"IF THE BOOK IS READ WITH THE SERIOUSNESS AND ATTENTION IT MERITS, IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO HAVE AS PROFOUND AND FAR-REACHING AN IMPACT ON RELIGION, SOCIETY, GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN RELATIONS AS CHARLES DARWIN’S ORIGIN OF SPECIES EVENTUALLY CAME TO HAVE ON SCIENTIFIC AND SOCIAL THOUGHT NEARLY A CENTURY AND A HALF EARLIER."

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If It Is Extreme, It Is Not Islam!

Dr. Pasha

Allah’s Boundaries: What a Glorious Concept!

I trust you are doing well. And having fun.

“What Islam and fun?” you may raise your eyebrows.

“What an oxymoron!” Some may exclaim in disbelief, even disdain.

Others may simply say Astaghfirullah and move on.

But some others may think – and that is what really matters: “Subhaanallah! What a Deen! What a beautiful miracle this Deen of Allah is that it attends to every human need. That it even lets people have fun!”

Provided, of course, I must hasten to add, both to set the record straight as well as to set at rest my readers’ apprehensions and skepticism, it is done within the boundaries of Allah.

Just like everything else.

The fact is that there is no life without fun. It is all a question of what kind of fun you have and how. Fun, Islam teaches us, must be pursued within the boundaries prescribed by Allah.

Just like everything else.

The basic principle is this: You do things within the prescriptions and boundaries of Allah, they are right and good. They are a boon for you.

You do them outside Allah’s boundaries and contrary to Allah’s commands and prescriptions, they are wrong; they are bad; and they become the bane of your life.

Of course, all this is to be understood within the overall framework of Halal and Haram – the basic tenets of Islamic law. So, adultery and fornication never become right or permissible no matter what the reason or the excuse or the circumstances. Same is true of interest-based financial dealings.

And the same is true also of consumption of liquor – or of incest or cannibalism.

If your doctor tells you three glasses of red wine a day is what your heart condition needs, find a new doctor. If a Muslim store sells something they call “Halal Beer,” run from that store. Because if they are not afraid of deceiving Allah, how do you trust them not to deceive you? And sex outside marriage is forbidden under all conditions and at all times.

So, when we talk about fun we are talking about things that are not clearly and categorically ruled by Islam as forbidden or Haram. And the list of such things in Islam is, contrary to what many Muslims may think, a very short one.
So, Allah’s boundaries are what we all need to remember and be mindful of – all the time. And what a glorious concept it is – Allah’s boundaries: *Hudoodullah*!

*Deenul Fitrah*, as Islam is often referred to – a complete and comprehensive culture and way of life entirely in keeping with the basic needs of human nature and perfectly in consonance with the primordial functioning of the broader laws of nature that govern the universe.

And it makes perfect sense.

**Laws of Nature, Laws of God: Optimizing Human Life on Earth**

For those who know (*Alladheena ya’lamoon*, as the Qur’an calls them), these are all *laws and ways of Allah* put in place to aid, facilitate, optimize and enrich human life on earth. And for those who don’t know (*Alladheena laa ya’lamoon*, as the Qur’an calls this other group), they are little more than *laws and ways of nature*, based on little more than chance, in whose midst human life is a mere straw in the wind without any direction or destiny.

The expression *Nature* for these wonderful people is simply a code word that stands for “*all that we don’t know*.”

In the language of statisticians, and scientists, these unknowns of *Nature* are the error component attached to our understanding, knowledge and science. Call them unexplained variance if you wish.

To me, it is “unexplained hitherto.” For, the unknown – and unexplained – of yesterday is the known and knowable of today and the new research focus, frontier and scientific challenge of tomorrow.

And the notion of Allah’s boundaries fits nicely into that divine scheme of things. Allah’s boundaries are put in place to protect and optimize human life on earth – physically, psychologically and spiritually.

And, don’t forget, socially.

It is the very definition of life, if you ask me, this notion of setting limits and drawing lines of demarcation.

Can you imagine a living cell – in human or animal tissue or in a plant – without a surrounding cell membrane or a cell wall to delimit and guard its identity and ensure its wellbeing? If there are no cell membranes or walls, there will be no life on earth. Period. Not animal life; not plant life; not human life.

Am I right on that? I don’t know. Why don’t you ask your high school biology teacher and find out?

That is why Islam says, go, seek knowledge. Get an education that is. That means along with everything else you do or don’t, and along with everything else you learn such as Qur’an, Hadith, Fiqh and everything else, go get yourself at least a high school diploma.

Learn the languages. Learn science. And learn math, which is as universal a language of Islam as any. And, from that point of view, as well as from a practical perspective, required of all Muslims. I mean math.

How can we call ourselves Muslims and not know not only Arabic, but also mathematics at the most rudimentary level? Explain that to me.
That means: You are a Muslim? Go to school. Regardless of who else does or does not do what. It is as simple as that.

**Boundedness: Secret to Life on Earth**

So, boundaries provide order and predictability to life. And life without boundaries is anarchy, confusion and chaos – and headed toward self-destruction. A boundary-less life is an anachronism and a virtual impossibility.

It is amoebic and pre-amoebic. It is little more than a blob. It is just a blotch on nature’s wall. Even those have boundaries.

That means no shape; no form; no boundedness; no life.

That is why Allah calls Qur’an and Islam and the message of Prophet Muhammad, **Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallaam**, the pathway to life itself. For, they teach you the secret to life on earth – and to life in the hereafter.

Here are the words of the Qur’an. Read them and enjoy them. And pass them around.

*Istajeeboo lillahi wa lirrasooli idhaa da’aakum limaa yuhyeekum.*

Paraphrase:

Respond to Allah and to the *Rasul, Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*, when he calls you to that which will give you life.

Also important is the nature of those boundaries. Human life sinks into tyranny when the boundaries are unfair, arbitrary and unduly restricting, just as life turns into a free-for-all fracas when boundaries are vague, ill defined or porous.

On the other hand when boundaries are fair, just, reasonable, meaningful, necessary, clearly defined and almost predictable – as Allah’s boundaries are with regard to everything – they protect, enhance and enrich life.

They add the essential elements of zest, *fun* and excitement to life.

They provide security and add to human wellbeing. They reduce anxiety and uncertainty. And they optimize the experience of a tranquil, peaceful and truly meaningful life on earth for everybody.

And how much of a better world would we have built if we had only embraced and respected God’s boundaries and steadfastly adhered to them!

A great many problems we experience in the world today are almost all a direct result of people disregarding and transgressing Allah’s boundaries in one way or another. Are they not?

Imagine how much better our land, water and air would have been today if human beings had done a better job of respecting Allah’s limits and directives – *Hudooodullah* – with regard to their consumption of energy; their discharge of pollutants in air and water; and their profligate and wasteful ways in general.

*Hudooodullah* would have saved countless animal and plant species from extinction. They would have saved our planet from global warming and impending peril. And they would have saved our global
financial systems from bankruptcy and collapse.

And they would have kept our planet safe from all kinds of rapacious wars many of which were waged to feed and appease individual as well as collective excess, greed and aggressive tendencies in the hearts and minds of so many human beings around the world.

And how much of a better world our world would have been overall!

**Divine Boundaries vs. Human Boundaries**

Furthermore, human boundaries are for *some*, whereas Allah’s boundaries are for *all*.

Human boundaries are generally meant to protect *some* people, and often their privileges, against encroachment by the *many*. Allah’s boundaries, on the other hand, *protect all human beings against all harm and evil*. And often against their own worst nature as it were.

Human beings set up boundaries out of concern for their own claims, interests and possessions. Allah, on the other hand, sets up boundaries out of concern for the welfare of human beings – all human beings.

What a magnificent difference!

Allah’s boundaries are there to protect people from what their creator knows will hurt and harm them and diminish the experience of life for them on this earth. Allah’s boundaries, therefore, are part of the unfolding of Allah’s *Rahmat* and love and mercy for his creation on his earth.

And it is a tremendous blessing from Almighty Allah that he defines his boundaries clearly and fairly. And that he openly warns human beings about them. Allah says in the Qur’an: “Those are Allah’s boundaries, don’t go near them.”

*Tilka hudoodullahi fa-laa taqrabooha!*

**What a Loving, Caring, Doting God!**

What a loving, caring God – a most *doting* God, as I have described him elsewhere. Himself *Rahmaan* and *Raheem*. Sends his man Muhammad, *Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*, as *Rahmat*.

So, what else do you expect to come out from the source of all *Rahmat* if not *Rahmat*?

And not just for this or that chosen or privileged part of his creation but for all his worlds, whatever and wherever they may be and in whatever form and shape they may be.

Where is the surprise then if *Rahmatul lil’aalameen* is how God Almighty describes his messenger of love, peace, mercy and blessings? What else do you expect from the master of all the worlds – *Rabbul ‘Aalameen*?

What a clear and powerful miracle, every *Aayat* of this Qur’an! How can an *unlettered man*, from an *illiterate culture*, sitting in a cave 1400 years ago, in a barren desert full of rock and sand, and an occasional palm tree, design a perfect equation like this?

Is this proof enough that this Qur’an is indeed from God Almighty? If it is not, then maybe you should work a bit more on learning the basics about the nature of proof in this world.
What Happens When We Break Allah’s Boundaries

So, Allah created his boundaries – Hudoodullah – out of his immense and abiding concern for your wellbeing and not because he wanted to protect something that belonged to him or to take away all fun from your life.

Below is a partial list of all the terrible things that happen to us when we break Allah’s boundaries. They are just a few of the problems that afflict human life today. Almost all of them are the product of human beings violating the boundaries of God Almighty on earth – Hudoodullah!

- A punctured ozone layer.
- Global warming.
- Air and water pollution and toxification.
- Many forms of cancer.
- Heart and lung diseases.
- Widespread poverty and hunger.
- Famine and growing water shortages.
- Drug and other harmful and dangerous substance abuse.
- Alcoholism and its widespread corrosive effects on human life, family, workplace, society and the world in general.
- Unsustainable weight gain and obesity in some parts of the world.
- AIDS and other killer diseases – what the Hadith calls Sayyi-il Asqaam.
- Wars, wars, even more wars and the devastation they cause.
- You cap all that with Allah’s wrath and displeasure, you have a real disaster on your hands – in this world as well as in the next world.

How can we reverse the clock on many if not all of these problems? The answer: Hudoodullah!

That is the unfailing formula for building a better world. Respecting the laws and bounds of Allah in his creation.

Hudoodullah! is the answer to many of our problems.

You respect them, and Allah will respect you and give you a better life – both here in this world as well as after death in the next world.

Every Aayat of the Qur’an a Miracle

Governments of this world pursue, penalize and punish those who violate their boundaries: their laws and the legal boundaries they set up. God Almighty’s government issues warning notices – and often lightly punishes in this world itself – those who persistently disregard his laws and violate his boundaries – hudoodullah.

God Almighty’s forgiveness is great, his patience immense. But so is his wrath – and his punishment.

He says in the Qur’an:

Nabbi’ ibaadee annee anal Ghafoorur Raheem. Wa anna ‘adhaabee huwal ‘adhaabul aleem.

Paraphrase:

Inform my slaves – (you and I and every other human being that is) – that I am indeed the most forgiving and the most merciful and loving, and that my punishment is indeed the most severe
and painful punishment of all.

Now do we understand why after every Aayat – not verse, Muslims, Aayat – I feel like saying: Subhanallah, what a beautiful Aayat. What a miracle! Each single Aayat!

What a wonderful proof that this Qur’an can only be from Allah.

And now do we see why Allah himself refers to the passages of the Qur’an as Aayaat – miracles? And proofs? For, that is what they are – a miracle, each one of them.

And a standing proof each one of them that this Qur’an and this Deen and this prophet, Muhammad, Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, are all directly from Allah. And they could not have emanated from anywhere else.

And that is what the Qur’an itself calls them – Aayaat: miracles.

Or proofs!

**Versification of the Qur’an**

Muslims, stop the poeticization of the Qur’an.

The Urdu-speaking Muslims did a great job when they retained that almost untranslatable expression Aayaat in their own language. Thus they kept the original divine expression intact and in the process enriched the Urdu language and culture.

English translators of the Qur’an – Allah bless them – on the other hand, got carried away by what the Biblical tradition and standard English usage handed them. And what the earlier non-Muslim translators of the Qur’an handed them.

They naively borrowed from the West the expression “verses” to describe what the Urdu and Farsi translators would often describe as Aayaat-e-Kareemah of the Qur’an.

This unfortunately resulted in the “versification” of the Qur’an in English, rather than in highlighting the miraculous nature of the Aayaat of the Qur’an and the enrichment of the English language and Western culture.

**Islam, Thy Name Is Freedom!**

And Islam, thy name is modernity. Even though I don’t know what modernity really means and I have trouble with some of the key definitions and measures of that expression or concept.

But if one reasonable measure of this mythical concept of modernity is freedom for the human mind and spirit and the freedom of belief, conscience and expression that goes along with it, then, no other system has a greater claim to modernity than Islam.

And if modernity means the alacrity, resilience and resourcefulness of the human intellect to reinvent a new future of inquiry, achievement and freedom in every age, and the powerful theoretical framework that makes it all possible, then the teachings of Islam and the Qur’an have a near-lock on the concept of modernity.

In any case, those were their days. Those were the days of the former English translators of the Qur’an. And, may Allah bless them, the Muslim English translators of the Qur’an did their best in
their own days and in their own ways.

Now these are *our* days.

Let us now forever change that expression “*verse*” to *Aayat* (or *Aayah*) and proceed to enrich the English language. A language that has now become mother tongue to entire new generations of Muslims in many parts of the world – and enrich Western culture that Allah has now made home to so many of us.

As some Muslim scholars – ‘*Ulamaa*’ – used to say a long, long time ago: *Hoom rijaalun wa nahnu rijaal!*

*Subhanallah*, what an expression! They were men, and we are men. They were people and so are we. That is what those Arabic words mean: *Hoom rijaalun wa nahnu rijaal!*

Meaning: *They* played their innings and left the wicket; *we* must play our innings now. *They* did their job and now it is *we* who must do our job. *They* were then; *we* are the ones now. Earlier, it was their turn; now, it is our turn.

That means other than to Allah and his beloved *Rasul, Sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*, human beings cannot be in permanent thrall to any other mortal. They should respect their elders and their *asilaaf* – the blessed generations that came before them. But they should not blindly follow everything they did or uncritically accept everything they said.

What a message of intellectual freedom, human dignity and personal empowerment these great *Ulamaa*’ (scholars) of Islam laid down in a few words – *Hoom rijaalun wa nahnu rijaal*.

Thank you Islam, for, thy name is freedom.

And thank you, God Almighty, for the blessing of Islam – and what a blessing it is indeed!

And thank you, great and sincere and selfless scholars (*Ulamaa*’), champions, advocates and defenders of Islam, for your service to God Almighty in heaven and to God’s creation right here on earth. May Allah forgive your shortcomings and fill your graves with his beautiful light that floods heavens and earth!

**Internal vs. External Boundaries**

Let me talk a bit more about Allah’s boundaries – *Hoodooollah* – before I move on. Not that I can do justice to a vast and important topic like this or in any sense really leave it behind. For this topic envelopes every aspect of human life.

The first thing I want to point out is that in life there are boundaries and then there are boundaries. And among the most important boundaries to observe in life are the ones that lie within our own selves. Our own internal boundaries as it were. I am talking about all the checks and limitations that must exist within ourselves.

These are boundaries that are mostly determined by factors and considerations inside a person’s head and heart – their spirits, minds and souls as it were. At the top of this list is the all-too-common human tendency to commit excess, aggression and then finally violence against others – especially against those over whom we may have a measure of power or control.
Avoiding Excess Even in War

As an antidote, Islam places a high premium on forgiveness, generosity, kindness and compassion. At the same time, Islam permits people to defend themselves when attacked by others.

But the interesting thing is the way in which Islam wants people to fight back.

Fight back without committing any excesses, says the Qur’an. And here is where and how the Qur’an says it:

\[ \text{Qaatiloo fee sabeelillahadheena yuqaatilooneakum wa laa ta’tadoo}. \]

And here is a paraphrase of that magnificent aayat – in several parts:

1. First of all, you are forced to defend yourself because someone else started the fight. So, what viable option do you have now but to fight those who fight you?
2. Even in the most defensive of situations make sure you are fighting purely for God’s sake and in his path – and not for the sake of your own name, fame, power, gain, wealth and passions.
3. That means fight those who fight you, but do so for the sake of justice, fairness, equality and opportunity for all and not just for your own favored few. For, that is what it means to fight in the name of and for the sake of and in the path of God.
4. That means don’t fight to conquer, control, dominate, subordinate, exploit, humiliate, plunder or exterminate others but to liberate, elevate, empower everyone.
5. That means, while some others may fight in the name of king, country, tribe, color, race, religion, political party, pet cause, personal ego, vengeance, hate, mercenary gain or some other selfish reason, and perpetrate all kinds of atrocities along the way, make sure your fight – even when you are only defending yourself against those who fight you – is always for a higher, nobler and more just, equal, humane and inclusive cause and undertaken in the most civilized and compassionate way.
6. So, according to this formulation, even the most defensive wars by those who believe in God must be fought in the most humane, civilized and compassionate manner, setting the stage for the Geneva Conventions, preparing the world for them and taking them to a whole new level, which the world has not been able to reach to this day.
7. And finally – how can anyone say “finally” when they are talking about an Aayat of the Qur’an? – even when you are only fighting those who fight you, and you are doing it for the sake of and in the name and path of God and for the highest goals and purposes, you should not commit excesses and transgressions and atrocities of any kind.

If all this is not proof that the Qur’an is from God Almighty – and Islam is directly from the creator of the universe himself – what is?

**Proportionality Is Us**

Nothing proves this fact more than the notion of proportionality that the Qur’an advocates so vigorously. How can I explain this to non-Urdu speakers?

There is a beautiful expression in Urdu – and Urdu is an incredibly beautiful language, just like Farsi – which says “Had say badhjaanaa,” which means going beyond the limit; crossing the boundary; committing an excess; or doing too much of something generally negative or bad.

Such is often the common human tendency: getting carried away, going overboard and trying to do too much.
Islam is extremely vigilant in warning human beings against their own propensity to excess, whether it is with regard to business or worship or personal life, and whether it pertains to this world or the next world. For, in all things human, humans would inevitably tend to exceed the limit in one direction or another if given a chance.

That is human nature.

That is why God Almighty – in Islam – wields a firm scale and makes proportionality a requirement in all human affairs. And he does so in the most clear, specific and unambiguous terms. So much so that when it comes to the question of proportionality in human conduct, we can very easily say: Proportionality Is Us!

We invented the whole game of proportionality. We wrote the book on it. We hold the patent on it.

For example, how are those people supposed to respond who may be subjected to some wrong – those against whom aggression, excess or violence may have been perpetrated by some others?

Are such aggrieved people allowed to respond in kind? Can they exchange blow for blow? And if they can, how exactly are they supposed to do it?

When and where do they stop?

Or are they supposed to completely wipe out and obliterate the wrongdoers – those who started the fight as it were? Those who initiated the aggression and committed the first acts of excess?

Two Miraculous Aayats in the Qur’an: Out of All the Others

You know what I say at every opportunity I get, right? Every Aayat of the Qur’an is a miracle? It is a proof about the fact that this Qur’an is and can only be from God.

But listen to the Qur’an on the subject of proportionality and tell me how much clearer it can possibly get. And who, if not Allah, can conceivably promulgate a formula like this for the human species that he created and let lose on earth?

And that too 1400 years ago, on this earth?

These are the same humans about whom the angels had argued that they would cause mischief and corruption on earth and shed bloods? Yes, that is right. The Qur’an does use the plural “bloods”?

The Qur’an says, Dimaa’, which is plural, instead of Dam, which is singular for blood.

(1) The first of the two Aayats I have in mind is the one that I quoted above:

_Qaatiloo fee sabeelilahil-ladheena yuqatiloonakum wa laa ta’tadoo._

Paraphrase:

Fight those who fight you, but do not commit aggression or excess and observe limits.

(2) And the second Aayat is:

_Wa in ‘aqabtum fa-‘aaqiboo bi-mithli maa ’ooqibtum bihi._

Paraphrase:
And if you were to punish, do so in proportion to the wrong that was done to you.

How can human minds come up with a formula like that? And how can human temperaments, steeped in greed, deceit, arrogance and selfishness as they are, accept such a foolproof recipe for universal peace and justice?

And that too 1400 years ago, on this earth, and among some of the most barbaric and bloodthirsty people in the world.

And here is a combined paraphrase of the two Aayats I just quoted:

1. Fight in the path of God those who fight you but do not commit excess or cross the bounds.
2. And if you were to inflict harm on some people in response to the harm they did to you, then make sure it is proportional to the harm to which you yourselves were subjected by them.

Which part of which one of these two Aayats requires a commentary or an explanation? And where is extremism in all this?

In fact, have you ever seen a more iron-clad teaching or guarantee against extremism anywhere in any culture, tradition or political document of any kind?

**Associating Islam with Extremism**

Therefore, associating Islam with extremism is as foolish as practicing extremism in the name of Islam. There are no ifs or buts about the utter foolishness and falsehood of either one of them.

Yet, why do some people associate Islam with extremism? Answers are not hard to find. Some people do it because they don’t know better. And there are two reasons for their ignorance.

(1) One, Muslims never bothered to communicate the right picture of Islam to them. Or did an extremely poor job of it.

(2) Two, because these other folks themselves never bothered to find out the real facts about Islam.

(3) There is a third reason too: Muslims, no matter what they may or may not preach, are in many ways such awful role models and such poor practical examples of much of what Islam really stands for. This in turn affects Muslim credibility in general.

So, what should the Muslims do to remedy the situation? At least two things:

(a) That means Muslims need to do a better job of informing people about the real teachings of Islam.

(b) At the same time, Muslims must also do a better job of putting into practice what they say they believe in.

(c) Another thing Muslims need to do is learn more about Islam and understand its teachings better, which brings me to the fourth thing Muslims need to do.

(d) Understand much better than they do now the world in which they live, for, without a proper understanding of the world, it is not possible to either understand Islam or to practice it properly and effectively.
Propaganda: Knowingly Mixing Truth with Falsehood to Cover Up Truth

Some other people associate Islam with extremism, not out of ignorance or misunderstanding, but with full knowledge and understanding of what they are doing. They know what they are saying is wrong but they go ahead and say it anyway.

That is because their purpose is propaganda – turning truth into falsehood and falsehood into truth.

Qur’an defines this diabolical game of propaganda that some people, nations, groups, organizations and institutions play in a most amazing and insightful manner. Hear the Qur’an say it:

*Lima talbisoonal haqqa bil baatili wa taktumoonal haqqa wa antum ta’alamoon.*

Paraphrase:

Why do you mix truth with falsehood and cover up the truth – knowingly?

So, there you have it. How I wish some of us Muslims had gone to school and learned not only about what we think is Islam but also about how Allah’s world works. For, without knowing how the world works you can neither know Islam nor practice it.

In Allah’s real world these folks know only too well what they do. And that is to give Islam a bad name deliberately. And they don’t much care how they do it. I mean many of the folks who associate Islam with extremism.

That means in general these people are motivated by considerations of political, religious, personal and economic gain for themselves and for their respective groups. And they are out to paint Islam and Muslims in the worst colors so that they can take political, economic, religious, personal and military advantage of them.

To many of these people, giving Islam – and Muslims – a bad name is simply a means of pursuing political, military, religious, personal and economic power, wealth and influence. Such people don’t care for truth and they are not bothered by morality, honesty or integrity. And they have no qualms or inhibitions about tarnishing and defiling the good name of Islam – and Muslims – using any means at their disposal.

To them all that matters is to win and they don’t care how they do it.

Muslims need to expose this evil propaganda and continue to present Islam to the world in the most proper and positive manner. Just as the Qur’an requires them to do: *Wa jaadilhoom billatee hiya ahsan* – counter them with a better strategy and a more effective and superior and nicer set of techniques.

A Bit of Context to the Proportionality Doctrine

Let me provide a bit of context to the Aayats of proportionality that makes them even more poignant. Don’t forget, the first addressees of this miraculous message of proportionality were the free, fearless and independent tribes of Arabia who lived a life of anything but proportionality.

When someone bothered them, they bothered those people who bothered them and their entire tribe many times over. When someone killed one of theirs, they killed a hundred of the other side. Unending revenge was their way of life.
Incessant and ongoing retaliation was the fuel that fired their life.

Listen to what one of their poets had to say on the subject – knowing of course what a critical role poets and poetry often played in their lives and culture:

\[ A-la\ laa yajhalan ahadun `alainaa. Fa-najhala faowqa jahlil jaahileena. \]

Paraphrase:

Don't let anyone behave arrogantly toward us, lest we behave even more arrogantly than all the arrogant people in the world.

What a wild, free – pure – and indomitable people these pre-Islamic Arabian tribes were!

It was this raw material of utter indomitability that Islam took and converted into the soft, gentle and yet immensely tough and powerful dynamo that changed the world and at the same time set new standards of fairness, compassion and equality for humanity. Standards that the rest of the world is to this day struggling to rival or emulate.

**Some More Context to the Proportionality Doctrine**

There is more context to these Aayats of proportionality. The early Muslims who were being told to observe moderation and proportionality while defending themselves were the same people who had been subjected to the worst atrocities, brutalities and excesses by their enemies continually for more than 13 years.

During this entire period of persecution, the Muslims were repeatedly told not to resist or take any defensive action. They were told to simply accept their persecution at the hands of their enemies and have faith and patience. The Muslims were told to take the enemy onslaught on the chin and not retaliate or defend themselves – or flinch.

What a superhuman test of human endurance and greatness this was. And what an amazing training this was in discipline, self-control and dedication to their mission and to the supreme code of conduct the fulfillment of that mission would require from them in the future.

The responsibility of changing a greedy and selfish world into a more just, compassionate, fair and noble one would require nothing less.

It is these same people who were now being given permission to fight back in self-defense. And it is these same people whose hands were still being tied with the warning that they should observe proportionality even when defending themselves after a sustained persecution of 13 long years.

Now that adds a whole new dimension to the concept of proportionality.

And to the notion of Allah’s boundaries – Hudoodullah.

After knowing and realizing all this, what would anyone say who has any sense of fairness, decency and integrity except perhaps: Thank you Islam, for, thy name is moderation, compassion and proportionality!

As for extremism, it has absolutely, positively nothing to do with Islam.

Not in so-called “religious” matters such as prayer, fasting or pilgrimage. Not in so-called “secular”
matters such as war, business or politics. In fact, whatever it is you think, say or do, if it is extreme, it is not Islam?

Got a better deal, anyone?

Allahu Akbar!

END

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