



Moderation and Akhlaq

Choosing the Middle Way in Dunya

In the Holy Qur'an, it talks to us, and in many *hadith*, about moderation. In Surah al Baqarah, 'āyat 143, Allah says:

And thus We have made you a community of the center that you might testify against the people, and that the Messenger might testify against you. And We did not make a change in the direction that you faced, except to know who would follow the Messenger, and who turned heel and rejected his guidance. It was a difficult test except for those whom Allah had guided.

Also in Surah al-Maidah, Allah says:

O you have attained to faith, do not make unlawful the good things that Allah has made lawful for you. Do not overstep the limits. Truly, Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.

Another example is in Surah al-Furqaan:

And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal or parsimonious, but are ever between the two extremes, moderate.

And finally, another example from Surah Luqman:

And do not scornfully turn your cheek away from the people, and do not walk arrogantly upon this earth. Surely, Allah does not love anyone who is a self deluded boaster. And be modest in your bearing, and lower your voices. The harshest of all voices is that of the donkey.

Obviously, today I'm going to talk about tomatoes! The *kalam* of Allah, the Qur'an, is most perfect because of the knowledge it gives us of Allah Swt, and the conditions and the circumstances of life that are discussed in it. We are told that Allah is the Possessor of choice, and has control and dominion over everything. Allah is the One Who makes everything happen, and affects all change and all existence. No attribute or condition is greater than Allah. So everything coming from Allah will therefore have perfection; it will be perfect. It also tells us that never can these laws be too strict, because He is not overpowered in any way by the attribute of anger or wrath. Nor is everything absolutely lenient, because He is also not overpowered by His attribute of Mercy, but He is the Possessor of choice—One who is the control over all things, al-Qahar, and He is Rahīm / Merciful, and He is Karim when He wishes to be. And He is not overpowered by any one attribute. In other words, they are all in some kind of harmony and balance.

We can extrapolate from this that the Qur'an, and all of the laws, are free from extremism. It's just that simple; it's just that easy. I wish! This is exactly why it is compulsory that every human being should place the Shar'iah above themselves, and carry themselves with the benefit of the Shar'iah. The Shar'iah is not to be just interpreted as just laws and rules. The Shar'iah is understood to be the middle path, the well trodden path, upon which everyone can feel comfortable, or should find their comfort. We understand that our experience proves to us that we become overwhelmed by difficult situations. It makes it more necessary for us to find a middle path, something that will calm us down in the times when we are in extreme

states, or extreme circumstances; therefore, we have to understand and look for the moderation in the Shar'iah.

It is clear from the *hadith* that the essence of good character / *akhlaq* is not to give any trouble / *taklif* to anyone—not to annoy anyone, or hinder anyone, or inconvenience anyone, or stand in anyone's way for your own selfish ends.

Obviously, you want to stand in someone's way if they're going to harm themselves. A *hadith* states that one should not remove the stick of a brother lest he becomes annoyed. This should not be done intentionally or as a joke. Don't provoke. Don't annoy him or her. Due to that annoyance, it is said that we should not jest too much with each other. We should be very, very careful when we jest with each other. We have all had the experience in life that you're pushing someone, or jesting, or teasing them, and they get annoyed.

Also, we are enjoined to avoid giving answers when questioned, or to delay answers when we are being questioned, that might cause the questioner some inconvenience of waiting or being disrespected. Another criterion is the love of Allah, and the love of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). [With] respect to the amount of love that a Muslim has for our children, for example, we will never tolerate disrespect from them regarding Allah and Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). In other words, you don't tolerate disrespect from your children when you are talking about truth, compassion, mercy, or any of the attributes or qualities of Allah or Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). It is not just because you said something against Allah. It has to be understood why. You cannot accept disrespect of the qualities of Allah. Even if it's cute, you can't accept it. It is said that the father will not be so angered with disrespect shown to himself, as he will with disrespect shown to Allah and Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). And why would a mother or father become upset, if they never had love for Allah? They wouldn't be upset. “Ha ha, it's a funny joke.” So we have to have some love and respect.

Even if the whole world is covered with *fitna*, and it pretty much is, still, one act of *tawba* brings resonance, and balance, and moderation. It absolves all the sins. One stick of dynamite can move part of the mountain. This is how Allah has created things. One little seed can push through the earth in the springtime and break open the frozen earth. A person who is a lover of Allah should build up strength, and courage, and make effort. Then Allah will ensure that person's success. If a parent sees a child walking for the first time – one step or two steps, and then falls down – due to the mercy and compassion of that parent, they run and pick the child up. And you hold them in your lap and say, “Oh, you are wonderful. Look, you took your first steps! Just like you have the desire for that child to walk, in the same way, Allah wishes to see our effort, but sometimes we are not prepared. Sometimes we do not do so well. Sometimes it's hard for us to make that effort, and we are not prepared to make it. But nothing is impossible for a person with courage. So Allah picks us up, in a sense, and we walk again. We do not pick up the child and say, “You are not ready to walk. Don't try to walk again.” We stand them up and say, “Okay, come on. Take another step. Take another step.” This is the analogy.

This courage, the strength of character, and this confidence is cultivated by staying in *suhbat*, staying in the companionship of a *kamil* (an experienced spiritual guide and experienced spiritual people), communicating with them. Also, it's important to understand moderation in this way: to wait for the mind to settle. Sometimes we get into a situation where our mind is running, running, running—we can't sleep; we can't eat; we can't do anything. We're upset about something. Something seem to be out of our control. We have to wait for our mind to settle. It's not possible while we are caught up in the world, with all the responsibilities, and all the duties we have in the world. So to achieve this, even in the miserable situation we are in, in the world today, with all the questioning and complexity and doubting, you have to have a

connection with Allah. Gradually, gradually, you have single-minded attitude, dedication, devotion. If you have that connection, that devotion will come; otherwise, life will come to an end, completely devoid of devotion and courage, and we will go to the grave afraid.

We remember that Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) said, ***“It is time to go from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad, the jihad al-akbar.”*** There was no other *shaytan* that led Iblis astray, just his *nafs*. There was no one before him to lead him astray. Just his own *nafs*, his carnal knowledge led him astray to turn him into Iblis. It overpowered his *nafs*. When our *nafs* overpowers us, it holds priority over us, and we are virtually non-believers. It means we don't set anything above us. Our devotion is covered, *kufr*. We have to strive against this *nafs* as we have been told for many years. That's the *jihad al-akbar*. That also brings us to moderation.

Then there's happiness. Happiness and contentment in life are not based on our wealth. It is not based on our power. It is not based on who we know. It is not based on what we own. It is based on the joy of ourselves and our soul. Our spiritual happiness is based on the relationship that we have an Allah, with the *dīn*. A person who has *dīn*—and in this case I'll use it as a noun, and also as a verb; it's dynamic; it's a reality—has very few material possessions, and often has a pleasant life. On the other hand, without the *dīn*, the *dunya* often becomes unpleasant. Understand that it's not just about materiality, but it's how you approach the materiality—if you approach it with a purpose in life. If a person possesses wealth, and is seen to be happy, it's either because it's a portion of the *dīn* they have, or the observer has been fooled by the external circumstances of life (*dunya*).

They think, “Oh, I'm going to do this, and everything's going to be fine. I'm going to marry that person, that's the best person in the world. I'm going to take that job, and

that job is going to be the greatest job in the world. I'm going to move to St. Croix, or Montserrat, and live by the ocean, any fresh fish every day. And everything's going to be wonderful." But it is what we don't see; we can't let the *dunya* be the foundation of everything we have, or what we say is of value. If our internal state is really looked at; if we really examine it, you'll find all those things of the material world, if they could just change one degree or 2°, you'd be miserable. You have something beautiful, you love it. It's in your home. You see it every day, but if there's just one little chip on it, you are miserable. Someone you love. All of a sudden they do something, and you hate what they did it, and you are miserable. You say, "That's not one degree;" but maybe it is. It's not 100° or 45°.

We have to be patient and tolerant, because the *dīn* will tell us, "Be tolerant. Okay, you enjoy it. On chip... so what. Don't be upset." So the person disappointed you today, but you saw the goodness in that person. So bring it out again. Look to yourself. Don't always blame someone else. Don't blame circumstance. Don't predict that something is going to be miserable. Predict that it's going to be fine. Be positive. We hold each other in those positions. "Yesterday you predicted I was going to be miserable. And three days ago you predicted I was going to be miserable. So the next time I talk to you, for sure you're going to predict I'm going to be visible. Some I am going to talk to you in a certain way, because I know you're going to predict that I'm going to be miserable"—or nasty, or grumpy, or whatever it is.

If our internal condition is really looked at, we see that we are not far away from unhappiness and stress and distress. It's also possible that we are unaware of the reality of genuine happiness. We have constructed this idea of what happiness is going to be. Happiness is going to be this situation, or that person, or that time, or that place, and all the rest of it. We take this kind of superficial attitude of comfort to mean true happiness. "I'm comfortable, therefore I must be happy." The secret is

true happiness and true contentment are very different. The means of happiness are very different than what we expect.

We should not misunderstand the things of this world and material possessions are the finders of happiness. They are not. What we think we want and what we think we need are not going to make us happy. If those material things which people consider to be the sources of happiness are not so, then what are they? If they are not sources of happiness, they are sources of misery, and unhappiness, and a sense of loss. They are punishment. Allah says in Qur'an: **"And do not let their wealth nor their offspring impress you. Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in the world, and that their souls shall depart all their disbelievers."**

It doesn't necessarily mean that a person in possession of material means of comfort is actually uncomfortable. It also doesn't mean that a person not in possession of material things is not happy or not contented. It also doesn't mean that a person who has the *dīn*, who has the faith, who has the courage, and is in possession of material things cannot be happy and understand the best way to use them. This is the way Allah provides for us. We also know that if we commit some error or some sin... "If I get that sin out of the way, I won't commit it again." What happens is you stop defining it as a sin. You stopped defining it as a negative. It starts to be defined as a positive.

There was a story in the news about an ex-pro football player. He was receiving tweets from his home from a bunch of stupid kids who went to his home and trashed it—tens of thousands of dollars of damage. Kids who were friends of his own children in high school came to his home, stole his trophies, and punched holes in the walls. They were drunk. They were doing drugs. They destroyed the house. These are kids who had been invited to his house, some of them, and he had made

breakfast for them on Sundays. He had invited them in and welcomed them into his home. They came because he was away in Florida. Then they tweeted it, showing very disgusting photos of themselves doing drugs and other things, and showing the destruction of the house. Do you think this would decrease their desire to do things? So, what he did was he invited them all to his home to help fix it. Come fix it up, and this will expiate your sin. How many came? One... one out of 300 came. They broke in, and destroyed his house. His response was, "Let's give them a chance to be forgiven." We are given a chance to be forgiven, but it doesn't mean you take that opportunity. We are given the opportunity to expiate our "sins," our wrong actions. Allah will expiate them, but human beings won't do that for each other.

And then there is the difference between genders. Women – *astaghfirh-Llāh* to speak about women to mostly women – are more prone to be serviceable, and are more prone to purity. In the world we live in today, we think that's a very historical statement. If you look at a picture of that house being trashed, at least half the people are young women. People have lost their roles, and the identity of their roles. I don't mean a cultural role that has been imposed. There is a natural tendency for women to be more kind, motherly, tender, and praising, patient, loving, and caring. I think we all pretty much agree about that. And when we see that is not true, we see it as an exception. The majority of people who create serious violence on the streets are men.

Did you see the statistics from Chicago from yesterday? How many people were killed by guns in Chicago? One person shot 12 people. There were tens of people who were shot just yesterday in Chicago, and most of the perpetrators were men. It was said by those who preceded us, and I don't know if it's still true today, that if you would ask 100 noble women, you would find that not a single one of them had an unchaste thought in their minds. Is that America in 2013? But this is the

perception and tendency. The role that women play also is to help us stay balanced in society.

Here we are, with the teachings of the Qur'an, as we understand them, about moderation. There are many more things about how we perform our prayers. There was a person who was ill, and in a lot of pain. But the only thing that person complained about was the inability to make their prayer. They couldn't pray, couldn't get out of bed. One of our *shuyukh* said, "It's not a problem if, due to sickness, it becomes too much trouble for the sick person to be cleaned or to change clothes. Then the *salat* will be valid in impure clothes, or whatever condition they make it." The sick person may not be excused from the performance of *salat*, but there are many things in the performance of *salat* that they can adjust. The other side of it is the sick person will feel that they can still make their *salat*.

It's the way you look for moderation that allows moderation to be of value to us. If we live our life with sincerity/*ikhlas*... *ikhlas* means to do it for the sole pleasure of Allah. What does that mean? It means you are compassionate because of the blessing of compassion. You are merciful because of the blessing of mercy. You speak kindly because of the blessing of speaking kindly. It's not for some reward. There is an inherent blessing in kindness. There is an inherent blessing in patience. That brings us to the state of the *ummata wasit*. That brings us to the state of balance. Even a small amount of effort is accepted. If there's no thought, no attitude towards *ikhlas*/sincerity; if you're not thinking about sincerity, but it's coming naturally to you, then every act that you do is an act of *ibada*. And every word you speak can have an ulterior consequence to it to help others be balanced also.

So these are the admonitions on balance as they are provided for us. Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) said, ***"You have to make an effort. If a person builds a masjid the size of even***

a nest of a sand grouse (like a dove), a mansion will be built for that person in Jannah.” A question arose that such a small nest cannot be a masjid. Linguistically, there is a sort of double entendre in this. I won't get into it, but it's very clever. *Masjid* has another meaning. The answer is that if someone donates one *rupee* for the construction of a *masjid*, and if this one *rupee* equals the size of the nest of a sand grouse, even though the person has not built the entire masjid, he still receives a mansion in Jannah, because he contributed whatever he had for the building of that *masjid*. *Inshā'a-LLāh*, we seek moderation as a means to our own personal love and fulfillment of this life in this world. And we find balance in what we strive to do. *Asalaam aleikum*.

O Allah, there are amongst those who are not feeling well. We ask You for their healing. You have blessed us today with rain to give more life to our forests into our plants. We are faced with many needs in our life and our community, Allah, in our life and in our infrastructure. We asked each one of us to find a place for generosity, even one *rupee*. We especially ask You, Allah, to give healing and health to Dr. Mehta, who has become weaker over the last couple of days. His daughter is with him, and Samir is heading back there. The doctor came today and put a feeding tube in. The doctor was very positive and felt that he would get better. *Inshā'a-LLāh*, we ask for your prayers and make a *fatihah* for Papa.