

QURANIC CONCEPT OF AL-WASATIYYAH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISLAMIC MODERATION

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ABSTRACT

The concept of moderation is one of the core basic words and frequently discussed subjects in Islam. It has been employed since the inception of Islam and is a major feature of Islamic creed. This concept is based on the Arabic term al-wasatiyyah that indicates "middle." It presents a fair, just, and efficient solution. Its goal is to encourage a well-balanced way of living that eliminates extremes and enables people to enjoy things in moderation. As a result, the goal of this research is to first determine the Quranic concept of wasatiyyah, and then to analyze its numerous distinct features drawn from the verses of the Holy Quran. The word appears throughout the Qur'an in a variety of settings, with all of the word forms revolving around similar linguistic connotations. Using the analytic method, this qualitative study used an exploratory and descriptive design. Library search was used to find data from classical/contemporary jurists' books and journals. to identify and examine the concept of al-wasatiyyah in the Holy Quran, its features, and proof of moderation in Islam. This research is noteworthy because it underscores the Quranic principle of moderation, which instructs man to strike a balance among physical and spiritual requirements, as well as moderation in religion and prayer.

KEYWORDS: Concept, Al-wasatiyyah, Moderation, Ummah Wasata, Features

INTRODUCTION

Al-Wasatiyyah (الواسطية) is an Arabic word that denotes balance and moderation that refers to the Universal Islamic Community possessing the qualities of justice, excellence and balance. In Islām, moderation refers to a belief system that provides equal weight without being imbalanced.¹ It instructs to maintain a balance between physical and spiritual requirements. It instructs that one should not be severe or rigid in one element of life while

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neglecting other aspect as Islām elaborates that a healthy existence is only concerned with moderation.

Concept of Moderation in the Holy Qur'an

Islām emphasizes on tolerance and harmony in all aspects of life including belief, worship, behavior, relationship, thought, tradition, transaction and everyday life activities.²As it is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَاهُمْ عَن قِبَلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ
لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (142)
وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ
يَتَّبِعَ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ
هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَعُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ
(143)³

“The fools among the people will say: “What hath turned them from the Qiblah to which they were used?” Say: To Allāh belong both east and west; He guided whom He will to a Way that is straight. Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the Qiblah to which thou west used only to test those who followed the Apostle from those who would turn on their heels (from the faith). Indeed it was (a change) momentous except to those guided by Allāh. And never would Allāh make your faith of no effect. For Allāh is to all people most surely full of kindness Most Merciful.”⁴

In the above-mentioned verses, Muslims were initially instructed to worship facing the *Bayt al-Maqdis* (بيت المقدس). The Holy Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and his followers received these words as an obvious command from Allāh عز وجل to change *Qibla*. In Islām, the most important feature of a trustworthy witness is that their testimony can be trusted in a court of justice. On the other hand, unbelievers are referred as fools (السُّفَهَاءُ).⁵ The term

ummah represents four important connotations such as origin, point of reference, group and religion. When Muslims are referred as ‘the Moderate Community’ then they are being called as ‘the best community’.⁶ The Holy Qur’ān has always urges to adopt the middle path in every aspect of life.⁷ Allāh عزوجل says in the Holy Qur’ān:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا⁸

‘Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes).’⁹

Allāh عزوجل has demonstrated the excellent attributes of *Ibad al-Rahman* (عباد الرحمن) and clear picture of moderation. It is explained that spending excessively to the point of extravagance as well as being ungenerous are both extremes. Being in the middle of the two extremes is the ideal position. Allāh عزوجل has instructed the followers to maintain justice as it is said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ
وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ¹⁰

‘Indeed, Allāh commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and he forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: he instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.’¹¹

All human deeds should be based on balance of justice and charity. This is a moderation principle without any doubt.¹²

Features of Moderation in the Holy Qur’ān

Islām promotes moderation as the Muslim community that adheres to it is also moderate. According to the Holy Qur’ān, Muslim community is different in respect of other countries and tribes.¹³ Each feature conveys a practical message and serves as a tool to keep individuals focused on moderation rather than extremism.¹⁴

3.1 Excellence or Goodness

Excellence or goodness is the primary characteristic of moderation. Muslims are recognized in the Holy Qur’ān as the best community (خَيْرُ أُمَّةٍ). It is one of the meaning or idea of moderation as it is stated:¹⁵

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۚ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ¹⁶

*'Ye are the best of peoples evolved for mankind enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allāh. If only the People of the Book had faith it were best for them; among them are some who have faith but most of them are perverted transgressors.'*¹⁷

The Arabic word *Khayra Ummah* (خَيْرُ أُمَّةٍ) means 'best people for mankind', 'best for and among nations' and 'best for mankind'. According to al-Tabarī, Muslim community is among the best of nations that have come before it and is 'the best' because who uphold justice are the finest among civilizations. It clearly shows that excellence, best or goodness is viewed as moderation which Allāh عزوجل defines as characteristic of Muslim community. At-Tirmidhī declared Muslims as the greatest and most respectable among seventy nations. Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā elucidates that Muslim society main message is to spread good and forbid from evil.¹⁸ According to the Holy Qur'an:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ¹⁹

*'Let their arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity.'*²⁰

It conveys message of 'enjoining what is good/right and prohibiting what is evil' as it is a key tenet of Islām and a component of *wasatiyyah*.

3.2 Justice

Justice (العدل) is the second aspect of moderation. It alludes to impartiality, fairness, equitableness, honesty, uprightness and equitable. This is the primary meaning of the *wasatiyyah* has expressed in the verse:

وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا

‘Thus have we made of you an Ummah justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves.’²¹

The phrase ‘a community of the middle way’ encapsulates the Islamic attitude towards the man’s existence as a whole. This balanced perspective stems from the concept of oneness of Allāh عزوجل and the sense of unity that unites His creation.²² Justice to the *Tawhīd*, nature and to oneself is the most fundamental principle of *wasatiyyah* that qualifies the *Ummah* to become witnesses over mankind (شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ).²³

Justice is a fundamental right as it also exists between believers, nonbelievers, blacks, whites, Arabs or non-Arabs. In order to enforce social justice, the Muslim community must be in the forefront. The Muslim community has to enforce justice as said by Mawdudi’s, ‘You must not only perform justice, but also bear the standard of justice in order to destroy injustice and build right and justice in its stead’.²⁴ Allāh عزوجل has commanded believers to preserve justice even if it is against their own interests as said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ
الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ عَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۚ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا
الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۗ وَإِن تَلَوُّا أَوْ نُرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرًا²⁵

‘O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allāh even as against yourselves or your parents or your kin and whether it is (against) rich or poor: for Allāh can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts) lest ye swerve and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice verily Allāh is well-acquainted with all that ye do.’²⁶

3.3 Ease and Removal of Hardship

The aspect of easiness is significant as it is one of the most essential characteristics of moderation that helps in removing hardship. The main goal is to attain ease and to remove difficulty which is achieved through moderation. It emphasizes on providing comfort to people and prevent them from hardship²⁷ as mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ ۗ²⁸

‘Allāh intends every facility for you and He intends not to put you in hardship.’²⁹

According to Ibn Manzur, the Arabic word *usar* means the action that is performed without restriction, oppression, difficulty or suffering. Allāh عزوجل has laid duties on souls that they can bear in terms of capability. Al-Qasimi explains the term *yusr* as an ability of soul to execute an action without being exhausted as it is said:³⁰

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ ۗ³¹

‘Allāh doth not wish to place you in a difficulty but to make you clean and to complete.’³²

The term *Haraj* (حرج) is used to express narrowness, restraint, confinement and dejectedness. In technical terms, it includes any activity that increases one’s trouble or hardship.³³ The principle of ease is also elucidated by number of the Prophetic Traditions as Abu Hurairah said, ‘The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم stated, ‘Religion is very easy, and whoever overburdens himself in his religion would not be able to continue in that way. So, instead of being fanatics, strive for near-perfection and receive the excellent things that will be bestowed to you, and gather strength by worshipping in the mornings, afternoons, and late at night’.³⁴

3.4 Straightness

According to the Islamic teachings, if someone is not integrated of straightness then they may deviate from the truth. Deviation is caused by excessive carelessness and is incompatible with moderate mindset. In the Holy Qur’ān, it is said that:

فَأَسْتَقِيمْ كَمَا أَمَرْتِ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا ۗ³⁵

‘Therefore stand firm (in the straight Path) as thou art commanded, — Thou and those who with thee Turn (unto Allāh); and transgress not (From the Path).’³⁶

Al-Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī explained about straightness that it denotes a person’s firm adherence to a religious duty such as the straight path.³⁷ Mawdudi interprets that ‘Straightness means not to make any change or impact any rise or decrease in this religion only to please people’. He further states that, ‘Do not make any room in the religion for their whims, biases and ignorant habits in the hope

that they may adopt Islām'.³⁸The Islamic *Ummah* is always advised to avoid the excess of anything as it will result in the displeasure of Allāh عزوجل.³⁹

3.5 Wisdom

The fifth characteristic of moderation is wisdom. The Arabic word *hikmah* (حكمة) literally means wisdom, justice, understanding and gentleness. It refers to the process of learning and reasoning of one's way to truth. Knowledge is wisdom as it protects humans from ridiculous and destructive behavior.⁴⁰According to Ibn al-Qayyim, excellent deeds are a part of wisdom. It is a desirable and an appropriate action at the right time.⁴¹The concept of wisdom explains the limitations that imply moderation. This is the core of knowledge as it demands precise moderation and is indifferent by any excess. It suggests that forsaking moderation will lead to passivism or negativism in the long-term.⁴²

Proof of Moderation in Islām

Islām is religion of moderation (وسطية).⁴³Islam serves as a guideline for all Muslims and instructs to maintain a balance between physical and spiritual requirements. It signifies that one should not be severe or rigid in one element of life while neglecting another. Islām believes that healthy existence lies in moderation.⁴⁴

4.1 Moderation in Worldly Affairs

The Holy Qur'ān teaches man to utilize the blessing of Allāh عزوجل without excess and should endeavor to combine the transitory and eternal worlds as ultimate importance.⁴⁵The Holy Qur'ān expressly defines this form of moderation as:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (9) فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ
الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ
كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

'O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (The Day of Assembly), Hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allāh, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you If ye but knew! And when the prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the

*bounty of Allāh: and celebrate the praises of Allāh often (and without stint): That ye may prosper.*⁴⁶

The above verse suggests that the Holy Qur'ān praises *wasatiyyah* and encourages its application in all aspects of life. It suggests that people should not be more luxurious in their worldly life while neglecting *akhirah*.⁴⁷

4.2 Moderation in Religion

Islām is a highly moderate religion that provides equal value to human existence without imbalance. It focused solely on their spiritual or material well-being.⁴⁸ It establishes every aspect in its proper context and provides essential guidelines for maintaining balance in human life.⁴⁹ The mentioned *Hadith* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is an excellent example of the importance of *wasatiyyah* in Islām. Anas narrated, 'A group of three men came to the residences of the wives of Prophet and asked how the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم worshipped Allāh, and when they were told, they regarded their worship insufficient and replied, 'Where are we from the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم as his past and future sins have been forgiven'. 'I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever.' One of them remarked. 'I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast,' responded the other. 'I will stay away from women and will not marry forever,' the third said. Messenger of Allāh asked them, 'Are you the same people who stated so-and-so?' I am more fearful of Allāh and more devoted to Him than you, but I still fast and break my fast, sleep, and marry women. So, whoever does not follow my religious tradition is not from me (not a disciple).'⁵⁰ This *Hadith* demonstrates the significance of *wasatiyyah* in Islām. Any excess or exaggeration in worship (عبادة) should be avoided by a real Muslim.⁵¹ The Holy Qur'ān states that:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۗ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ ۚ انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا⁵²

‘O people of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allāh aught but truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an Apostle of Allāh and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allāh and His Apostles. Say not “Trinity”: desist: it will be better for you: for Allāh is One Allāh: glory be to him: (for Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allāh as a Disposer of affairs.’⁵³

4.3 Moderation in Performing Prayers

Prayer, fasting and even charity are acts of worship that should be done with moderation.⁵⁴ Allāh عزوجل states in the Holy Qur’ān:

وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا⁵⁵

‘Neither speaks thy Prayer aloud, nor speaks it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between.’⁵⁶

The short Friday sermon is another illustration of *al-wasatiyyah* (الواسطية) in prayer. In this regard, Jabir Ibn Samurah reported, ‘I was praying with the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم, and his prayer was of moderate length, and his speech was of moderate length.’⁵⁷ In terms of voluntary acts of worship, the Holy Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم advised his followers numerous times to fulfill their family responsibilities.⁵⁸

4.4 Moderation in Worship (Ibadah)

In contrast to some Jews and Christians who adopt extremist viewpoints, Islām encourages a moderate approach.⁵⁹ The Holy Qur’ān states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ ۗ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَيُنِيعَ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ⁶⁰

‘O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer wash your faces and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub

*your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill or on a journey or one of you cometh from offices of nature or ye have been in contact with women and ye find no water then take for yourselves clean sand or earth and rub therewith your faces and hands. Allāh doth not wish to place you in a difficulty but to make you clean and to complete His favor to you that ye may be grateful.'*⁶¹

It indicates that if someone has a difficulty and is unable to achieve required cleanliness due to some circumstances then there is relaxation given by Islam.⁶² In short, there is no room for strictness in Islām and one can practice religion with moderation. Islām is a religion of peace and moderation. Muslims are always advised to avoid extravagance and luxury. The Muslim community is referred as an 'equally balanced *ummah*' in the Holy Qur'ān.

CONCLUSION

Islām is a religion of peace and moderation. Muslims are motivated to avoid extravagance and luxury. The Muslim community is referred to be an "equally balanced Ummah" in the Qur'ān. In Islām, moderation refers to maintaining a sense of moderation in all of one's actions whether religious, social, personal or societal. The Muslim nation is a middle nation in the sense that it uses all of its resources in constructing, reforming, profiting, educating, and teaching in a reasonable and prudent way. The Qur'ān and Sunnah both instruct Muslims to live a moderate life in terms of spiritual and material pursuits. While they are expected to concentrate on religious obligations, they are also advised not to disregard worldly matters. Even when it comes to doing good things, Muslims are encouraged to follow a moderate path. As a result, every Muslim must understand the concept of moderation between life in this world and life after death in order to effectively return to Allāh عزوجل. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم always highlighted the importance of achieving a balance between this life and the life after death. As a result, there is no denying that the concept of moderation is critical for Muslims to retain and apply in all aspects of their lives, as it is one source of achieving social justice and equality among humanity.

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