creed to which they adhere fully and wholeheartedly. Achieving equality based on religious defamation of

\* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

† M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Email: [ubkhan707@gmail.com](mailto:ubkhan707@gmail.com)

‡ Assistant Professor, TESOL, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

other people and giving blasphemous connotations to their religion, by no means achieve eternity for the religion of those in power. It is dehumanizing techniques that religious fanatics exercise in one way or the other to manipulate the core religious teachings in the discomfort of their practitioners.

In the context of the present research, Iranian culture with its diverse and orthodox Islamic ideologies has been propagated. The Imams and Kazis who hold religious hierarchy, enjoy the dangerous power of drastic nature. The rhetoric that they use is colored with the religious gaudiness of spirituality and every action is done in the name of God. Their authority is shown, leading people on the wrong path while supposedly, camouflaging them with the religion of Islam. They misguide people there in the name of Islam and mis(represent) it as a religion where everything is done is prewritten and is according to the will of God.

### Summary of the Play

The play *Iranian Nights* (1989) was written in response to the culture crises caused by Rushdie's affairs. Explicitly, the play is not concerned with Rushdie and his book, but it provides a true understanding of Islam and shows the hypocrisy on the part of some religious officials. The play is concerned with those people who take religion as their property and consider that they have the right to issue fatwa and pronounce one's death, claiming that it is God's will and that the accused should be killed for Heaven's sake. The play questions how God conveys to them that one's death is assured. It also questions *their* surety of going to Heaven; isn't it God alone who will decide that who will go to hell and who will go to Heaven? Ali and Brenton are trying to show that religion is misunderstood by people due to a lack of knowledge. The play also shows that religion is used by some people for personal benefits by using 'fear' as God's weapon. *Iranian Nights* suggests that if anyone abuses a religion, then instead of pronouncing their death, one can argue with them with thoughts and ideas, as it is obvious that Islam spread more with debates and discussions and not with the sword. Instead of killing someone, you can try to convince them through the true and genuine religious teachings and ideologies.

### Critical Review of Related Literature

Modern-day world is seeing disharmony, chaos, and terrorism in numerous ways. One of these can truly be called religious intolerance. Religious intolerance is the major cause of today's unrest and is the product of unawareness of religious teachings by its practitioners in general and stakeholders in particular, who enjoy certain religious authority. They do not have the necessary religious knowledge and if they have any, it is manipulated by them concerning the common practitioners. Religion has been misused by people in (religious) power who consider it as their commodity, by playing with the beliefs of people to instigate their feelings through manipulation of their thoughts. They act as a connector between God and believers. They propagate the rumors that God blessed them with knowledge, and He wants them to teach his teaching to the people. Once the desired objective is got, they start playing with the psyche of the believers through their (corrupt) religious thoughts and teachings.

[Johnson \(2015\)](#) asserts that spiritual abuse is the type of abuse that is unique to religious networks. It is abuse in which an abuser, acting as a watchman between the person (victim) and God, corrupts the spiritual resources that underlie his victim's whole perspective. His assaults are not physical, nor even fundamentally mental; they are spiritual. Spiritual abuse is somewhat and subsequently related to mental abuse in the way that the abuser first tries to abuse someone spiritually, then takes control over one's mentality and perception so that he (the abused) can use them in the manner that benefits them (the abusers).

[Zakiyyah \(2017\)](#) explains that spiritual abuse is the least discussed type of abuse. However, in religious families and networks, it is one of the most frequent. It is any abuse characterized by the mental and emotional manipulation that try to persuade an individual to accept and believe in any suffering or provision, by injecting the idea of Divinity in the form of pre-written state of affairs in their minds. It also includes how individuals are refrained from making complaints against the abusers by criticizing and highlighting them or protesting them and questioning their authority. In other words, for the sake of religious commitment or under the

danger of discipline from God, spiritual misuse evacuates the right of people to make judicious decisions concerning their physical, emotional, and mental prosperity and security. Being conscious of the fact that they suffer, they do not protest. Under the false impression of the sacredness of religious authorities, their mental capacities paralyze and they do not think or if they think at all, it is again guided by the will of the abusers who always tell them about the curse and damnation by the God, had they criticized them. The concept of suffering from God is misinterpreted and the idea that God will punish the oppressed (or the abused) is constructed one because, the abusers know that if people understand and interpret religion, they will ignore them. They try to impose their constructed ideologies on people so that they can keep them oppressed by not providing them with the real cause of suffering which is why Nietzsche (1886) called religion functionless. Nietzsche (quoted by King, 2017) claims that religion is not divine, but it originates from “faith in opposite value” (p. 114). According to him, faith is something that does not have any physical proof. It is grounded in this transitory world and not in a perfect and static world. Nietzsche called religion as worldly, materialistic, and functionless. He says that religion is nothing but economic relation to God as people use religion for personal gains in everything. They do not care for its spiritual element and are in want of luxuries as (Hughes, 2015) states that some religions frequently, likewise utilize a portion of the cash to subsidize charity regularly; however, it is debatable that those who collect the funds use these funds in religious affairs or these funds are used to enrich those who are on the top. Religious blasphemy is also used sometimes for personal revenge in some religions which is a kind of spiritual abuse.

Hughes (2012) explains that religion is one of the sources to maintain peace and harmony in communities. But in fact, Islam and Zionism along with many other religions have been and could be misused in the past by the religious stakeholders to justify chaos, violence, and tussles. The focus here is on the misuse and misinterpretation of Islam that promotes violence and conflicts. Particularly after 9/11, the misuse of Islamic ideology for political purposes has been the greatest concern for the Muslims of the world to guard their religion against the harmful effects of those who abuse it. The constructed ideologies mark Islam as intolerant religion especially, regarding women's rights as Johnson (2015) states that there have been recorded examples of honor killings, aggressive behavior at home, and decidedly misogynic compositions and verbal interchanges by Mullahs in Islam.

Lichter (quoted in Johnson, 2015) elaborates on the privileges given to men by Islam and the lower social status given to women there like: man, as patriarch, holder of the power of giving divorce, and his right of polygamy. But, regarding women's rights, Islam, and the teachings of the Holy Quran have been misinterpreted and misrepresented. Women have been given many due rights as well in every capacity. A matchless example of women's rights in Islam is where a man (husband) will be responsible for all the expenses (including those of breastfeeding and the like) of the woman (wife) and the newborn, after the birth of the baby: “Upon the father is the mother's provision and their clothing” The Holy Quran (2: 233). Why does Lichter believe in the so-called misinterpretation is that some of the religious authorities have (as a business) misrepresented Islam before the world?

The true understanding of Islam has the answer to the contention regarding women by Johnson. Islam has given equal rights to women as well. If on the one hand, it has restricted women from participation in certain activities, it has, on the other hand, given due rights to women.

In a nutshell, spiritual abuse is defined paradoxically by Johnson and VanVonderen (quoted in Oakley & Kinmond, 2013) as abuse which is done on the pretext of strengthening spiritually the individuals while being pushed to the edge by actually weakening their psychological faculties in the form of strict adherence to the crude religious ideologies which are thought to be taken for granted and which interpretation by the common people is thought to be sinful. This gives way to strict compliance without any regard to discretion, logic, and debate.

## Conceptual Framework

The primary teaching of every religion is to bring peace and prosperity and to avoid violation of human rights. But nowadays, due to ignorance and misinterpretation of religion (as shown in the context of *Iranian Nights*), it is misused for personal benefits, which is the major cause of various problems at different levels in Iranian culture. Religious teachings of patience and toleration are often thrown aside and intolerance becomes the major cause of the hatred among believers of different religions and sects within a religion. Hughes (2015) provides many examples of the misuse of religion. According to him, religion is used as a 'mean' to give way to destruction against the Jewish community in Europe. Around six million Jews were slaughtered in the Nazi battle of abhor and murder; also, millions of people were seriously mishandled and exposed to loathsome torments and other despicable treatment. This is not an instance of the religion itself submitting to abuse but rather of individuals misusing religion as a method for recognizing and focusing on a minority for assault and butchery. Religion was at the core of extreme fight between Catholics and Protestants in France amid the late Sixteenth Century. Around 3 million or more individuals were executed. Religion was utilized to legitimize rehashed wars, triumphs, intrusions, and occupations by European Catholics. In countries like Saudi Arabia, religious law is utilized to implement serious persecution against women. Religious teachings regarding human rights especially women's rights are misinterpreted and mis-conveyed to people by religious officials due to their (people's) ignorance and little knowledge, which promotes violence and intolerance in the case of women. Through their orthodox constructed ideologies, they make religion patriarchal and use it as a tool to suppress women's voice for their basic rights that promotes fear, hatred, and many other problems in society which mark religion as intolerance institution.

[Shulman \(2016\)](#) states that most often, ignorance results in intolerance, and individuals in power (guardians, educators, and so on) being insensible and ignorant, pass down this ignorance and intolerance to the next generations. Ignorance regularly prompts fear, fear can prompt abhor, and abhor can prompt violence. Restricting people's knowledge is a tool to abstain them from reality in this way. Strife between individuals of various religions may start with simple ignorance. Individuals who know nothing about different religions, simply assume the other religions altogether different. They do not know that many religions share similar fundamental thinking. In this way, these people think that other religions must not be right. In different cases, certain people assume that if their religion is right then the others' must be wrong because mostly, we do not allow people to go rationalize the truth. Ignorance is the base of spiritual abuse and it happens when people in power misuse their power and little knowledge of their trade to misguide people in the name of God and other sacred teachings. Their ignorance hurts people both emotionally and mentally.

Spiritual abuse is somewhat related to emotional abuse and emotional blackmailing. One of the most important strategies on the part of a fake religious official is that first they win the hearts of the believers and take them to the place where they start trusting them blindly. Once they win their trust, they start (mis)using them for personal benefits by using the name of God. The abusers also misuse sacred objects for their satisfaction.

[Schultz \(2016\)](#) perceives that, religious official works on something that psychologists call spiritual abuse. This abuse happens when individuals in places of power misuse their power and profound position, to manipulate them for their very own benefits. Abusers might be priests and different pioneers who misuse the authority or the abusers might be individuals and lay leaders who abuse church staff. Victims of spiritual abuse often feel disgraced, controlled, threatened, and embarrassed. Exploited people regularly place an elevated level of trust in spiritual leaders. Spiritual abusers regularly utilize implicit standards, mystery, neurosis, and dictatorship. They are often image-conscious people and averse to criticism. Sammons (quoted by Schultz, 2016) has some expertise in counseling victims and culprits of spiritual abuse. He says that spiritual abusers are regularly unreliable individuals. They rely upon others to acknowledge them, elevate them, and follow their footprints. They attempt to supplant God; i.e. spiritual abusers "often deny they hurt people. They deceive themselves" and "sadly, they're *not* [italics added] likely to reform" (para. 7). Manipulation and misuse of

religious power for a commercial purpose leads to spiritual maltreatment. The politicization of religion is also one of the major causes of spiritual abuse that paves the way to the concept of sects. Sectarianism is the concept of different groups of believers within one religion who seek and bring differences among themselves. Some people promote violence through the concept of the sect by moralizing one and demoralizing the other although, Islam rejects the concept of sects. Sectarianism constantly causes religious conflicts due to the misinterpretation of religious knowledge by spiritual leaders. The current era provides many examples of spiritual abuse due to sectarianism like the tussle between the Sunni and Shia sects in the North-Western region of Pakistan, in Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Talking about the political nature of the sectarianism, [Black \(2015\)](#) says that sectarianism has led to an unseen war among the Arab nations. They have demanded an individual identity for them and up to an extent, they have succeeded in it but the sectarian or religious ties of the various groups to their specific creeds have also made it unclear for them to decide. They are on the same front in as far as the issue of identity is concerned but are also diverged, as being in power is the ultimate reality that they are after. This tug of war for gaining power in the Arab World is sure to lead them to “a series of civil wars among brothers” (para. 17). This war has the discourse of ‘sectarianism’ in the background which will pave the way for the internal chaos in the Arab territories for gaining political power.

Religion has also been used constantly for sexual satisfaction on the part of religious teachers. Sometimes, they do wrong to their students and then use them constantly for their siliceous aims. According to [Abdullah \(2019\)](#), recently, there were at least two revealed cases of sexual maltreatment including Muslim religious educators, in Singapore. In April, a 73-year-old religious teacher was sentenced to 16-month imprisonment for attacking his 36-year-old female understudy. The abuse was submitted in 2017 in a mosque, under the appearance of relieving her of dark magic. Only a month earlier, a 31-year-elderly person, a religious educator at a neighborhood Madrasah, was imprisoned for eight months for sexually abusing his understudy, a young lady who was only eight years of age. Such cases would qualify as instances of “spiritual abuse” (para 1). Most often people misuse or misinterpret the knowledge of their trade to satisfy themselves and get whatever pleases them.

The notions of intolerance, ignorance, emotional abuse, the exercise of religious authority, the politicization of religion, sectarianism, and sexual behavior of religious teachers provide the necessary conceptual background for the current research. If seen deeply, they together lead to spiritual abuse globally. However, the researchers’ perspective lies in considering this ‘spiritual abuse’ as the discursive practice. This abuse leads to the construction of some orthodox ideologies on the part of those who have very little religious knowledge, which is misinterpreted and conveyed to people in the manners they want. They impose constructed and manipulated laws through their oral authority because religion has been socialized by different groups. A theologian for example, in Islamic ideology (being male always), can make illegal things legal and vice versa due to his religious power. He makes religion a monster for the Muslims who, based on a little knowledge about Islam, always think about Islam as a staunch and rigid religion. Religion should not be centered on and the subject of some specific groups, rather, it should be open to all alike to interpret it wherever they are in the need of guidance. It is only through debate and dialogue that this discursivity can be shed.

### Statement of the Problem

In almost every religion, some groups consider that religion is centered on them only and that only they will interpret it and will teach religious principles to communities. They consider themselves to decide the ways in which they will convey the basic principles of religion. [Dimas \(2017\)](#) states that earlier, religion had constantly assumed an imperative job in advancing peaceful and harmonious connections inside and among individuals and networks. But now, things have changed. Religion is currently being utilized as an engine for spreading double-dealing and promoting the demolition of brains, lives, networks, and resources. Certain characters in *Iranian Nights* proclaim themselves to be the owners of religion and regard it as their commodity to sell,

thereby making religion a predicament for the believers. The current research is an attempt to analyze the ways that these characters use and factors responsible for the commercialization of religion for their interests. [Diderot \(1993\)](#) explains the manipulative and destructive role of the priests by making a comparison between them and the philosophers. It is the latter who are regarded to be the molders of society through their knowledge and thinking. But the thing is different since, it is the clergy, who have mis(taken) the job of the philosophers and have changed the minds of people by playing with their emotions in the form of true religious ideals towards rigid fundamentalism.

### The Rationale of the Study

The literature studied until now elaborates on ignorance, intolerance, inequality, violence, control, oppressing women, politicization, manipulation of peoples' ideologies, and commercialization of religion, which lead to spiritual abuse. However, the current project has tried to understand the epistemological and dialectical consideration of the psychological fear, injected in the minds of people through language use that marks it 'spiritual abuse', done through the discursive practice of the language. This abuse leads to the construction of some orthodox ideologies on the part of those who have very little religious knowledge, which is misinterpreted and conveyed to the common people in the manners that religious authorities want. They impose constructed and manipulated laws through their oral authority because religion has been socialized by different groups. The current project has brought these things to light to be thought-provoking which seem to be the root causes of almost all the world's conflicts in the current era.

### Research Objective

The research intends to explore the ways in which spiritual abuse is done by various characters in the play *Iranian Nights*.

### Research Question

The analysis and interpretation are guided by the following research question:  
How is religion misused by various characters in the context of *Iranian Nights*?

### Method of Analysis

The method that the authors used for data analysis is narrative analysis because the focus is on the narrative structures that are the basic elements of a story. According to [Bamberg \(2010\)](#), when the narrators reread a story, they introduce and experience narrative structures. They place and study characters both synchronically and diachronically in a larger context, arranging events to understand or find out what occurred, or what might have occurred through their subjective interpretation. It means that the stories and narratives explain and qualify what has been into what might be. They search out why certain events are and why and how they change in different manners. Narrative analysts are interested in finding out the necessary links between the story and the techniques or structures used in the narration of it, to draw out the critical conclusions. To analyze and interpret the events occurred in the context of *Iranian Nights*, the authors have, therefore, opted for narrative analysis, as it can put more importance on examining the story accounts, or the purpose might be to infer and better understand the different strains of specific events (Bamberg, 2010). Asserting the critical nature of the inference, [Wertz et al. \(2011\)](#) while referring to Ruthellen, say: "narrative analysis is "not a record of what 'really' happened," per se, but rather it attempts to bring "forth something new — something not apparent in the surface of the text" (326). This perspective focuses on the interpretive domain of those who read the story; their critical reasoning which becomes subjective and individual.

In the same way, [Allen \(2017\)](#) explains that narrative analysis is a kind of logical interpretation where the researcher explains stories that are narrated inside the setting of research or potentially practiced in human casual life. Researchers who carry this kind of investigation make different yet similarly significant and

important analysis and inference, by concentrating on various components. These components are incorporated in the organization and arrangement of the story which makes it elemental for the purpose for which the story is written i.e. the theme and its technique of narration i.e. “every text is in one way or the other, the progression of another text “the fabula”... with the difference that ideas are slightly changed “syuzhet” ([Qureshi, 2014, p.93](#)).

The research aims to bring to surface certain constructed events in the context of *Iranian Nights* which influence everyday experiences of people, to find out the causes and effects of these events and therefore to bring their better understanding.

### Analysis and Interpretation

1. *“In nineteen hundred and ten ... In nineteen hundred and forty-six ...*

CALIPH

*(Interrupting. [italics in original])*

*Dog! Hast thou forgotten thine own calendar?*

OMAR

*“In thirteen hundred and sixteen Kasravi the unbeliever was brought to trial on the charge of slandering Islam. The devotees did not wait for verdict. They shot him in open court. Once death is decreed, God's will be done”.* ([Ali & Brenton, 1989; p. 1](#))

The word “*Caliph*” is a noun used for a religious scholar and preacher in Islamic ideology who has the authority to teach and convey religious teaching to the Muslim community. Omar is narrating the story of Kasravi and uses the Christian calendar “*nineteen hundred and forty-six*” to refer to that event, that is why the Caliph calls him a dog. “*Dog*” as a noun is related to a broader social ideology in the sense of viciousness and degradation. Omar is degraded and called a dog by the Caliph for not being faithful to his religion and religious ideology and teachings i.e. for not narrating the things in his own (Hijri) calendar. It shows the negative behavior of the “*Caliph*” towards the personality of Omar. Such negative attitudes are not expected from theologians and caliphs in Islamic ideology.

The same dialogue between the Caliph and Omar also shows the intolerant and inflamed nature of the religious scholar who cannot tolerate a slight divergence from Islamic concepts to modernity. Omar retells the story out of the fear of the “*Caliph*” by giving reference to a past event of Kasravi that happened in “*thirteen hundred and sixteen*”, according to the Hijri calendar. “*Kasravi*” is a proper noun who is qualified with the adjective “*the*” as unbeliever. Ahmad Kasravi was an Iranian author and active member of the Constitutional revolution. The writer mentioned him as unbeliever on the basis that he defamed Islam. He was brought to trial according to Islamic jurisprudence.

In the dialogues, the words Islam, unbeliever, devotees, and verdict collocate with each other which makes it the discourse in ‘Sharia Court’. The devotees specifically, refer to a specific group of Islamic believers, who killed him in the court (after he was blamed for defaming Islam, Navvab Safavi issued a fatwa pronouncing his death) ([Kasravi, 2012](#)) before the verdict. This story overlaps with the story of Salman Rushdie, whose affairs brought culture crises and in response to which the play *Iranian Nights* was written. Rushdie wrote a book *Satanic Verses* for which he was called as ‘Murtad’ (apostate) by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian spiritual leader, who pronounced his death. The writer is trying to show that if one is charged with revolting from Islam and its teachings, they will be put to death as Kasravi, who was killed before the verdict. Islam is misinterpreted by the so-called religious stakeholders and they have introduced strict and strange rules through their orthodox ideologies that are enough to promote fear in communities in the name of religion. The Muslims are addressed here that a little religious knowledge can be harmful and dangerous, and it paves the way to religious extremism that in turn causes thousands of problems.

One of these problems is the eradication of religious harmony among believers of the same religion or different religions. Further, the writer says that the concept of “*Once death is decreed, God's will be done*”; is

socially constructed and is related to the idea that it is God, who wants the believers to kill those who defame religion. It is questionable, how God conveyed to them to kill anyone? This marks religion as an intolerant institution. The intolerance is often seen due to the constructed ideologies and lack of harmony and proper religious knowledge. The dialogue also can imply that killing one apostate can stop the other blasphemous mishap. No religion allows its believers to promote violence and war. Due to the ignorance and intolerant nature of few fanatics, the primary teachings of religion regarding peace and harmony, are vaguely communicated to the public that makes it as terror producing organization. Religious intolerance, therefore, is at its peak these days. If the constructed ideologies are mended and religion is interpreted and explained in its revealed form, harmony, peace, and prosperity among religions can be achieved.

2. “*Caliph: Ah. Theology. Heads will roll. And what was the blasphemy*”. (Ali & Brenton, 1989; p. 4)

“*Theology*”, “*blasphemy*” and “*heads rolling*”, the last one used to mean beheading, collocate with each other and refer to a broader social context of the idea of killing and chopping off heads of the people who commit blasphemous acts. The word “blasphemy” is directly related to theology because it means to speak against or disrespecting a religion. In the context of the play *Iranian Nights*, written in response to the fatwa issued for Salman Rushdie’s death, it has nothing directly to do with Rushdie and his book but it provides a true insight of Islam and highlights how Islam is abused by some religious stakeholders. In the dialogue above, a Caliph (theologian in Islamic ideology) is expressing his feelings after listening about a blasphemous act, and before any investigation and verdict, the “*Caliph*” says that “*heads will roll*”, though he does not know what blasphemy is. This shows that some theologians make things for granted for the people through their void proclamations. They, being at the heights of religious extremism, do not use reason to investigate incidents like blasphemy. They implement their ideologies where they consider religion as their property and use it the way they want. They blatantly interpret the basic religious teachings due to their little religious knowledge which promotes fear and hatred among people towards different religions in different communities.

## Conclusion

Islam is abused in the name of the reformation in the context of *Iranian Nights*. The character of Caliph is crucial in the definition of the religious abuser. His very intolerant nature and narrowminded behavior do not allow the free-thinking of Omar. Time and again he (Omar) is halted in his perception. He, out of the inherent fear of the religious fanatic like the Caliph, seems lost in his choice of words and is puzzled what to say. He knows that denying the Caliph’s authority could mean beheading on the pretext of blasphemy. He, therefore, becomes very clear in his account of the events to save himself from the harsh criticism of the public who take for granted whatever is told to them. People who enjoy certain religious power and authority, use religion as a weapon to defend their causes. They construct such ideologies that are extremist in nature and character and want their fulfillment in true spirit by the public who are deliberately kept in dark. They do not allow them the true understanding and interpretation of religious teachings and keep them unaware by pushing them into the blind acceptance of the ideals in toto as Divine and uninterpretable. This ignorance paves the way for intolerance like the one observed in the case of Kasravi. The Muslim mob of the audience became so frustrated and intolerant that they killed him in the court before the pronouncement of the verdict. Due to the demagogic attitude of the spiritual leaders, religious extremism has become a universal disease with the chronic capacity of fundamentalism, chaos, unrest, and a plethora of social and geographical evils.



## References

- Abdullah, A. (2019, July 16). Islam and spiritual abuse. *The Karyawan*. Retrieved November 3, 2019, from <https://karyawan.sg/islam-and-spiritual-abuse>
- Ali, T., & Brenton, H. (1989). *Iranian nights*. London: A Nick Herm Book.
- Allen, M. (Ed.). (2017). *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Bamberg, M. (2010) Narrative Analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), 'APA handbook of research methods in psychology', Vol. 2. Washington: APA Press.
- Black, I. (2015, April 5). Sunni v Shia: Why the conflict is more political than religious. *The Guardian*. Retrieved December 1, 2019, from <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/05/sunni-shia-why-conflict-more-political-than-religious-sectarian-middle-east>
- Diderot, D. (1993). *Political writing*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Dimas, D. (2017, July 5). The misuse of religion. *News Rescue*. Retrieved November 3, 2019 from <https://newsrescue.com/misuse-religion-david-dimas/>
- Ebrahim, Z. (2014). *The terrorist's son: A story of choice*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. Retrieved December 1, 2019 from <https://www.pdfdrive.com/the-terrorists-son-a-story-of-choice-d166023691.html>
- Engela, C. (2019). *Dead man's hammer*. *The Quantum Series*. [n.p.]: Lulu.com.
- Hughes, A. W. (2012). *Abrahamic religions: On the uses and abuses of history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, M. (2015, January 17). What are the best examples of 'misuse' of religion? *Quora*. Retrieved October 26, 2019 from <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-best-examples-of-misuse-of-religion>
- Johnson, A. J. (Ed.). (2015). *Religion and men's violence against women*. New York: Springer.
- Kasravi, Ahmad Assassination. (2012). "Kasravi, Ahmad", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition. Retrieved November 30, 2019 from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kasravi-ahmad>
- King, R. (Ed.). (2017). *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and contemporary approaches and methodologies*. New York: Colombia University Press.
- Marx, K (1967). *Critique of Hegel's 'philosophy of right'* (A. Jolin & J. O'Malley, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oakley, L., & Kinmond, K. (2013). *Breaking the silence on spiritual abuse*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Qureshi, A. W. (2014). *Oppression of women in patriarchal societies: An analytical study of Anita Shreve's novels*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Schultz, T. (2016, July 13). Dangers of spiritual abuse. *Holy Soup*. Retrieved November 7, 2019 from <https://holysoup.com/dangers-of-spiritual-abuse/>
- Shulman, L. E. (2016). Religious intolerance: Causes and solutions: Some observations. *Religious Tolerance*. Retrieved December 1, 2019 from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/religious-intolerance-causes-solutions-observations.html> [The Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqara Verse 233.](#)
- Wertz, F. J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L. M., Josselson, R., Anderson, R., & McSpadden, E. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Zakiyyah, U. (2017). When religion is a weapon: Understanding spiritual abuse. *Al-Walaa Publications. UZ Articles*. Retrieved October 26, 2019 from <https://uzauthor.com/understanding-spiritual-abuse/>