

The Importance of al- wasatiyyah in Islamic Worldview

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Abstract- *Al wasatiyyah* is Arabic word which means moderation and balance. Down the centuries, Islam provided an entire life structure that teaches man to follow the middle ground between physical and spiritual needs, balance between worldly life and hereafter and balance between Physical universe, (micro & macro-humans, flora, fauna, inanimate environments) and metaphysical cosmos (angels, heaven, hell, jinn, satan). Thus, Islam as a seal of revealed religions is a belief system that gives to each aspect of human life without any imbalance or exaggeration and never asks people to focus only on the spiritual dimension or on material aspect of their life. It means, one must not be extreme or rigid in one aspect of the world and neglect another dimension, but he should balance his routine activities and worldly affairs, (economic, religious, political and ceremonial activities) with hereafter, on the ground that Islam believes that the healthy life is highly situated in moderate life. Based on this fact, this humble paper aims to explore the importance of moderation in Islamic worldview, with particular reference to moderation in religion. However, For the sake of article, revelation based approach will be applied to carry out this study. Finally, a brief conclusion will be provided, followed by some suggestions and recommendations.

Index Terms- Islam, moderation, religion, Qur'an, Sunnah, Wasatiyyah

I. INTRODUCTION

Islam is the seal of religion of God it deals with human affairs from cradle to death. One of the best characteristics of Islam is moderation which is known in Arabic as "*Wasatiyyah*" and which means middle and balance in every action of mankind religiously, politically, financially and socially, this implies that, Islam does not tolerate any sort of extremism or fanaticism. It sees moderation as the best measure for human activities that will fetch peace, harmony and happiness for people. Base on this tangible fact this humble paper will explore the importance of moderation in Islam with particular reference to moderation in religion that urged by Islam. Therefore, the paper will adopt the revelation based approach to investigate the necessity of balance in religious activity according to the teaching of Islam, and Islam's abhorrence and condemnation to any kind of extremism.

II. DEFINITIONS

The word "moderation" generally means "Middle" and "to avoid extreme" in every matter¹. In Arabic, it is known as *Al-Wasatiyyah*² which means excellence, rightfully balanced, just and fair in all aspects. Balance without any excessiveness in human life. It is indeed one of the Islamic Principle. Furthermore, the term *al- wasatiyyah* is used in the context of the Qur'an to refer to Islamic community which is "*ummattan wasatan*" which means nation that having attributes of Justice, excellence and balance in order to serve as Allah's trustworthy "witness over mankind" (*Shu'adaa' ala al- Nas*) in this world and in the hereafter³. In this regard, *al-wasatiyyah* can also be translated as "justly balanced quality" or "justly balance nature" of Islam and the Islamic community. The more common translation however is moderation⁴. In the most serious note, the term *al- wasatiyyah* or moderation has become very famous in Muslim talk and lecture today, especially after the incident of September 11 2001 on the United State of America, that resulted to the loss of lives of hundreds of innocent people. Hence several Muslim nations struggle with the religio- political challenges posed by religious extremism, radicalism, fanaticism and violences in their respective societies.

According to (Al- Zuhaili, 1991), *Al Wasatiyyah* is obviously a fundamental trait of Muslim personality that is in line with the objectivity of human creation purposely functioning to flourish in this worldly life with obedience and worshiping the Almighty Allah and being entitle for paradise in the hereafter. Therefore, basically, *al- Wasatiyyah* or moderation means a complete denial of extremism or a strong condemnation of any kind of radicalism for self interest in the name of religion. *Al-wasatiyyah* strongly holds the ethical attitude, scrupulous manner to demonstrate the characteristics of justice and balance in a structured and in a scientific manner. It is one of the main characteristic of Muslim Individual's conduct and Muslim community's living style, that shape their routine activities in balanced manner in this world and hereafter without any exaggeration or excessiveness.

¹ The Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1992, Oxford University Press.

² Munir Al- Ba'labaki, Al-mawrid (Qamus- English -Arabic). 1989. Darul 'Ilm Lilmalaayin, Beirut.

³ Qur'an, 2: 143

⁴ Muhammad Kamal Hasan, 2013, *The Need to Understand Al-Wasatiyyah*

III. QURANIC PRINCIPLE OF AL- WASATIYYAH

As a matter of fact, the meaning of *al- wasatiyyah* in Quranic worldview and which makes the *Ummah* suitable to become “witness over mankind” is justice (Al-‘adl) which means

justice to Allah SWT, justice to religion of Tawhid, justice to human being, justice to creatures, and justice to nature and oneself. Because, Almighty Allah dislikes injustice. According to the holy Qur’an, Allah said

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرُّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ
عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِيَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُولَ أَلَّا يَكُونَ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ
لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّكُمْ إِنْ
أَلَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

Thus, have We made of you an *Ummah* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the *Qiblah* to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels (From the Faith). Indeed it was (A change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah. And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect. For Allah is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful”⁵.

Undoubtedly, justice is a position between two opposing sides, without picking any of the sides and not being bias or prejudice in making judgment or decision, and according to the above passage, this is position of *Ummah*. Therefore, there is a need for Muslim to become a religious, moral and civilizational witness over mankind, with the attributes of justice and moral excellence as the core attributes. The Qur’an has attested the principle of Justice when Allah says: “

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾ ﴿١٠﴾

“Indeed, Allah command justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded”⁶

of the revelations of God invites man to enjoy bounties of Almighty Allah in this temporal world without any excessiveness, and it reminds him not to forget the importance of hereafter .i.e man should try to integrate between the transitory world (*al-Dunya*) and everlasting world (*Al- Akhirah*), in which the *dunya*-aspect must be related profoundly to the *Akhirah*-aspect in moderate manner, and in which the *Akhirah*-aspect has ultimate and final significance. This kind of *wasatiyyah* is clearly stated in the Qur’an when Allah said that:

IV. AL- WASATIYYAH IN WORLDLY AFFAIRS

Furthermore, *al- Wasatiyyah* principle in the worldview of the Qur’an, extended to balance quality of Muslim between worldly affairs and hereafter. i.e the holy Qur’an which is the seal

⁵ Al- Qur’an: 2:143

⁶ Qur’an, Al Nahl: 90

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾
فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا
اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

“O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, 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

Allah. and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.”⁷

The Principle of *al-wasatiyyah* and integration between worldly affairs and hereafter is again stated in another passage of the Qur’an when Allah said:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا ءَاتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِن
كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

“But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.”⁸

Hence, the above two passages indicate that the holy Qur’an has valued *al-wasatiyyah*, and invites man to exercise this principle in all dimensions of life, and human should not be too extravagant in his activities in *dunia* and forgetting *al-Akhirah* or vice versa. Based on this fact, it is relevant to say that Islam is truly a religion of *al-wasatiyyah* and moderation.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF AL- WASATIYYAH IN RELIGION(WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ISLAM)

As we mention earlier, Islam is a religion that gives to each aspect of human life its due without any imbalance or exaggeration. The materials, social, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual aspects of human life are treated in a balance manner.

Islam never asks people to focus only on the spiritual dimension or on the material dimension of their life. But it puts each dimension in its right place and legislates the necessary instruction to fulfill and meet the need of that particular dimension of human life. Therefore, this segment will exclusively explore the important of *al-wasatiyyah* and moderation in religion with special reference to Islam. Indeed, it is important to note that, Extremism is not a new phenomenon, it can be found in all religions. With regard to Islamic community, its root can be found in the early history of Islam. As a matter of fact, there have been many extremist schools and sects, which have impact on other extremist groups. These groups have no consideration for the principle of *al-wasatiyyah* and moderation. In this respect, *Al-Khawaarij* and *Al-Murji’ah*⁹ are the best known of early extremist groups. These two groups have gone extreme in their ideology and teaching, as they have deviated from the correct teaching of Islam that holds the principle of moderation. Hence, It is sufficed to say that Islam does not condone any sort of extremism, it rather invites people to enjoy moderation and *al-wasatiyyah*

⁷ Al-Qur’an, 62:9-10

⁸ Al-Qur’an, 28:77

⁹ *Al-Khawaarij: are the ones who set out to kill Ali bin Abi Talib due to his rulership. Their methodology consists of freeing themselves from ‘Uthman and ‘Ali. They believe that the person who commits a major sin will remain in the Hellfire forever. They have branded all those who oppose them as unbelievers. They dare to heap curses on the Companions [Ashab] of the Prophet and on his Helpers.*

Al Murjiah: They believe that actions are deferred from Iman (al-Irjaa). Thus, actions, according to them, are not part of it. Iman is simply the complying of the heart. The sinner, according to them, is a believer with complete Iman, even if he does what he does from the disobedient acts or he abandons what he abandons from the obedient acts.

The following hadith of the prophet Muhammad(p.b.u.h) is such a perfect example, that indicates the importance of *al-wasatiyyah* in Islam. Anas narrated, "A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped Allah, and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, "Where are we from the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven." Then one of them said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." Allah's Apostle came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women.

So, he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers)." (Al-Bukhari).¹⁰

What a statement! This Hadith proves the importance of exercising *al-wasatiyyah* in Islam, not only in our social or economic or political fields, but it is also required in the field of religion. Therefore, a true Muslim should refrain from any excessiveness or exaggeration in the worship, (*ibadah*) or in religion. Indeed, as we argued earlier that extremism is a world phenomena it can be found in all religions, as such, Qur'an as a book of history, has narrated the absence of *al-wasatiyyah* in some of the followers of the previous religions with particular reference to people of the book(Jews and Christians) who happened to exaggerate in the nature of Jesus the son of Marry. According to the Qur'an

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا
الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى
مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ أَنْتَهُوا
خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾

“O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not "Trinity" : desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs”¹¹.

The above Verse demonstrates the approach of people of the book with particular reference to some Christians who invented acts of worship to make things difficult on themselves.

VI. MODERATION IN WORSHIP

Unlike extreme approach of some Jews and some Christians, Islam comes with moderate approach in order to make things easier for mankind. Although one must strictly fulfill its spiritual duties like offering prayers five times a day to get closer to the Almighty, fasting for sake of pleasing the Lord, performing Hajj etc. but one is also excused not to complete such acts being in a state of some difficulty. According to the holy Qur'an:

¹⁰ Sahih al -Bukhari

¹¹ Al-Qur'an, 4:171

irreligious and ungodly to exercise extremism which is the act of going beyond the normal or acceptable limit in the name of faith and belief ; because Islam as a seal of revealed religions never encourage it, and indeed, extremism and its all manifestations are completely opposed by the teaching of Islam.

IX. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Islam is a religion of *al wasatiyyah* and moderation; it loves *wasatiyyah* on the ground that, the survival of human being in this life and hereafter in Islamic worldview, is strongly related to moderation.
2. Extravagant life and extremism are merely the inventions of people, especially some people of the books (Jews and Christians) who deviated from the right teaching of Torah (*Taorah*) and gospel (*Ingil*) respectively.
3. The act of extremism or radicalism in religion, exaggerating in worship, overburden in da'wah and Islamic missionary should be condemned in strongest term by the Muslim *Ummah*, because it is neither the teaching of Islam nor the act of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).
4. Muslim leaders, economics, politicians administrators academics, intellectuals, students families etc.. Should always exercise this excellent value(*al- wasatiyyah*) and avoid any sort of extremism in their routine activities, moreover, the individuals, community, schools, media ought to take a leading role in conveying this Islamic

value of *al-wasatiyyah* and condemning the vicious act of extremism in the society.

5. There is a strong need of organizing a talks, lectures, debates, workshops and conferences on the importance of moderation and danger of extremism in the society.

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