

Hijacked the Minbar: The Penalty of Religious Intolerance

By: Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed

Ph.D. (USA), NDI, Shahadat al Aalamiyyah (Al Hawzah, Najaf, Iraq), M.A, LLM (Shariah)

Musheer: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan

Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan

Chairman: The Guardian Pakistan

The Writer is Attorney at Law and Religious Scholar

Website: www.durrenajaf.com

Academia: <https://durrenajaf.academia.edu/QaziBorhany>

Contact for spiritual help: najafspiritualcenter@gmail.com

Abstract: *The life of Muhammad Rasulullah (S) exemplifies mercy, humility, and Adl-principles that were meant to guide humanity toward compassion and balance. Yet, in many contemporary Muslim societies, especially across South Asia, religious authority has drifted far from this Nabawi example. Religion, instead of serving as a moral compass, is often used as a tool for influence and manipulation. Emotionalism has replaced 'ilm, and rituals have replaced reflection. Consequently, while Muslims express deep love for Islam, widespread ignorance of its authentic teachings has allowed exploitation and intolerance to flourish. Religious intolerance has become a major crisis. Many clerics, instead of promoting Unity and mutual care, spread division and hostility from the Minbar. Rasulullah (S) emphasized patience, Adl, and mutual support-Muwasat, but modern discourse often promotes superiority and sectarianism. Religious leaders who seek fame and wealth erode the moral fabric of the Ummah. True Islam, however, remains a faith of compassion, wisdom, and social justice. Islamic institutions once established to protect the poor, are frequently misused for personal gain. Sacred funds such as Zakaat and Bait-al-Maal are diverted, betraying the spirit of honesty and equality of the Qur'an. The emergence of clerical arrogance and hypocrisy has deepened this moral crisis. Islam rejects priesthood; no cleric holds authority unlimited, over other Muslims. As Al Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) stated: "Ulama aligned with rulers are the most dangerous, for they corrupt faith under the guise of piety". Sectarianism's modern roots are also political. Similarly, many Madaris once centers of scholarship, now discourage critical thinking and promote rigid interpretations. Reforming these institutions is crucial to restore Islam's intellectual and ethical spirit. True progress for Muslims lies not in the blind following of Western lifestyles but in reviving Islamic values of Taqwa, 'ilm, and Adl. The Qur'an reminds believers that honor comes through righteousness, not appearance or power. Reconnecting with this Nabawi vision is essential for rebuilding a balanced, educated, and compassionate Muslim society.*

Keywords: *Islamic ethics; Clerical corruption; Sirah Nabawiyyah; Zakaat; Sectarianism; Madaris; Political Islam; Taqwa; Muslim Unity; Deen of Fitrah; Social Justice; Islamic reform.*

1. Introduction

The Minbar, a religious platform in the Masjid from which sermons are delivered, symbolizes Hidayah, Haq, and the moral authority of Aqidah. When those entrusted with this responsibility misuse it for personal financial and political gain, the very soul of religion of Islam becomes endangered. The phrase "Hijacked the Minbar" vividly captures this distortion, a scenario where corrupt clergy-Ulama al-Su manipulate Talim of Shariah to serve worldly interests, sow division, and breed intolerance among Muslims. Religious intolerance often begins not in the hearts of the Muslims but in the words of misguided Ulama who exploit devotion for dominance. Instead of preaching kindness, Adl, and Wahadah - the true essence of Islam - such figures weaponize doctrine to justify hatred and exclusion. The spiritual trust of the community is thus betrayed, leading to polarization, extremism, and the erosion of social harmony. The penalty of this Fasad is severe. When religion becomes a tool of intolerance, societies lose their moral compass. Faith turns into fanaticism; diversity into division. The young, searching for meaning, may be led astray, while the genuine message of peace is drowned in the noise of manipulation. Ultimately, both religion and humanity suffer - the former losing its purity, the latter its empathy. True religious leadership calls for humility, wisdom, and sincerity. The Minbar must remain a beacon of enlightenment, not a stage for control. Clergy who ascend it bear the sacred duty to uplift minds, not incite hostility. Only by reclaiming the Minbar for truth and tolerance can communities restore the integrity of faith and heal from the wounds inflicted by corruption in sacred spaces.

The Sirah of Muhammad Rasulullah (S) stands as the ultimate example of Rahmah, humility, and Adl. His conduct was the living Qur'an, and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) carried forward his Daw'ah through their words and sacrifices. Yet majority of the contemporary clerics act in ways far from his ethos. In different parts of the Muslim world, especially South Asia, religion has become a means of influence and emotion rather than enlightenment and purification. Amir al-Mumineen Moula 'Alī (as) warned:

"Two groups will destroy religion, an ignorant worshipper and a corrupt Aalim."

Today, gatherings meant for remembrance often fuel division, and harmful acts are falsely labeled as "Barakah."

Most Muslims inherit Islam by birth, not by understanding. Aqidah has become identity, not transformation. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) taught that Ibadah without understanding has no value, yet weak Talim and emotional preaching have replaced true scholarship. The love for Islam remains deep, but often lacks the intellectual and moral clarity needed to preserve it. Reviving the Talim of Rasulullah (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) is not sectarian, it is a return to Islam's essence, where 'ilm refines 'ibadah, Rahmah guides strength, and Adl uplifts humanity.

2. The Spread of Religious Intolerance

Muhammad Rasulullah (S) embodied Rahmah and Adl, and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) upheld his Daw'ah through Hikmah and sacrifice. Yet, soon after his passing, political ambition and tribal rivalry disguised as religion sowed seeds of intolerance. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) became its earliest victims, marginalized, persecuted, and assassinated for defending Islam's true spirit. Despite immense suffering, they responded with patience and compassion, never hatred. This was the

beginning of religious intolerance in Islam, a disease that evolved into sectarian hostility. Instead of following Nabawi command:

"The believer is one from whose tongue and hand others are safe,"

Religion became a tool for exclusion. Today, this sickness persists. In many societies, preachers use the pulpit to attack others and deepen divisions. Public spaces echo with anger, and difference is seen as enmity rather than diversity within the Ummah.

Rasulullah (S) taught Muwāsāt (mutual care) and Adl, but these values are fading. Some clerics now pursue fame and influence instead of unity and purification. As Dr. Muhammad Iqbal warned, when Ulama forget the balance between faith and intellect, they harm the Ummah. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) reminded us that Islam is a religion of Knowledge, reflection, and Rahmah, not prejudice or ritualism. Al Imam Jafar al-Şadiq (as) said:

"He who acts without 'ilm destroys more than he builds."

Amir al-Mumineen Alī (as) said:

"People are enemies of what they do not understand."

True Islam is not about sectarian superiority but about Adl, 'ilm, and compassion. Only by returning to the Nabawi path can the Ummah regain its unity and moral strength.

3. Islamic Institutions and Clerical Exploitation

Islam was founded to build a just and caring society. Rasulullah (S) established systems like Zakāh, Şadaqah, and Qard al-Ḥasanah to ensure social welfare, and the Bayt al-Māl served as a public trust. Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as), as Khalifah, embodied accountability extinguishing a public lamp when attending to personal matters and reminding his Governors that Bayt al Maal - public funds belong to Allah and the Ummah. Today, many religious institutions have strayed from this trust. Zakāt and different religious donations are mostly misused, and wealth meant for the underprivileged class uses for personal luxury. Such corruption violates the command of the Qur'an that the needy have a right in our wealth (Qur'an 70:24–25). The Ahl al-Bayt (as) lived the opposite spirit feeding the poor, orphan, and captive purely for the sake of Allah (Qur'an 76:8–9).

Tragically, while Masajid and institutions multiply, the poor remain neglected. Outward religion thrives, but its moral essence fades. Al Imam Jafar al-Şadiq (as) said:

"He who withholds the rights of others is far from Rahmah of Allah."

When the Minbar becomes a source of earning and public trust is violated, the spiritual soul of Islam dies. Rasulullah (S) foretold:

"A time will come when people will consume the wealth of Allah unjustly and consider it lawful"

A reality now visible, true revival lies in returning to the Divine Model of Qur'an and Sunnah, which is religion of Fiṭrah, a Aqidah rooted in Adl, sincerity, and service. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) showed that Taqwa without Adl is hypocrisy and charity without sincerity is mere display. Their path remains the blueprint for restoring the Ummah's moral integrity.

4. Corruption, Hypocrisy, and Clerical Arrogance

Corruption and hypocrisy have long been the twin diseases that erode the moral foundation of any society. In the Muslim world, these ailments have often taken root within the very institutions that were meant to guide and purify. When religion becomes entangled with greed, pride, and self-interest, its light is dimmed and its message distorted. Many top clerics who once shouldered the sacred duty of Amānah - moral guardianship and service-have instead turned the Minbar into a throne and the 'ilm of religion into a currency for influence. This tragedy is not new; it began in the earliest days after the demise of Muhammad (S), when political ambitions overshadowed spiritual integrity. The Ahl al-Bayt (as), the true inheritors of Nabawi Hikmah faced relentless persecution precisely because they refused to compromise the truth or legitimize Zulm. Amir al-Mumineen Alī (as) lamented this condition, saying:

"The world has revealed its teeth; the oppressor is obeyed, the just is oppressed, and the tongue of truth is silenced."

(Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 3)

Throughout the Muslim history, the same cycle has repeated: those who speak the truth are marginalized, while those who flatter power are elevated. Today, the pattern persists in new forms. Many religious heads, once regarded as shepherds of Madhab, now compete for followers, wealth, and status. Their sermons often serve political or sectarian agendas rather than moral awakening. They wear the white dress of Taqwa, but their actions betray the humility that should accompany Talim of Islam. Rasulullah (S) warned explicitly against such hypocrisy:

"The most severely punished among people on the Day of Qiyamah will be the Ulama whom Allah did not benefit with his 'ilm."

(Hadith reported by al-Ṭabarānī)

Likewise, Al Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (as) said:

"The Ulama are the trustees of the Anbiya, so long as they do not mix with the rulers. When they do, they betray that trust."

This spiritual betrayal, where religion is used as a means of self-promotion rather than self-purification is one of the greatest threats facing the Ummah. Instead of exemplifying humility and service, some Ulama display arrogance and intolerance, branding others as misguided or unworthy. The Ulamā' al-Sū' (corrupt scholars) described in Hadith Literature become living examples of hypocrisy: outwardly adorned with religious titles, inwardly hollow of sincerity.

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) always taught that true leadership is a burden, not a privilege. Amir al-Mumineen Alī (as) considered governance a trust so weighty that he accepted it only to restore justice, not for personal gain. He said:

"If it were not for the obligation of standing for truth and repelling injustice, I would have left the caliphate as I would a worn-out shoe."

(Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 33)

This stands in stark contrast to many modern leaders, religious and political alike, who seek authority for personal enrichment. They speak of sacrifice but live in comfort, preach humility but display pride, condemn worldliness yet chase its pleasures. Such duplicity erodes public trust

and drives believers away from religion itself. The Qur'an condemns this hypocrisy in unequivocal terms:

"O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you say what you do not do."

(Qur'an 61:2–3)

When the Minbar becomes a stage for arrogance and lust instead of a platform for truth, the community's faith weakens. When Ulama become servants or friends of rulers instead of servants of Allah, the light of Hidayah dims. Rasulullah (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) stood against such corruption not with violence, but with integrity, Talim, and moral courage. Al Imam al-Husayn (as) rose in Karbala not for power, but to expose hypocrisy and restore the conscience of the Ummah. His stand remains the eternal symbol of resistance to clerical arrogance and moral decay. True Ulama are those who resemble the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in humility and service. They speak less and act more, guiding with sincerity, not superiority. Amir al-Mumineen Alī (as) described them beautifully:

"The sign of a true Aalim is that he does not allow the ignorant to deceive him, nor the knowledge of the wise to mislead him. He stands firm upon truth, even if it is bitter."

The Ummah will only heal when its religious leaders return to the Nabawi model, where 'ilm is a light of service, not a ladder to power; where the 'Aālim becomes a mirror of the Qur'an, not an actor upon the stage of fame. Until that happens, corruption, hypocrisy, and arrogance will continue to darken the spiritual horizons of the Muslim world. When their power or benefits are threatened, some clerics twist Islamic rulings to suit themselves. They focus on outward appearance, long beards, robes, or titles, while ignoring honesty and humility. Some even teach that serving them is a form of 'Ibadah, which is false and dangerous. Islam has no concept of a priestly class. No cleric or group has divine authority over others. As Al Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as) said:

"The worst class of clerics is that which is friendly with the rulers." (Al Kafi)

When Ulama chase wealth or political favor, they lose credibility. A corrupt cleric can mislead more people than an open sinner because he hides behind religion. It is therefore necessary for Muslims to demand accountability and to question what they hear, using Dalil (evidence) and reason.

5. The Political Roots of Sectarianism

Sectarianism in Islam is rooted not in theology but in politics. It began after the Muhammad's passing, when questions of leadership divided the Ummah. Instead of following Nabawi clear Hukum at Ghadir al-Khum, amongst more than twelve hundred thousand, regarding the Nass of succession of Amir al-Mumineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as), tribal loyalties and political ambitions took precedence. What started as a dispute over governance hardened into divisions that fractured the Muslim community? The Ahl al-Bayt (as), who embodied Rasulullah's (S) Dawah, were marginalized and persecuted by dynastic rulers. Their call for Adl and adherence to the principles of Qur'an was met with hostility and Shahadah-the tragedy of Karbala being the most powerful symbol of politics overriding Nabawi ethics. Over time, rulers institutionalized sectarian narratives to legitimize their authority, promoting obedient Ulama while silencing

voices of Haq. This manipulation of religion for political control bred deep mistrust among Muslims. Therefore, sectarianism arose not from the Talim of Wahadah and Rahmah, given by Islam, but from human ambition and the corruption of power and command. The cure lies in returning to the Qur'an, reason, and moral integrity-where leadership is a trust, not a privilege, and Aqidah serves to unite, not divide.

6. Madaris and the Cultivation of Fanaticism

Talim of religious was meant to nurture wisdom, compassion, and moral refinement. The early Madrasah connected intellect with spirituality, embodying Nabawi command that seeking 'ilm is a Fard upon every Muslim. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) upheld this legacy by harmonizing reason -Aql with 'ibadah. Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as) taught that 'ilm without Amal leads to arrogance, while 'ibadah without Marifah leads to Jahalah. Yet many modern Madaris have strayed from this Nabawi model. Instead of producing intellectuals and thinkers, majority have become centers of rigidity and blind followers. Students are trained to memorize inherited Aqaid rather than reflect on Hikmah, often prioritizing sectarian loyalty over Haq. Political powers further deepened this decline by using Ulamā' and establishment-funded Madaris to enforce official ideologies, replacing intellectual diversity with rigid conformity.

In South Asia, many Madaris even became breeding grounds for fanaticism and intolerance. The Qur'an, meant to open hearts, is too often used to close minds; the Minbar and classroom, meant to enlighten, sometimes spread division and hate. Al Imam Jafar al-Ṣadiq (as) said:

"Our followers are those whose actions match their 'ilm, whose humility exceeds their speech, and whose hearts are wider than their tongues."

True Talim, he taught, liberates the mind from Jahalah and refines the soul toward virtue. Today, many Madaris produce individuals who mistake loud rhetoric for 'ilm and zeal for piety. Such graduates often sow discord, condemning others as Kafir and Murtad while reducing Islam to slogans. Rasulullah (S) warned of such people:

"They will recite the Qur'an beautifully, but it will not go beyond their throats."
(Sahih Muslim)

The intellectual and ethical legacy of Islam-once the foundation of Universities and sciences-has been neglected. The Ummah cannot regain dignity until its educational systems are reformed. Madaris must again unite Aqidah with reason, train Ulama who heal divisions, and teach that 'ilm is a means to Adl and Khidmah. Amir al-Mumineen Alī (as) said:

"'ilm enlivens the soul, illumines the mind, and leads man to act justly."

When Talim embodies this spirit, light of Muslim world will again shine through Hikmah and Rahmah.

7. Modern Confusion and the Meaning of Progress

Many Muslims today mistake modernization for imitation, equating progress with Western habits and lifestyles. Yet in Islam, progress means refining society through Talim, Akhlaq, and Adl while remaining firm in Aqidah.

*The Qur'an defines true honor not by wealth or appearance, but by righteousness:
Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."
(49:13)*

Islamic civilization once advanced the world through Taqwā, 'ilm, and 'Adl. Rasulullah (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt ('a) embodied this balance, promoting learning anchored in moral discipline. Imam 'Alī ('a) said: "The value of every person is in what they do well." True progress, therefore, is measured by contribution and excellence, not imitation. Modernization in Islam is an inner transformation that leads to social reform. Muslims are encouraged to innovate and engage with the world, guided by moral integrity:

*Seek, by means of what Allah has given you, the Hereafter, and do not forget your share of the world."
(28:77)*

This Ayah calls for balance-embracing worldly advancement without sacrificing Aqidah.

When this equilibrium is lost, two extremes emerge: those who reject all progress, and those who abandon Aqidah for imitation. Both stray from Islam's middle path-Sirāt al-Mustaqīm-that unites spirituality and intellect. Al Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq (as) demonstrated this harmony by training Fuqha, scientists, and philosophers together, proving that 'ilm without Akhlaq corrupts, and Akhlaq without 'ilm weakens. Thus, modernization must be rooted in Wahi and morality-modern yet modest, global yet grounded. As the Qur'an praises those:

*"who remember Allah and reflect on the creation"
(3:191),*

Progress in Islam comes through understanding, not imitation. Modernity without Taqwā leads to decline; with Taqwā, it builds civilization.

8. Conclusion

The crisis in today's religious leadership reflects a deep moral decline. When clerics seek fame or wealth and followers abandon reflection, corruption thrives. Like the Ulama of old who argued while enemies invaded, we risk repeating history by fighting over trivialities. The enemy's bullet does not distinguish between Sunni or Shia. The Qur'an commands:

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." (3:103)

Revival will come only through sincerity, 'ilm, and Wahadah. We must replace hatred with compassion, Jahiliyyah with understanding, and corruption with accountability. By following the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the Ummah can once again reflect the true light of Islam-an Aqidah of Rahmah, Adl, and Sukoon for all humanity.

Note: Effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity. This document may be used, only with this copyright notice included. Permission is granted to circulate among private individuals and groups, to post on internet forums, and include in not-for-profit publications subject to the following conditions: (1) Material used must be produced faithfully in full, without alteration or omission; (2) The author's subject title must remain unchanged, in whole or in part; (3) Material must be attributed to the author. Contact the author for all other rights, which are reserved. **Copyright © 2026 Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed**