

MODULE 3

Class title: Balancing Act (part 4 of Salah series)

Aim of lesson: We can only achieve balance in our life if we follow the *sunnah*

Category: Worship

Class Format: Power Point Presentation

(Greeting to students) *AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatummillisaniyafqahuqawli*(Surah At

Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28

Slides 1- 3:

Our topic today is called “Balancing Act”. To begin with, I’m going to use the example of *salah* to explain this topic. *Salah* is a structured and formal form of worship. We discussed this in our first class, also. That is, we have to follow a prescribed way of doing it. We can’t do whatever we want and recite whatever we feel like reciting. We can’t say, “today I feel like performing my *salah* like this” and the next day, do it in a completely different way. We have to follow a certain prescribed way, as taught by Rasullullah (saw). Contrastingly, do we always have to make *du'a* in the same structured way? So *salah* is structured, whereas *du'a* is not. This is the difference between *du'a* and *salah*: *Salah* has to be done in Arabic, in a particular, *masnoon*—very formal and structured, way. On the other hand, *du'a* is informal and not at all structured. It can be done anywhere, anytime, in any way—sitting, standing, lying down, and with hands held up or not. Contrastingly, *salah* can be done sitting or lying down due only to a legitimate, required reason.

Slides 4- 5:

Now... look at this picture of all these sockets, cables and plugs. Some look alike. Have you ever tried to hook up something like this? I’m sure all of us have lots of cables at home-- laptops, computers, monitors, printers, speakers, etc...Lots of cables. See how some of them look so alike, and some of them look different. Imagine connecting all this up properly. It can be quite confusing. We may not know what connects to what. Right? All of the plugs have to go in their proper places, in their specific sockets, otherwise things will not run. If you put the wrong plug in the wrong socket, will it run? No, of course not! Besides being connected properly, even if all the connections are made and there’s no electrical supply, do you think it’s going to work? Of course not! So, we need, basically, the proper connection wherein all of the plugs have to be in their right sockets,

and there has to be an electric supply, otherwise this computer system won't operate, at all.

Slide 6:

Most structure, machines, as well as institutions are made up of different parts, with each one having its own function. However, all the parts are interdependent; thus, they all work together in achieving the final goal/end, and making the whole what it is. This is the case with almost everything. For example, if you were to open up your cell phone you'd see that there are different parts within. Each and every one, however minute, has to be put in a certain fixed way for the phone to function. Otherwise, it wouldn't achieve its purpose of allowing you to communicate, and therefore would be nothing but a piece of junk. Similar is the case with *salah*, For it to be performed properly, all the required components have to be present and work together, for it to be worth our time and effort, and in order for us to fulfill our obligation to Allah (SWT).

Slides 7- 8:

We could categorize *salah* into consisting of three basic parts. The first is *taqwa*: the feeling of awe, respect, love and fear of the Almighty in our heart. We have to actually feel we are standing in front of Him, "ALLAH O AKBAR". The sense that Allah (SWT) is truly the Greatest has to infiltrate deep into our heart. We have to imagine that we are standing in front of the Almighty, the Greatest. Then, there's His remembrance by the tongue, the voicing of this feeling into the *tasbeeyaat* we read in *salah*. Finally, there's the submission of the body, the showing of bodily respect and reverence to Allah. This is the utmost manifestation of our *taqwa*, submission, and obedience.

The components of *salah* that we've just discussed are generated by the mind, body and heart, so that *salah* is a form of *ib'adah* which combines all three. First, we have to feel *taqwa* in the heart, our submission and obedience will show through our actions, and our mind will do the reciting. The challenge for you and I is to find a balance between all three; this is the balancing act. *Salah* is thus a balancing act wherein we have to find the right balance between our heart, body and mind.

Sounds simple enough, but usually we have a hard time striking the perfect balance. Usually, the most neglected component in our *salah* is our heart, as we're so busy paying attention to the words that we're reciting, or the required actions, that our heart is somewhere else. So our heart, which is the most important part, is the least involved generally because we are so involved and engrossed in what's happening around us, such as what we were just doing or are going to do, our feelings, etc. If not distracted by such thoughts, then at the very least, we concentrate too much on the physical movements, "How many *rakat* more to read?" At times, though we may be parroting the words, our

mind is wandering somewhere else. Does this happen to any of you? Yes, of course, to all of us sometimes, and more so with some others! So what's essential in helping us fulfill our greatest obligation to Allah (SWT) is attaining the right balance between the heart, mind and body.

Slide 9:

When you think of balancing, what comes to your mind? If you close your eyes and imagine you are in a stable position, what comes to your mind? Are your heart and mind at rest and peace, or are they going haywire?! When we are in a stable position, our mind and heart are at complete rest and peace. Therefore, stability is the first step towards inner peace.

Slides 10- 18:

Balancing is not alien to us; we see it all around us. Now, you must have all experienced balancing different things at some point, like...riding a bicycle. This is a real balancing act, isn't it? However, when beginning to ride a bicycle, do we start on a two-wheeler? Did you start riding on a bicycle from the first day? No. How did you start? On a tricycle? Why? Clearly because it keeps you upright in a balanced position, and allows you to ride without toppling over. Then, as you get steadier on a tricycle, what happens? You are promoted to a bicycle, but not without two small wheels attached to it. Finally, after practicing with the training wheels, they're removed and you're left on two wheels only, forced to balance yourself and ride simultaneously. Even then, somebody's there next to you in case you fall. So clearly, learning to balance on and ride a bike takes place gradually.

As another example, climbing stairs is a very big challenge for toddlers. Have you ever seen them when they're just learning to climb stairs? You know, they put one foot on a step and then the other on the same step, and then repeat the same actions on the next step? So it takes them a lot longer. It's obviously a real challenge for them. Holding someone's hand and trying to walk is again very challenging for toddlers. Eventually, they let go of the helping hand and try to walk on their own, balancing and staying upright on their own, and moving forward!

Have you ever tried to keep something balanced, like a ball on a spoon held in between your teeth, in some race? I don't know if you've seen rural women carrying clay pots on their heads. They walk with so much ease that the pots don't even move, even though they don't bother holding them. The ability to do this requires practice so that it's become second nature to them. Skating, hopscotch, gymnastics—all of these are all about balancing, without a doubt! Gymnastics is especially so, and requires a lot of

practice in order to be perfect. Gymnasts start at a very young age. So the former have all been examples of balancing physically.

Slides 19- 23:

Now let me give you examples of mental balancing. Putting a puzzle together is one; you have to fit all the pieces together perfectly so that they complete the puzzle. Then there's playing chess. "Where should I move my pawn or queen or brook???" Have you ever played chess? You have to balance your moves so that you end up winning. As you got older you had to balance your studies with other activities, like sports, hobbies, time spent with friends, *salah* and Qur'an. Everything has to be balanced. How about trying to multitask, like studying on the computer, talking on the phone, and eating? I'm sure you're **all** familiar with this?! Tried this? Does it work? What is usually negatively affected when you multitask? Your conversation with your friend will probably continue, but at the expense of what?

Student: Balance.

Teacher: Yes, you will not be able to achieve a balance. As a result, usually in this case, it'll be your studies which will suffer; you cannot concentrate on studying and talk at the same time. You won't be able to maintain a balance. Without balance, there cannot be success.

Slide 24:

Non-Muslims know the power of balance. Lots of books have been written on this topic. I'm sure you must come across articles or books about balancing mind, body and soul?

Slides 25- 41:

Have you seen people doing yoga? Or have you ever done it? Yoga is all about balancing. A yogi sits still, focusing on relaxing her mind and body so that they are in complete balance. There are certain products which are available, different lotions, creams, aromatherapy oils, etc. to assist one in attaining balance. There are even certain foods and drinks, certain herbal teas or herbs. Different religions also encourage different balancing techniques. What's common with all of these techniques is that they all require continuity--a lot of practice. Just see this yoga position: balancing on one foot, and maybe even for hours. Or this; this is quite tough! He's not even holding onto anything. Do you think he was able to do this the very first time he tried it? He probably fell many times! It's only through persistence and dedication that he can do this so perfectly.

Student: He makes it look so easy.

Teacher: It looks pretty difficult to me. He's achieved this incredible balance with lots of practice, without a doubt. This is clearly not an easy position. Now, he's probably in this position fulfilling a religious duty or prescription. Moving on, are these familiar positions? Do we sit in this position ever? When? Which position is this? This is like the *tashahud* position, isn't it? She's obviously not reading *salah*. Nevertheless, this is a very popular position in yoga. This one is like *sajda*; even this position is very common. Here, Muslims are praying. Now, he's a Christian, but he's also doing something similar. This is a Sikh lady, and she's also in a position of *sajdah*.

Student: Why?

Slides 42- 45:

Teacher: Hindus in the same position. This is someone who's Shinto. This is a religion practiced mainly in Japan. She's also in that same position. Notice how these people are also all in a similar position, while doing karate. More Christians. I even saw a video of a Jew doing his *salah*, or his prayer; it's very similar to the way we pray. A coincidence, do you suppose? If you were to look at it, you would think that this is a Muslim praying. But the difference is that, as you may know, they have to keep moving throughout. So he kept on moving. Overall, the positions are all very similar. Why the similarity? You see, their *deen* was the Truth or *Haq*, at the beginning, when their prophets taught it to them, as revealed by Allah (SWT). They just mixed it up with whatever they liked, and now it's completely changed, distorted.

Slides 46- 47:

Anyway, why do you suppose all these different religious groups all perform prostration? Could there be some benefits to this position? In fact, studies have shown that prostration strongly influences the balance and harmony of our body. Our mind becomes clear, and our ability to understand increases. These facts are from the Net. These are just some of the physical and mental benefits of doing *sajdah*. This is why we see this position being practiced in just about every religion, and even in some physical exercises.

Because of this position, our body and mind both function harmoniously, achieving a perfectly balanced state. This can only be achieved through prayers. Our mind, body and soul, are all in perfect harmony, achieved only through *salah*.

Slide 48:

Teacher: Are you convinced of the balancing power of *salah*? Do you all think *salah* has the power to balance our body and mind? Why?

Student: Because of the physical positions we perform.

Slides 49- 51:

Teacher: Because of the positions? It seems logical. It must clearly be the benefits of the physical positions, as all the religions seem to have incorporated at least some of these actions. Even many exercise routines contain similar ones. So clearly, there are physical benefits of doing the positions of *salah*. But are the physical positions the only reason for the balancing power of *salah*? Let's see.

Slide 52:

To begin with, what are the conditions of *salah*? Firstly, obviously, the *musalli* has to be a Muslim. She must be sane and have reached puberty¹. She must be physically clean, having done *wudu* or *ghusl*. She should be properly covered, as prescribed. She should be facing the *qibla*. It should be time for that particular *fardh* prayer, one is about to perform. Finally, and as importantly, she should have the intention to pray a particular *salah*, such as the *fardh* of *fajr*, etc.

Slides 53- 57:

So the first condition of *salah* is faith or *eman*. This is the first condition. Agreed? Obviously, if one isn't a Muslim, then why would she bother to pray? In Surah Zumar, verse 65, Allah (SWT) says...

لَنْ أَشْرَكَتَ لِيُحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

This means, if we join others in worship with Allah, then surely all our deeds will be in vain, and we will certainly be among the losers. In Surah Muhammad, verse 33, He declares...

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ

That is, "O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger (saw) and render not vain your deeds." This means, if we want our deeds to be accepted by Allah (SWT) as good deeds, then we must obey not only Him, but also Rasullullah (saw), or else they will be meaningless, and therefore, wasted. Why's obeying Rasullullah (saw) so essential? As you're all aware, he's shown us how to obey Allah (SWT) in the best way. So, how do we know how to pray at all? From whom do we learn how to perform our *salah* properly and perfectly? We've discussed this before, also.

Student: The Prophet (saw)?

¹ The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Order your children to pray when they reach the age of seven and beat them at the age of ten (if they refuse), and separate the beds" (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Al Hakim)

Slides 58- 61:

Teacher: The Prophet (saw)! Yes! We look at his *sunnah*, at the *ahadith*, and that's how we know how to pray. Rasullullah (saw) said, in a hadith in Bukhari, "Perform *salah* as you see me performing it." He should be our role model for everything we do, including and most especially *salah*. The reason we bow and prostrate in a certain way is because we follow Rasullullah (saw), in our attempt to fulfill our most important duty to Allah (SWT) Himself. Remember the physical benefits of doing prostration or *sajdah*? These aren't the most important benefits of *salah* then, are they? No, they're just the fringe benefits. They're not the reason for doing *sajdah*. Agreed? They're not the reason why we do *salah*, at all. In yoga or any other physical activity, people prostrate merely for the physical benefits. We don't do *sajdah* just for the physical benefits. We do it because Rasullullah (saw) has told us to perform *salah* in this particular way, in order to fulfill our duty to Allah (SWT). If he had told us to do it differently, in any other way, then we would have followed that instead. Rasullullah (saw) has taught us this way and that is why we perform our prayers as we do. We follow our leader. We don't make things up according to our whims. We have to follow in his footsteps, whatever he has done, including for *salah*.

Slides 62- 63:

Rasullullah (saw) said "The vilest thief is he who steals from his *Salah*." They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how does he steal from his *Salah*?" He (saw) said, "He does not perfect its *ruku'* and *Sujood*". And a lot of us do this. We finish our *salah* in less than two minutes. Four *rakat* in less than two!! Because we just drop to the ground, bolt up, drop again, and bolt up, and so on. Have you ever done this? If you have, you've been stealing from your *salah*. If we don't do the *ruku* and *sujood* properly, we're stealing from our own good deed! Essentially, we're wasting our deed, as this is not how our beloved Prophet (saw) taught us to do it! If we don't follow his *sunnah*, it'll be like groping in the dark, or being blind, we won't know how to be a true believer and follow our *Deen*. And then there will be total confusion and chaos in our life. Can you see how? We've discussed this before, remember?

Slides 64- 69:

Without true guidance from Allah Himself, people try other means of connecting to Allah (SWT), instead of *salah*. Imagine if you tried something else and she tried something else, and both without any guidance, just on a whim and a fancy! In Islam, however, nothing whatsoever is done without evidence, from the Qur'an or *Sunnah*. Sufism is an example of this; the devotees indulge in twirling and dancing as a way of connecting to Allah (SWT). People have made this mode of worship up. We certainly don't have any

evidence of this from the Prophet (saw) or his companions (RA), let alone from the Qur'an! There's also the concept of going to *mazaars* and asking dead pious men to help fulfill one's *du'as*. Instead of worship pleasing Allah (SWT), this is *shirk*. So how can there be evidence of this in our *Deen*? There are those who gain fame for themselves, using these men's names, in the name religion. We have this right here in Karachi, Abdullah Shah Ghazi's *mazaar*. Have any of you ever been there? Neither have I. But from the frenzy we see around there, and what we hear from others, people actually fervently make *du'a* to them; *n'audhubillah*. Now, it doesn't take much intelligence to know that dead people are totally useless; they can't do anything for themselves. In fact, when a person dies and his eyes are open, he can't even close them himself! No, other people close his eyes. Who gives *ghusl* to a dead body? Others, of course. So if a dead body can't close its own eyes nor give itself a bath, then how can it help others when they ask it for something?! How can they make things better and fulfill anyone's needs? He can't even help himself; he's gone. He's merely a lifeless body, hereon.

Student: Abdullah Shah Ghazi is not to be blamed for such ignorant actions, though.

Teacher: No, he can't possibly be. He was a pious person; there's nothing blameworthy with him. He was a scholar who used to spread Islam and the right guidance. There was nothing wrong with his actions. He never asked people to make *du'a* to him. It's precisely because these men are Allah-fearing, *muttaqi*, that once they die, ordinary people make more out of them. People attribute them with powers which belong only to Allah (SWT). Desperate people start praying to them, though they never asked others to. Essa (As) obviously never said "I'm God, so pray to me; ask of me". Once he died, people made him their lord. You know people make *du'a* facing the graves, as we do to Allah (SWT). This is exactly the problem with *mazaars*.

Slide 70:

Have you seen something like this? This is a *dhamaal*. They're usually men with long hair who beat drums. They just keep on going round and round and round until finally they lose control over themselves. I hope that none of you have seen this! Maybe your parents may have. They may be able to tell you about it. Such rituals can be seen at *mazaars* only. These states are usually achieved with the help of drugs. All kinds of terrible things go on over there. Ironically, it's all in the name of Islam.

Can you imagine, *n'audhubillah*, Rasullullah (saw) or his companions (RA) doing anything of this sort? Can we ever imagine that? No we can't? And who do we have to follow? Rasullullah (saw) and his companions (RA), of course. When people don't follow the *Haq* from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, we see outrageous things like this.

Slides 71- 72:

Did you hear about a woman leading a *jama'at* of men and women, a couple of years back? Did you hear about it? Her name is Ameenah Wudood, in New York, and she's still leading the prayers. There's nothing wrong with leading a prayer if one is leading a *jama'at* of only women. But she's not leading only women; she leads men and women, who all stand side by side.

Student: Why can't women lead prayers?

Teacher: Well, if it's not allowed by the *Sunnah*, she can't do it. If it's not permitted by it, then it's clearly wrong. Her prayer, and that of all those following her, will not be accepted if she's leading men, because it's just not allowed.²

Slide 73:

Moving on, what's happening here? Ameenah Wudood and her followers aren't following the *Sunnah*. Simply, this is the basic problem. She's deriving her own conclusions, not based on any teachings or precedents from the *Sunnah*. As a result, you also see something like this: she's not even properly covered. Her *satr* isn't covered; she can't pray like this. Can we say that she is doing something good, worthy of reward, and pleasing to Allah (SWT)? Well, she's attempting to obey Allah (SWT) by doing *salah*, but she's not doing it the right way. A good deed is only a *naiki*, **if** it is done the right way. The right way is none other than the way of the *Sunnah*. Right? Next, what about this? This woman is standing next to a man and praying. Even if he's her *mehram*, her *salah* is absolutely invalid. Women have to stand behind men, even if he's her son, husband, brother or father. She cannot stand next to him and pray. It's just not allowed. Women have to stand behind men, even in their own home, and even if they aren't doing *jama'at*, and merely praying in the same room, simultaneously. We **cannot** pray in front of a man, or even next to him, but must be a step behind him. Why?? Is it because we're any less than them? No, merely because this is the way taught by Rasullullah (saw).

²Narrated through Jabir ibn Abdullah: "A woman may not lead a man in Prayer, nor may a Bedouin lead a believer of the Muhajirun or a corrupt person lead a committed Muslim in Prayer.(Ibn Majah)

An indirectly relevant *hadith* is widely considered to be crucial, since the imam stands at the front of the congregation.¹Abu Huraira said: "The best rows for men are the first rows, as opposed to the last ones, and the best rows for women are the last ones as opposed to the first ones."(Muslim)

Slides 74- 75:

So here again, she's doing something good but totally invalid. Her prayer is in vain, as she's not following the *Sunnah*. All agree? We're all aware that following the *Sunnah* is extremely important, in fact **essential**, for an action to be accepted as a good deed, a *naiki*, by Allah (SWT). And if it is not a *naiki*, it's not going to benefit us at all, on the Day of Judgment.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There's absolutely no need to do that. Our success lies in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (saw). If you follow the *Sunnah*, you will never be an extremist, ever. In fact, we will be perfectly balanced individuals. We cannot be extremists if we're balanced, can we? In fact, the real extremists are those who do not follow his *Sunnah*. Have you seen lone people on the road, with long beards, who never take a shower? They're called "*malang*". Have you seen people like that? There's no such person as a "*malang*", in Islam. Cleanliness is part of Islam; having a relationship and family are a part of it, too.

There was once a *sahabi* who used to fast all the time. His wife complained to Rasullullah (saw) about him. Rasullullah (saw) said, "No, you should not fast all the time, because I don't even do that. I fast, and I break my fast, you should also do the same".

Why do you think we don't have Ramadan all year round? It's just once in twelve months. This is Allah's (SWT) balance. Rasullullah (saw) used to fast every Monday and Thursday, and on the 13th, 14th, and 15th of the month. The rest of the month he ate as normal. This is balance. Therefore, we cannot be extremists if we follow the *Sunnah*. In Surah Al-an' am, verse 162, Allah (SWT) says,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Say: "Truly, my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for ALLAH, the Cherisher of the Worlds." This should be our goal and motto of life. And how will we live up to it? There's no other way than by following the *Sunnah* as best as we can, *inshaAllah*.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbullIzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun 'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*