

Islam is a system of life (Deen) that is optimally balanced in its design by Allaah SWT based on His ultimate knowledge and absolute wisdom.^{footnote}For details refer to my book “Islam -- Does it Make Sense?” and many of the articles on my website such as “Celebrating the greatest mercy of Allaah SWT”, “Which one s the Straight Path?”, and “What is the Amaanah?”

^{/footnote} For Islamic society as a whole, Allaah SWT has mentioned balance, moderation and equilibrium as the distinguishing feature of the Muslim Ummah.^{footnote}Al-Baqarah verse 143: <http://ayubhamid.com/quraan/tafseer/al-baqarah/486-verses-142-176>

^{/footnote} Even individually, Islam expects its followers at a minimum, to be balanced, moderate and fair in everything they do; and to strive towards excellence in goodness, as their target.

So how can a person maintain the required balance on an ongoing basis?

To be able to maintain a balance, first we have to clearly know what things need to be in balance. In reflecting on this point, we must remember that the things to be balanced must be different and separable matters or affairs competing with each other for our care, attention, focus, time or resources; such as a variety of views on the same topic, different demands on time, various heads of expenditure, different attitudes or reactions that can be adopted for the same stimulus, etc. In addition, we also need to understand the concept of balance. Balancing does not mean assigning the same amount of attention, importance, priority, time or resources to all competing matters or affairs, but assigning the right amount at the right time to the right extent according to the role played by that matter or affair in the attainment of our objectives. If all of the three “rights” are fulfilled according to the respective roles and significance of different matters in the attainment of the objective, the balance has been achieved or maintained. Otherwise, some sort of extremism has been committed.

Usually everyone has their own definition of balance and extremism -- because if people do not know the truly balanced scheme of affairs, then every one of them considers himself to be in a balanced position and those who differ seem like extremists. This is a natural human tendency. Thus, even if a third person is really maintaining a balanced position doing the right things at the right time to the right extent, he will be considered an extremist by both the person on the extreme right and the person on the extreme left.

So, what is a truly balanced scheme of affairs and how do we determine what is the moderate or balanced position and what is extremism?

The need to maintain balance as a Muslim can be viewed from two perspectives: balance in views, attitudes and focus; and balance in assigning time and resources. As for the first one, it has been dealt with and demonstrated in my Deen chart^{footnote}The chart can be seen in my article, Sufism vs. Salafism: <http://www.ayubhamid.com/q-a-a/609-sufism-vs-salafismwahabis>
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{/footnote} that depicts the balanced concept of Deen needed to succeed as a Muslim. This article is focused on the second aspect, the balanced assignment of one's time and resources.

Many Muslims who regard Islam as a religion (a set of religious rituals), think that the balance is to be struck between Dunya (worldly matters) and "Deen" (misunderstood as "merely" religion). With this misunderstanding, they then think that the balancing act is to give enough time to religious rituals in a way that the time and money dedicated to their worldly pursuits are not negatively affected in any shape, way or form. Thus, whenever a religious matter comes in the way of their worldly interest, preference is given to their worldly interest in the name of "balancing". This results in a lifestyle where so-called Muslims worship their "Dunya" (worldly matters and expediencies) whereas only a little time here and/or a little money there are given to the acts of worship. All such people think that they are Muslims because they perform the rituals when they can afford to do so. Allaah treats such people as hypocrites.

The reality is that Deen and Dunya are inseparable, intertwined aspects of a person's life. Deen is, in fact, the way to live in Dunya (the world). Deen encompasses every part and aspect of Dunya and teaches us how all matters of our worldly life should be handled. Thus, it is absurd to think of balancing Deen and Dunya as if they are two separate things. Rather, it is a matter of assigning appropriate time and resources to all components of Deen according to the importance and priorities that Allaah SWT has assigned to them, the Prophet demonstrated through his practice, and the Sahaabah observed them in their lives. In other words, it is assigning appropriate time and resources to all matters of worldly life according to Allaah's Deen.

This allocation of time and resources to various components of Deen depends on multiple factors: Is Islam fully established in the society or does it need to be established? What stage is that Islamic movement at? Is the person a leader of the movement or worker? Is the allocation during the normal course of life or is it related to emergency situations?

In normal circumstances, every Muslim should allocate his or her time and resources in such a manner that the right time and resources are allocated to the following four broad segments of Islamic obligations:

1. Islamic work responsibilities are met on a timely basis in such a way that the Islamic movement {/footnote} The Islamic movement, as we have defined in many places, is a movement launched to spread the message of and commitment to Islam and its objectives, by presenting signs of Allaah, using rational and logical evidence, satisfying intellect, educating, answering questions, promoting understanding, demonstrating Islamic excellence with personal behaviour, etc., with the goal of attaining its implementation as the complete lifestyle system of a society where Muslims are in majority.

{/footnote} for the establishment of Islam as a complete system of life on earth is able to progress towards its goals according to its strategy and plan;

2. A strong personal relationship with Allaah is maintained and efforts to attain personal excellence are consistently pursued;

3. The person's dependents' basic physical and psychological needs, according to the Ma'roof{footnote}Generally accepted notions of the society

{/footnote} of the society, are adequately met and children's training and coaching needs are not neglected; and,

4. The person's own physical health (through adequate food, rest and exercise) is maintained in a way that the person can continue functioning optimally through his or her normal lifespan without incurring lasting damage to physical and psychological health.

5. Reasonable money/resources are earned to finance the above.

If adequate time and resources are not assigned to any of the five items above, the person is not maintaining the balance{footnote}After I had written this brief article, someone brought to my attention a speech attributed to Bryan Dyson, a former CEO of Coca Cola. He described the balance succinctly, when he said, "Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends and spirit ... and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life." If we replace "spirit" with "personal excellence" and "friends" with "Islamic movement" (duties as well as the brotherhood of the Islamic workers), the analogy applies quite well.{/footnote}. Examples are: the fifth item absorbs the person to the extent that other items are neglected; other activities take so much time that the attention to children's understanding of Deen and coaching in good behaviour suffers; family matters take too much time to leave hardly any time to be spent on the Islamic work or personal relationship with Allaah SWT; the first three activities take all the time and resources that person is overstressed inflicting lasting damage to his or her personal health; or, either item two or four is paid too much attention at the cost of the other.

This model is ordinarily applicable to Muslims in normal circumstances. However, it is neither applicable to all Muslims nor to all situations. Examples of the exceptions are: If a person is in a leadership position of an Islamic movement, he/she will need to spend much more time on the first two items on a consistent basis. Depending on the stage of the Islamic movement, all workers and leaders may have to suffer and endure extra hardships and sacrifice of personal well-being and physical health, including injuries and death. In the time of crisis, emergency or desperation, such as the Tabook Expedition, people may need to sacrifice items three and four substantially.

Thus, balancing depends on the need of the hour to determine how much time and resources should be allocated to which category to be in a balanced position. This balancing is not an easy task. It is like walking a tight rope that is thin like a hair and sharp like a sword. Luckily, we have a very well-defined and clearly described ideal level of moderation and balance in the form of the life of the Prophet SA'WS, as shown by his Seerah. If we take the Seerah of the Prophet

and the lifestyle of the society of Sahaabah collectively, that is where we will find the lifestyle that is balanced, where right things are done at the right time to the right extent. As we start moving away from the point, we are moving towards one extreme or the other. As for the uswah of the Prophet, Allaah SWT Himself has presented it to us as a model. As for the collective lifestyle of the society of Sahaabah, the Prophet himself told us about it when he said: “The best society is my society; then the generation succeeding them and then the generation succeeding them.” Studying their Seerah carefully to grasp the way they assigned their focus, emphasis and the priorities and then applying it to the current state of our affairs and those of the Islamic movement, is the only way of learning to do the right things at the right time to the right extent – maintaining the balance. Any other model will be an out-of-balance situation and can be called extremism.

So if people want to find extremism in allocating time and resources, they can easily find it by comparing themselves to the role model of the Prophet and the society of Sahaabah. The farther a person is from their lifestyle, the more extremist that person is. The majority of today’s Muslims are extremists in the sense that they have abandoned the principles and objectives of Deen, forsaken the Islamic movement, neglected the Hereafter and have over-indulged in the world. The less time a person gives to the establishment of the whole Deen, the more extremist he is in favour of the Dunya. This is stating it in a simplistic way, but if we delve into this topic, there are so many different ways that Muslims have deviated from the way of the Prophet and Sahaabah, and hence, there are so many different kinds of extremism being practised by so-called Muslims.

In short, the only way to maintain balance and moderation is to emulate the Prophet and Sahaabah according to the circumstances of the Islamic movement. Any deviation from their model is extremism of one sort or the other.