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***Wasatiyyah* (Moderation) as the Principle and Objective of the *Shariah* as a Solution for Preventing Violence and Extremism**

Wasatiyyah (Kesederhanaan) sebagai Satu Prinsip dan objektif *Shariah* adalah satu Solusi Mencegah Keganasan dan Ekstrim

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali,* Muneer Muhammed Rafeeqe**

Abstract

The *Shariah*, the foundation of the scheme of life, seems to be the most misunderstood concept of our time. The *Shariah* is confined to the domain of law in a rigid way and used out of context in an exclusivist manner. This has generated numerous implications to thought and life. It is generally assumed that the violent extremism that we witness in many parts of the world is the result of this misrepresentation of the *Shariah*. The situation demands a textual and contextual reading of the *Shariah's* principles scientifically, especially, the principle of the *wasatiyyah* as an objective of the *Shariah* [*Maqasid Shariah*]. A correct view of the *Shariah* and the principle of *wasatiyyah* will help to remove the misunderstandings. It will also help to prevent the violent extremist and terrorist tendencies. This paper, therefore, aims at examining the principle of *wasatiyyah* based on the textual study of the Principle Sources – the Quran and *Sunnah* - and determines its scope to counter violence, extremism and terrorism. The socio-ethical dimensions and the principle of *wasatiyyah* as principles and objectives of the *Shariah* in relation to extremist trends will be explored and analyzed in this paper. This paper will present the principle of *wasatiyyah* as a solution for preventing the current extremist tendencies among some Muslims. The descriptive and analytical approaches will be employed in this study. Based on the textual study in a changing context, this paper concludes that the principle of *wasatiyyah*, owing its significance in the *Sharī'ah*, needs to be highlighted and acknowledged as a major principle and objective of the *Sharī'ah* which would be helpful to solve the societal problems besides its significance in private life.

Keywords: *Shariah*, *Wasatiyyah*, violent tendencies, extremism, contextual reading.

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Abstrak

Shariah yang merupakan asas kehidupan manusia adalah konsep yang seringkali disalah ertikan masa kini, Shariah yang dianggap terhad kepada undang-undang dan digunakan di luar konteks dengan cara eksklusif telah memberi pelbagai implikasi terhadap pemikiran dan kehidupan manusia. Secara amnya, keganasan golongan ekstrimis di beberapa Negara di dunia ini adalah berpunca daripada pemahaman Shariah yang salah. Situasi ini perlu kepada pembacaan prinsip-prinsip Shariah secara saintifik terhadap teks dan konteks terutamanya prinsip wasatiyyah sebagai satu bentuk objektif Shariah. Pandangan sebenar terhadap Shariah dan prinsip wasatiyyah dapat menghapuskan tanggapan yang salah dan mampu mencegah keganasan golongan ekstrimis dan terroris. Oleh itu makalah ini mengkaji prinsip wasatiyyah berdasarkan teks al-Quran dan Sunnah untuk mengenalpasti skopnya demi mencegah keganasan, ekstrimis dan terroris. Dimensi sosio-etika dan prinsip wasatiyyah sebagai objektif Shariah akan dianalisis dalam makalah ini. Makalah ini akan membincangkan prinsip wasatiyyah sebagai penyelesaian untuk mencegah kecenderungan ekstremis semasa di kalangan umat Islam. Pendekatan deskriptif dan analisis digunakan dalam kajian ini. Berdasarkan kajian tekstual makalah ini menyimpulkan bahawa prinsip wasatiyyah, perlu diakui sebagai objektif dan prinsip utama Shari'ah yang akan membantu menyelesaikan masalah sosial selain kepentingannya dalam kehidupan setiap individu.

Kata Kunci: Shariah, Wasatiyyah, kecenderungan kepada keganasan, ekstrimis, pembacaan konteks.

Introduction

Wasatiyyah (*moderation*) as one of the important principles of the *Shariah* has not been emphasized in the contemporary discourse for a long time. This negligence has resulted in the rise of extremist tendencies among people. It is high time to bring back this principle to its proper place in the scheme of the development of life and society. In fact, it is presented through the Quran and Sunnah as one of the very important principles for cultural and civilizational development. Its proper explanation and application will work as an effective method and mechanism to check extremist tendencies. The current scenario in the world demands a proper exposure of the concept of *wassatiyyah*. Hence, this paper focuses on the elaboration of the *wassatiyyah* as the principle and objective of the *Shariah*. In order to establish the validity and authenticity of our position we will first embark into the commandments of the Quran and Sunnah which will be followed by the analysis of the views of commentators of the Quran. In addition, the views of some scholars on this issue will also be referred and analysed.

The Arabic term *wasatiyyah* is generally used to denote the moderation in the personal conduct as well as a collection of behavioural

characteristics.¹ It may be simply referred to as an attitude or position or stance that is contrary to the extremism and excessiveness.² The term *wasatiyyah* is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of the original word *wasat*. Instead of assigning to a single literal and unilateral meaning, many other synonymous meanings, as in the case of other words in the Arabic language, are also be credited to *wasatiyyah*. *Tawassuṭ*, *i'tidāl*, *tawāzun* and *iqtisād*³ are translated as moderation, justice, balance and prudence respectively. The opposite of *wasatiyyah* is *taṭarruf*, which refers to inclination towards the peripheries⁴ which is simply translated in to “extremism” or “radicalism” in our time.

The word developed from its simple meaning into a broad concept with multiple dimensions, basically stems from the Qur’anic designation of the Muslim community as *ummatan wasaṭan*. It has been translated as midmost community or justly balanced community. This community which maintain *wasatiyya* is considered the best community. The Qur’an says:

*And thus we have made you a just community (or middle most community) that you will be witness over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.*⁵

As we mentioned before, the literal meaning of the word *wasat* can be translated into the three interrelated meanings; i.e. to be moderate; to be in the middle; and thirdly to be the best. It denotes that the taking the middle of the road, and positioning in the center of the circle.⁶ Its meaning also extends to a number of other alternatives such as the “best” and “strongest.” For example, the sun at noon (middle) represents its best performance as it emits its hottest temperature compared to morning and evening. Similarly, the youth signifies the peak and energetic period of manhood compared to the childhood and old age.⁷ This is to say that, the term *wasat* represents the designation of the Muslim community, connotes the meaning of the best, strong, justly balanced community ever

¹ Muhamadul Bakir Yaakub, Khatijah Othman, “A Textual Analysis for the Term “Wasatiyyah” (Islamic Moderation) in Selected Quranic Verses and Prophetic Tradition”, *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, vol. 5 (20016): 67.

² Ibid.

³ Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam; The Qur’anic Principle of Wasatiyya*, (oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Qur’an, 2:143.

⁶ Yaakub, 65.

⁷ Kamali, *The Middle....* 9.

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created by God. In the same vein, the *‘aṣr* prayer is depicted as the best prayer in the Qur’an. God says;

*Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind).*⁸

This prayer occurs at late afternoon and it is the middle of the other four prayers.⁹ Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) affirms that the term *wasat* is equivalent to *khiyār* (chosen, selected) and *‘adl* (just) linguistically.¹⁰ A Prophetic tradition which affirms the exact meaning of *wasatiyyah* is noteworthy in this regard. According to this report,¹¹ the Prophet (pbuh) himself clearly stated that the *wasat* is to mean justice (*al-‘adl*). Justice in literal sense is a middle-most position between two or more opposing sides, without inclining to or favouring any of the sides, and not swayed by emotions, biases or prejudice in making judgments, decisions or solving disputes.¹² The meaning that the Prophet (pbuh) envisages in this *hadīth* clearly represents a number of manifestations such as attitude, unbiased stance and character. One of the wise sayings of Arabs which is *khair al-‘umūr al-wasat* also meaning to say that the best of affairs is the middle and moderate position.¹³ The Prophetic tradition which says; “Beware of excessiveness in religion, people¹⁴ before you have perished as a result of such excessiveness”¹⁵ is a clear warning not to be an extremist and urges his followers to stay in moderate and balanced position in the affairs of life and society.

During the time of Hajj (pilgrimage), the Prophet (pbuh) was heading to Muzdalifah. He halted on the way for a while and asked Ibn

⁸ The Qur’an, 2:238.

⁹ Kamali, *The Middle...*, 9.

¹⁰ Etin Anwar, The Ethics of *wasatiyya* and the Pursuit of Gender Equality in “*American Journal of Islamic Sciences*”, vol. 32 no.4 (2015), 50.

¹¹ This *hadīth* has been reported by Imam Ahmad on the authority of Abu Sa‘īd al-Khudri.

¹² M. Kamal Hassan, The Concept of *al-Wasatiyya* and the Place of Islamic Moderation in *Applications of Wasatiyyah in the Contemporary Muslim World*, edited by Ahmad F. Yousif, (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2015), 7.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The people the Prophet (pbuh) referred to here are Christians and Jews. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism*, Trans. Nancy Roberts, (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), 9.

¹⁵ Ibn Mājah Abū ‘Abdillah al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, ed. Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (al-Qāhīrah: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, n.d), 1008.

Abbas to collect some stones for him. Ibn Abbas took small stones instead of big ones. Upon seeing the small stones, the Messenger [pbuh] commented acknowledging Ibn Abbas's deeds; (Yes with such, it is what I intended). Beware of excessiveness in religion."¹⁶ Emphasizing the same point, the Messenger of God [pbuh] has used to say; do not overly be strict with yourselves lest God be all the stricter with you. For you what remains (of those who have done so) in the hermitages and monasteries?¹⁷ As God himself stated in the Qur'an; "But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them."¹⁸ All these textual references in the Qur'an and Sunnah clearly show the importance and significance of the wasat and its use as principle and objective of the Shariah. It is equally applicable and significant to individual and society. Before going to the detailed elaboration of the important dimensions of this concept, it would be better to have a cursory glance at certain aspects of this concept.

***Wasatiyyah* as a Balance: the Prophetic Approach**

Keeping a balance and moderate approach in all walks of life is somehow part of disposing the higher ethical value of justice. In fact, moderation and balance are the sub themes originating from the fatherly principle of justice. They are deeply interconnected and interdependent altogether. Therefore, *wasatiyyah* and justice are inseparable in most of the cases.¹⁹ The absolute justice is a divine attribute cannot be equate to humans. The ideal or perfect justice is mirage.²⁰ It is deemed impossible to be accomplished perfectly by people since it is transcendental and super natural. Therefore, we need to understand that the realization of the absolute justice would only be apprehended by the disposal of God on the Day of Judgment. This world is not deemed as an abode of such realization of ultimate justice. Similarly, the complete realization of *wasatiyyah* would not be sufficiently manifested in this world by people,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, ed. Muhammed Naṣir al-Dīn Albānī. Second Edition (Bayrūt: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1979), 9.

¹⁸ The Qur'an, 57:27

¹⁹ Kamali, *The Middle...*, 11.

²⁰ Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 1.

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though they are being instructed to do so.²¹ As in the case of imparting justice, we are ordained to be moderate and justly balanced beings as much as possible. The Qur'an emphatically calls people especially the Muslims to uphold justice through several statements²² but, people, by their innate nature,²³ are not likely to carry out the herculean task of realizing the absolute justice. All the Prophets (pbuh) sent by God had carried out the responsibility of imparting justice to their societies.

*"We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice."*²⁴

This instruction clearly identifies that in all revealed books the emphasis on balance and justice are included as the part of the mission of all the Prophets (pbuh). This clearly indicates that it is a basic duty of people to maintain balance, justice and moderation between the extreme tendencies. People have always been tended naturally to incline towards something in excess or tended to be heedless and reckless in their life. Islam as the way of life, in fact, fulfils the role of balancing life with all of its affairs in its right proportion and right degree. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in one way, was correcting the innate human qualities in its right place and right degree. Once he openly proclaimed that his mission of Prophethood constitutes moulding and perfecting the human character. "I was sent to perfect the noblest morals."²⁵ The *wasatiyyah* is primarily a noble character which was included in the Prophetic mission. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the exemplary manifesta-

²¹ The complete and flawless manifestation of some of the virtues such as justice and balance cannot be materialized by men in the worldly life since they are the attributes of God by whom alone it would be possible.

²² "O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!" (4: 135), "O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do." (5:8)

²³ The Qur'an, 4: 28.

²⁴ The Qur'an. 57: 25.

²⁵ Imām Mālik Ibn Anas, *Al-Mawsū'ah al-Hadīthiyyah: al-Muwaṭṭa'*, ed. Kulāl Ḥasan 'Alī (Bayrūt: Mu'assasah a-Risālah, 2014), 691.

tion of perfect human character. The manifestation of the model of universal and perfect man can be found in him.²⁶ The Qur'an attests this claim by saying; "And indeed you are of a great moral character."²⁷ Sayed Hossein Nasr describes the Prophet (pbuh) as "the universal man par excellence and also the quintessence of all that is positive in cosmic manifestation."²⁸ The noble aspects of life have been clearly depicted in the Prophetic model. As an ethically approved scheme of life, the perfect model of the Prophet has to be emulated by humanity. Worship, rituals, socio-political affairs, family and economic affairs all have been modelled through his life.

As part of this mission, the Prophet (pbuh) had to bring the exact proportion of balance among people with different habits and potentials. As a human being, each and every companion had inclined to one or another temperament. They had never been consistent in keeping a balance in their temperaments and skills. Unlike the Prophet (pbuh), their moral and personal qualities have not been proportionately conglomerated by the divine help. Whereas the excellence in governance and the quality of justice overwhelmed in Umar's character which made him distinguished from others as a just ruler, it was the character of austerity and asceticism that made Abu Dharr distinguished. Whereas Abu Bakr is the symbol of patience and determination, Usman was known for his modesty and humility. This shows that the human qualities among the companions had not been combined proportionally. Whereas some characters have been possessed by some companions, some other noble qualities have augmented in other companions. Therefore, they would not be considered as moderate and balanced in that sense. They had been in divergent levels in securing these noble characters and manners in their personalities. Their temperaments and characters vary significantly from person to person. But the balance lied in the Muslim society as a whole was dominant. The community in which different companions lived with different natures and qualities made them the community of justly balanced.

²⁶ Sayed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1968), Sayed Hossein Nasr, "The Nature of Man", World Wisdom.

<http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=The_Nature_of_Man_by_Seyyed_Hossein_Nasr.pdf> (accessed 20 May, 2017).

²⁷ The Qur'an; 68: 4.

²⁸ Sayed Hossein Nasr, "The Nature of Man", World Wisdom. <http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=The_Nature_of_Man_by_Seyyed_Hossein_Nasr.pdf> (accessed 20 May, 2017).

New Conceptualization of *Wasatiyyah*

Grounding on the textual premises of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions, scholars have broadly developed the concept of *wasatiyyah* pertaining to various dimensions. From a narrow and literal meaning, the concept has momentarily been elaborated and interpreted multi-dimensionally according to the social changes and needs of time. It seems the contemporary scholars have much concern on the concept of moderation. They have interpreted the concept in such a way to meet the newly evolved challenges of alleged extremism and terrorism. Kamal Hasan, for example, argues that the *wasatiyyah* encompasses three fundamental components namely justice, excellence and balance/moderation.²⁹ Hashim Kamali defines the *wasatiyyah* as a "recommended posture that occurs to the people of sound nature and intellect, distinguished by its aversion to both extremism and manifest neglect."³⁰ Kamali envisages the moderation in a comprehensive way. He writes; "moderation is a virtue that helps to develop social harmony and equilibrium in personal affairs within the family and society and the much wide spectrum of human relationships."³¹

Muhammad Asad also visualizes the moderation as a hallmark of the Muslim community and their scheme of life.³² The extreme approaches in religious affairs as well as mundane affairs deemed as blameworthy and therefore they are to be avoided at any context. It means that the moderation has to do with all aspects of human life. The Qur'an exhorts the believers to bring this quality in all aspects of life. It does not encourage to place great emphasis either side of the life. According to him, moderation is a branch and subservient aspect of *tawhid*. Referring to this aspect, he argues that the expression of a community of the middle towards the problem of man's existence. To avoid conflict between spirit and the flesh the balanced approach and a moderate position is considered as praiseworthy. Islam gives the right way of balance and moderation through its teachings.³³

²⁹ Muhammad Haniff Hassan, "*Wasatiyya* as explained by Prof. Muhammad Kamal Hasan: Justice, Excellence and Balance", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, vol. 6, issue 2. (2014): 27.

³⁰ Kamali, *The Middle...*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³² Muhammad Asad. *The Message of Quran*, (1980), 30.

³³ *Ibid.*

For Yusuf al-Qaradawi moderation, besides an ethical trait of an individual, is an alternative life approach for people at global level. The quality of moderation is required to be accepted as a scheme for life and society as explained by Islam. He sees the *wasatiyyah* as a viable and global alternative way of life. In order to save people from engendering hostility of extremism, moderation need to be restored at collective level.³⁴ It is, therefore, not proper to confine the concept of *wasatiyyah* at individual level. It is urgent to bring the idea in social level as well.³⁵ For Wahbah al-Zuhayli, “*Wasatiyyah* is meant as keeping moderation and balance in belief, morality and character. Hence, it functions in the manner of treating others and in the applied systems of socio-ethical order and governance.”³⁶ The above mentioned scholars envisage *wasatiyyah* as a life scheme not only as an ethical value of an individual. It is a social requirement. In short, in the light of the above views one can see *wasatiyyah* as a call for its collective application in all aspects of life of a community.

The Evolution of *Wasatiyyah* as a Higher Principle of the *Shariah*

From the above analysis, we would be able to conclude that the concept of *wasatiyyah* serves as an integral theme of the *Shariah* along with other principles. The scholars who are specialized in the fields of *Shariah* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* have acknowledged some major principles as the *maqāṣid al-Shariah*. *Wassatiyya* is one of them. New conceptualization of *maqāṣid* has been instrumental in proposing some major but new principles besides the old conception of five categorizations of *maqāṣid*. For example, the voices of preservation of justice and freedom of expression as the higher principle of the *Shariah* have recently been increased. In the past the principle of *wasatiyyah*, as an objective of the *Shariah*, did not gain the proper attention from the *maqāṣid* scholars. The early scholars did not categorically employ the concept of *wasatiyyah* as a higher objective of the *Shariah*. There is much scope for the interpretation of meaning of *maqāṣid*. The early scholars, especially those who were specialized in the *Shariah* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, had extensively deliberated on the principle of *wasatiyyah*. They dealt the issue in detail with the

³⁴ Al-Qaradawi, *Islamic...*, xii.

³⁵ Ahmad F. Yousuf, *Applications of Wasatiyyah in the Contemporary Muslim World*, (Gombak: IIUM Press, 2015), xiii.

³⁶ Kamali, *The Middle ...*, 11.

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various philosophical and methodological implications. Nevertheless, they did not expose *wasatiyya* as an objective of the *Shariah*. Among the classical scholars, al-Shāṭibī has contributed much in developing the concept into broader dimensions. The idea of *wasatiyyah* has been present throughout his book. It will be imperative to examine his scholarly views on *wasatiyyah* and their scope of conceiving the idea as a higher objective of the *Shariah*.

Although al-Shāṭibī confined himself in limiting the *maqāsid* in five fundamentals, many of the other important subsidiary objectives have clearly been illustrated in his writings. He distinguishes *wasatiyyah* as one of the most distinctive characteristics of the *Shariah* since it keeps a moderate and middle way in legislating rules and imposing laws. When the laws are imposed as obligations, it proceeds and maintains the path of moderation and consummates fairness.³⁷ His view on *wasatiyyah* especially in legal matters is obvious.

It is a path which appropriates both extremes without inclining toward either of them, and which remains within the limits of human capacity, thereby causing us neither hardship nor harm. Indeed, the obligations entailed by the Law of Islam are founded upon an equilibrium which requires that every one of us progress toward perfect moderation.³⁸

Although he does not categorize *wasatiyyah* as an objective of the *Shariah*, he unequivocally located the concept at a higher place in the fold of *Shariah*. Al-Shāṭibī understands the *Shariah* as a middle path which is free from excessiveness and extremism. Al-Shāṭibī' was treating the *Shariah* with a universal outlook. According to Wael B. Hallaq, al-Shāṭibī' has attempted to demonstrate the true nature of the *Shariah* which draws a middle course between extreme and uncontrolled lenient attitudes guided by personal interests.³⁹ That is why he states time and again throughout the book that the "*Shariah* represents nothing but a middle-of-the-road position between undue difficulty (*'usr*) and extreme ease (*yusur*)."⁴⁰ Although he presents the *Shariah* as a *wasatiyyah* scheme in his designation as a middle of the road position, but his

³⁷ Gamal Eldin Attia, *Towards the Realization of the Higher Intents of Islamic Law Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah A Functional Approach*, Tran. Nancy Roberts, (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007), 45.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiqh*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

presentation of *wasatiyyah* confines at individual level. Perhaps he may be the first scholar who made meticulous observation on the feature of *wasatiyyah* which is ingrained in the breadth and width of the *Shariah*.

Despite of a number of serious scholarly deliberations on moderation by the classical and contemporary scholars, Ibn Ashur alone, as far as the researcher knew, might be the one who presented moderation as a higher objective of the *Shariah*. He describes moderation with the Arabic word *samahah* (magnanimity) which means “standing midway between sternness (*tadyiq*) and (*tasāhul*).”⁴¹ He explains the idea of *samahah* as the ideal of moderation, justice and temperance. Although he adduced the principle of *wasatiyyah* (he used the word *samahah* magnanimity in place of *wasatiyyah*) as a higher objectives of the *Shari’ah*. However, he elaborated the concept very little.⁴²

In order to demonstrate the need to include *wasatiyyah* as a higher principle and objective of the *Shariah*, we need to reflect upon some of the Qur’anic injunctions which are very much related to the wider scope of the *wasatiyya*. For this, the researcher employs an inductive method of reading⁴³ and also analysis to highlight the wider scope of *wasatiyyah* as elaborated in the Qur’an as a higher and universal principle of the *Shari’ah*.

***Wasatiyyah* based Approach of the *Shariah* underlying in the Qur’anic Injunctions**

Besides the other meanings such as moderation, middle and best, our discussion focuses on central meaning of *wasatiyyah* as balance. We

⁴¹ Muhammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Ibn Ashur Treatise on Maqāsid al-Sharī’ah*, translated from Arabic by Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), 87.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ In order to make understand what inductive method exactly is, Sherman Jackson elucidates the idea through an imaginary anecdote. To open the window, fetch a fan, turn off the lights and pour a glass of water are the four separate statements or commands. Imagine a man is coming to his house and delivers the above mentioned statements to his wife. She serves her husband according to his commands. At the same time, these scattered separate commands definitely transmit a cumulative meaning of “it’s hot” which is not really literally spoken by this man. Although the word ‘hot’ is not literally spelled out, the most powerful meaning he shared to his wife is the same. If she is able to understand the real meaning of his command she can address the issue by various means. Sherman A. Jackson, *Literalism, Empiricism and Induction*” *Apprehending and Concretizing Islamic Law’s Maqāsid al-Sharī’ah in the Modern World in Michigan State Law Review* (Vol. 2006:1469-1486). 1471.

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can find out a *wasatiyyah* based approach, rightly balanced approach of the *Shariah* in matters of life. By *wasatiyyah* based approach, we mean a balanced and sophisticated approach based on the *Shariah* principles without leaning towards either side of trends in society. It is a right sort of approach dealing with any issues at hand. Besides the explicit and categorical statement of God in the Qur'an on *wasatiyyah*, the very concept is also implicitly underlying in the spirit of the *Shariah* itself. Many of the Qur'anic statements promote the idea without using the explicit and categorical textual expressions. The rulings and admonitions in the Qur'an also carries a right sort of balance and proportion in every aspects of life even the spiritual and devotional affairs. A meticulous pondering and careful reading of the Qur'an enable us to find out the ideals of *wasatiyyah* available in various statements of the Quran. Without explicitly declaring, God chooses to convey the principle of *wasatiyyah* to the readers with clarity. Therefore, from the very outset, we need to analyze some Qur'anic statements in which the notion of *wasatiyyah* is included invisibly. From the different commands and admonitions of God, the cumulative meaning of *wasatiyyah* could be induced from the following statements of the Quran. The concept of *wasatiyyah* is packed with the spirit of all the rulings and teachings of the *Shariah*. The following exposition of the opening chapter of the Qur'an demonstrates the theme more clearly and role of Islam as middle and balanced way of human life.

The *Wasatiyyah* Theme in Surah Al-Fatihah

Among the *ayahs*, the employment of the theme *wasatiyyah* in *sūrat al-Fātiḥah* can be read in between lines through inductive method. *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, the opening chapter is the most important chapter in the Qur'an which is ordained to be invoked by every Muslim as his basic invocation during his five times daily prayers. The prayers would not be completed unless the *sūrat al-Fātiḥah* is being recited. The most important part in this prayer is to make supplication to God to make him steadfast on the right path and never to let him be corrupted and deviated into the paths of those who have been incurred His wrath and those who have gone astray. The right path, in fact, we seek is the guidance for a middle way, far away from the two poles of either extremisms. A Muslim is ordained to invoke this prayer at least 17 times in a day, unquestionably indicates the importance of this prayer. God calls it *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, (straight path) which is in between the two extremes approaches taken by various major religions. A significant number of the

Qur'anic exegeses are of the opinion that among the major religions Christianity and Judaism are included. The Qur'an urges Muslim community not to imitate the Christians who are extreme in their religion. God says:

Say: O people of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even Way.⁴⁴

This warning constitutes all forms of belief, worship, rituals and transactions. Although both of the communities have kept high level of extremism and rejection in their religious affairs in general, the Christianity in particular, has gone, according to the Quran, beyond all permissible limits of their religion. Due to their excessiveness in faith, they were particularly admonished in the Qur'an. "Do not exceed the limits of your religion."⁴⁵ Thus, they transgressed the permissible limits of religion by elevating the status of Isa (Jesus-pbuh) to the level of God and assumed him as son of God. The love of the so called Christians to the Prophet Isa (Jesus-pbuh) crossed the limitation. As a result of their blind love, they ascribed divinity To Jesus which finally transformed as a weird argument of trinity of God. Foreseeing grave consequences of the extremism, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) strongly warned his followers never to exceed the limits of love to him. Excess of love is also a kind of extremism. Although the love to the Prophet (pbuh) is an essential component of faith, a Muslim is required to be vigilant not to reach his tremendous love in a state of assigning divinity for the Prophet (pbuh) as the Christianity did to Jesus. Here the Prophet (pbuh) put a limit even to one of the fundamental aspects of Islam such as love of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh).

Jews on the other hand, have exceeded in their religious teachings in many ways and reached into extremism by killing the Prophets (pbuh) who had been sent to them. In connection with Jews' approach, once the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said; if (in the first instance) they sacrificed any cow chosen by themselves, they would have fulfilled their duty; but they made it complicated for themselves, and so God made complicated for them."⁴⁶ In short, the *sūrat al-Fātiḥah* teaches Muslims to be consistent in the right path, keeping away from the deviated ways and dis-

⁴⁴ The Qur'an, 5:77.

⁴⁵ The Qur'an, 4:171.

⁴⁶ Ibn Ashur, 88.

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torted teachings of the two early communities for their excessiveness and extremism, by its frequent and incessant invocation during obligatory and optional prayers. The prayer is pivotal in the *Shariah*. Seeking the guidance of straight path not leaning towards either extreme ways becomes a major theme of the *Shariah*.

This first and most important chapter in the Qur'an serves as a beautiful manifestation of the concept of *wasatiyyah*, especially in the sense of balance and a middle way. On the one hand this opening chapter presents Islam as a middle or moderate way of life and mode of *ibadah* against Christianity and Judaism, and on the other hand, it exhorts to keep a right sort of balance in all walks of life of a Muslim. The idea of *wasatiyyah* is implicitly packed with the guidance, admonitions and teachings of the *Shariah*. Whereas it explicitly calls for the appreciation of the moral quality of *wasatiyyah* occasionally, it urges sometimes without explicit textual expressions.

Wasatiyyah based approaches of the Qur'an: Some other examples

In addition to the above, we can see some other statements in the Quran which implicitly emphasize the theme in different ways. An amazing pattern of balancing has been logically occupied in the style and choice of words in the Qur'an. The analysis of such few *ayahs* given below will be helpful to understand the argument more reasonably. God says;

*And who, whenever they spend on others, are neither wasteful nor niggardly but [remember that] there is always a just mean between those [two extremes].*⁴⁷

And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute.⁴⁸

In the first *ayah*, God illustrates the virtuous qualities of *'ibād al-Rahmān*, obedient servants of God. Among these qualities, He Exalted enumerates the quality of moderation which is a clear illustration of moderation. It is said that keeping away from the two extremes positions in spending money is desirable. Both extreme points are blameworthy. Spending too much to a level of extravagancy and being stingy and un-

⁴⁷ The Qur'an, 25: 67.

⁴⁸ The Qur'an, 17: 29.

generous even for own needs are undesirable. The best position is being in between the two extremes. The *wasatiyyah* approach is exemplified here in an unusual way. In the same vein, the *surah al-Isrāh* also promotes the same message. The second *ayah* also deals with the same issue in different words.

Facilitating the things and letting people to have a sort of comfort is also a part of accepting a balanced and moderate position in the life. This is why God clearly explains that He does not want people be in difficulties and be burdened. God says; “God intends every facility for you and he intends not put you in hardship.”⁴⁹

Another example of balancing approach of the Quran has been expressed through this *ayah*; “Grant us good in this world and good in the hereafter.”⁵⁰ This admonition is a clear sign of keeping a balanced approach, neither inclining towards this world alone, nor the other world alone, but holding the two worlds together and equally. An interesting fact is that the Qur’an has kept a balancing even in the number of times both the words were used. Each word is used 115 times in the Quran. This *ayah* apparently leaves us with the Qur’anic philosophy of *wasatiyyah* which is a right sort of equilibrium and balance in approaching the worldly life and the world to come.

In order to substantiate the above said Qur’anic statements, there are some prophetic traditions as well. It is reported on the authority of Anas bin Mālik that the Prophet [pbuh] is reported to have said: “The best among you are not those who neglect this life for the life to come, nor those who neglect the life to come for the sake of this life. Rather each of them serves as a path leading to the other. Hence blame accrues when one exceeds the limits of need and those of sufficiency.”⁵¹ This hadith also implies the importance of keeping a balancing between worldly and heavenly life. The companions who learned and trained from the School of the Prophet [pbuh] have also upheld the theme in their life. For example, Ali bin Abī Tālib is reported to have said these words; “Strive in your worldly affairs as if you will live forever, and strive in your affairs of the hereafter as if you will die tomorrow.”⁵² Working for

⁴⁹ The Qur’an, 2: 185.

⁵⁰ The Qur’an, 2:201.

⁵¹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Hāwī li al-Fatāwā*, ed. Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥāsan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 2000), 2:46. As quoted in Gemal al-Din Attia, *Towards Realisation of the Higher Intents of Islamic Law, Maqasid al-Shari’ah: A Functional Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), p. 212.

⁵² It has been reported from the various sources mainly as a saying of the fourth rightly

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this world and coming up with something fruitful in this world has never been considered derogatory rather it is actually viewed as a form of *‘ibādah* itself,⁵³ by which a believer gains the reward from God. Here the equal footing is given to both this world and the hereafter.

Another example of a balance that we require to keep in our life is taught by the Prophet (pbuh). For which we need to invoke to God

Besides the Qur’anic supplication mentioned above, the Prophet (pbuh) taught us another invocation which also teaches us to pray for keeping us away from the two extreme situations. “O God! I seek refuge to Thee from poverty and from disbelief.”⁵⁴ The poverty is an extreme pathetic situation in the life, it is one of the extreme sufferings of material life. On the other hand, at the end of other side the Prophet (pbuh) taught us to be away from the situation of disbelief which brings man to the total failure and eternal disgrace.

Besides the above discussed instructions on moderation, the Qur’an appears to be accommodating a pattern of balancing in choosing some words and their contrasting words. If we look at the Qur’an, we can see a number of words and their antonyms that have been employed in the Qur’an in a symmetrical position. This is also a kind of a balanced approach of the Qur’an. It also denotes the Qur’anic literary style which retains a balancing in the employment of such words. It would be interesting to note the figure given below which shows the Qur’anic juxtaposition of some words and their balance.

guided ruler caliph ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. There have been a report that this is a Prophetic hadith. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Religious Thrust of Islamic Civilisation*, in *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*; A Journal devoted to contemporary issues and Policy Research, <<http://iaais.org.my/icr/index.php/icr/article/view/375/353>> (accessed on 13th October, 2017).

⁵³ Spahic Omer, *The Role of the Madinah Market at the time of the Prophet (pbuh)*, <<https://medinanet.org/2011/03/madinah-market-during-the-prophets-time-part-1/>> (accessed on 14th October, 2017).

⁵⁴ Ḥāfiẓ Ahmad bin Shu’aib Al-Nasa’ī. *Sunan al-Nasā’ī: Kitāb Al-Isti’adhah min sharr al-kufr*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2005). Also quoted in Yusuf al-Qaradawi. *Mushkilat al-Faqr wa-kayfa ‘Ālajaha al-Islam* (Kaherah: Maktabah Wahabah, 1997), p. 14.

Qur'anic Words	Meaning	No. of times	Total
Al-Dunya	This world	115	230
Al-Akhira	The hereafter	115	
Al-Mala'ikah	Angles	88	176
Al-Shayateen	Satan	88	
Al-Hayat	Life	145	290
Al-Maout	Death	145	
Al-Rajul	Man	24	48
Al-Mar'ha	Women	24	
	Hardship	114	228
	Patience	114	

Figure no 1.⁵⁵

The above figure shows how the Qur'an used some words and their equal proportion. The juxtaposition of the word *dunya*, this world and *akhirah*, angels and satan, life and death, man and woman are the testimony for the numerical balancing of the Qur'an.⁵⁶

From the above analysis, we would be able to see all instructions related to all aspects of life, whether legal or ethical, social and spiritual, have been granted to the humanity which help people to maintain balance and order. All rulings and admonitions of the *Shariah* urge Muslims to be moderate and balanced. The spirit of *wasatiyyah* is ingrained in every breadth and width of the *Shariah*. It could be assumed that the *wasatiyyah*, is a middle station between two stations at opposing sides.⁵⁷ It means that there are three situations or positions for all the issues even in religious affairs. It may be suffixed as negligence in pursuing what is of benefit. Secondly excess position or extreme level and the third position is middle and moderate station or stance.

***Wasatiyya* to Counter the Challenges of Violence and Extremism**

In the previous section, we discussed views of some scholars on the theme of *wasatiyya* and its orientation toward *maqāṣid*. But in order to establish the vitality of this theme some other aspects seem to be vital

⁵⁵ Tariq Al-Suwaidan, Statistical Miracle in Quran, <<http://www.islamawareness.net/Miq/stat.html>> (accessed on 13th October, 2017).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Attia, 85.

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for analysis. The area we dealt with so far deals mainly with conceptual presentation of the principle of *wasatiyya*. We also need to analyze its practical implications in society, especially in the multi-religious societies of our time. It is expected from the contemporary scholars to develop a strategy based on *wasatiyyah*. In addition to this, the study argues the *wasatiyyah* based approach is an essential tool to combat the extreme tendencies in societies. This approach has always been employed by the early scholars to address the challenges of social problems like extremism and intolerance.

Wasatiyyah Based Approaches of Various Muslim Scholars

Slipping from the middle position and balanced approach of the *Shariah* and inclining towards either of two extreme poles has always been witnessed as a social phenomenon in history. However, as God promised, the emergence of the reformers in the beginning of every century will always managed to correct such tendencies and to place back the *Shariah* in its right place. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had instantly corrected the tendencies of extremism and undue negligence among his companions in his life time which finally enabled them to be exemplified as the perfect model of a moderate and balanced society. However, after the demise of the Messenger (pbuh), the Muslim society had witnessed the tendency of deviation by losing the *wasatiyyah*, moderate state of affairs. God had promised that He would send reformers to renew His *dīn* in every dawn of the century. Their renewal efforts and reform schemes, though heterogeneous, appear to be a kind of efforts of bringing back the *wasatiyyah*, balance and moderation in Muslim society. The reformers always had strived to renovate and renew this character in their respective times, in one way or another. They sought to bring a right sort of balance at socio-ethical levels. They had adopted a balance and moderation in approaching the *Shariah*. Although their contributions and efforts are varying from person to person, time to time, the overall efforts of each one have been instrumental to present the *Shariah* as a balanced scheme of life.

The Need of Prioritization and Balanced Approach in the Contemporary Societies

Giving utter importance to unnecessary issues and ignoring the crucial problems of society is truly an unbalanced approach and the disorder of the priorities. This tendency is just opposite of the Qur'anic con-

cept of moderation. Here is the *wasatiyyah* approach which is becoming relevant in order to treat these social problems. Putting the things in their right position and right propositions or approaching an issue in its right degree of concern is something which rightly be described as *wasatiyyah* approach.⁵⁸

As part of worship and spiritual activities Muslims who live in multi-religious society should avoid to conduct big gatherings, most often for non-obligatory acts, as a public nuisance. They should not disrupt the peaceful and serene atmosphere of community. They should think how to maintain environmental purity and avoid noise pollution. Should they use huge sound system and loud speakers if they are not needed? The majority in society might not be the part of the event. If Muslims do so it will unwillingly force other communities to suffer. In several parts⁵⁹ of India Muslims, though they are minority, use the loud speaker to make the *tarāwīh* prayer and non-obligatory offerings of prayer in high volume which affect the people of other faiths in many ways. Giving unnecessary importance to the trivial issues is kind of expression of extremism.

As far as the case of prayer, obligatory or *tarāwīh*, are concerned using the loudspeaker cannot be considered as a recommended practice. According to the *maqasid*, it will never be considered under the category of *darūriyāt*, but only under *tahsīniyāt* or embellishment. At the expense of the *tahsīniyāt*, which is particularly concerned to Muslim community alone, the *darūriyāt* of all people, which is the freedom of their faith and freedom of their peaceful living is violated. The fundamental rights and freedom (*maqāṣid*) of other people should be taken into consideration in their right degree. The ignorance on the overall objectives of the *Shariah* and overlooking its outstanding principles seem to be instrumental for these extremist tendencies in multi-religious societies. In short, it would not be fair to bring hair splitting disputed issues of *fiqh* in to the multi-religious societies. The concern of the common people in such society is not the jurisprudential issues, especially the issues related to a particular religious group rather, the fundamental issues belong to their life and society would be their main concern. As al-Qaradawi pointed out, the emphasis should not be placed on minor or controversial issues, but on fundamentals.⁶⁰ In multi-religious society the image of Islam should be

⁵⁸ This is part of *fiqh al-muwāzanat*.

⁵⁹ It is common in Kerala to use loud speaker at night prayer during Ramadan and other occasions of optional prayers such as solat offerings from Sunni community.

⁶⁰ Al-Qaradawi, *Islamic....*, 24.

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highlighted with its fundamental principles of *iman* and higher principles and values by which people of other communities might be closer and less hostile to Islam. From the right and balanced priorities of Muslim communities, the people of other faith can easily convince that the *Shariah* is actually meant for the well-being and good for all.

Conclusion

From the above illustration, it is clear that keeping the moderation in all aspects of human life is an essential part of the *Shariah*. The principles of the *Shariah* are not for dealing with some aspects, but for all aspects of life. The moderation is recommended for life as a fundamental principle. The theme, therefore, elevates itself as a fundamental universal principle upheld by the *Shariah* which aims to bring benefits and welfare of humanity through the attainment of this objective. Since the overall objective of the *Shariah* is to bring good and benefits to humanity, deviating from the moderation by inclining either to negligence or to extremism, is considered as equal to bringing harm to society. In addition, the universality of moderation is justified as it is prescribed to observe at all occasions and situations and irrespective of time and space. In many places, we have seen the Qur'an directly and indirectly exhorts believers to apply this notion individually and collectively. Moreover, the title of *wasatiyyah* justly balanced is designated as the fundamental feature of Muslim community. All this indicates that the *wasatiyyah* could be enumerated as one of the higher objectives of the *Shariah*. As some of the principles of the *Shariah* like justice and freedom are conceived in later period as the higher objectives of the *Shariah*, the *wasatiyyah* could also be considered as a higher objective of the *Shariah*.

In short, the concept of *wasatiyyah*, from merely an ethical value which is most often confined at individual level, needs to be elevated to a broader perspective as the principle and objective of the *Shariah*.⁶¹ Such kind of presentation will enable people to view it as a major life scheme for Muslims as well as non-Muslims at societal and global level. And it has to be practiced in all kinds of societies prevailing today irrespective of Muslim dominated or Muslim minority societies. It is, therefore, genuine to conclude that the moderation is the best and most suitable approach in the multi-religious society as well.

⁶¹ Kamali, *The Middle...*, 1.

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