"UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT OF **AL-WASATIYYAH** IN THE CURRENT WORLD SITUATION"



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Keynote address delivered by Prof M. Kamal Hassan at the 2nd International Conference on "Islam and Islamic Studies in Changing World: Challenges and Opportunities" at Prince of Songkla University ,Pattani , Thailand from 14th until 16th January 2013.

WHY WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF WASATIYYAH IN THE CURRENT WORLD SITUATION

- 1. The world has entered into an "Era of Turbulence and Turmoil". Islam and Muslims have become the target of demonisation, islamophobia, and ethnic prejudice in the West after 9/11 and "WAR ON TERROR". Muslims are perceived as violent-prone and the Qur'an is seen as the source of violence and militancy worldwide. Muslim immigrants are viewed as a threat to Western stability and scheming towards "Eurabia". The new phenomenon of Arab Awakening or Revolution raises doubts about the role of Islam vis-à-vis secularism in the new regimes. New labels are manufactured: "Political Islam" "Spiritual Islam", "Transnational Islam", "Moderate Islam", "Liberal Islam" and "Progressive Islam".
- 2. The mission of Islam as a peaceful religion which advocates inter-religious tolerance is being distorted by non-Muslim states, media, NGOs and religious fundamentalists in the world.
- 3. The phenomenon of religious extremism as well as religious liberalism, among some Muslim groups, has tarnished the image of Islam among non-Muslims in the West and the East. The terms *Jihad* and *Shari`ah* have become taboo concepts to Western media and governments. Consequently there is an urgent need A) to explain the true nature of Islam according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and B) to correct the misconceptions or misinterpretations regarding Islamic concepts,
 - beliefs, teachings, laws, values, institutions, etc.



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Muslim preachers and intellectuals in Muslim societies around the world have been stressing the Qur'anic teaching that the Muslim Ummah is "The Best Ummah" (*Khair Ummah*) brought forth by Allah SWT for mankind in order "*to enjoin that which is good and right, and to prohibit that which is bad and wrong*". This is in fact part and parcel of *al-Wasatiyyah*. Unfortunately, not enough emphasis has been given by the Muslim community to the Qur'anic concept of *al-Wasatiyyah* which refers to the condition, attribute or quality of Justice and Goodness/Excellence which Allah SWT has designated solely to the Community of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The traditional religious education given to the younger generation in the Malay world, for instance, tends to focus on basic Islamic theology (ilmu tauhid), halal and haram matters, religious worship proper (ilmu ibadat) and good character (ilmu akhlak). For the older generation, the focus tends to be on the knowledge of personal Islamic spirituality (ilmu tasawwuf). As a result, the education regarding the concept of Ummah Wasat - the vital collective transnational force mandated by Allah SWT to champion the tranformational mission of the Prophet, the different roles of the *Ummah*, and the sociology, politics, economics and culture of the *Ummah* have not been given the attention that they deserve. Meanwhile the emergence of Sunni Muslim militant or sectarian (such as Shi`ah) groups, which tend to ignore mainstream religious viewpoints, or are bent upon bringing about socio-religious changes based upon their own visions of Islamic society, culture or state, has made it necessary for religious authorities and concerned Islamic scholars to promote the correct and balanced understanding of Islamic teachings. To make matters more challenging, a countervailing social force consisting of liberal and secular eiltes has also appeared in some Muslim countries to popularise their startling and anti-orthodox views of Islam in the name of democracy, basic human rights, gender equality, moderation and rationalism

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5. Today, as a result of the emergence of the trend of Islamic extremism and radicalism from the 70s through the 80s, and the post 9/11 wave of the "War on terror" with its bloody consequences in Palestine, Iraq, North Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia and Mindanao, Muslim leaders and the OIC states decided to promote and highlight the message of inter-civilisational and inter-religious dialogue, interreligious tolerance and non-violent solutions to international conflicts as well as peaceful approaches to socio-political change. The term "moderation" began to be used by political leaders in Western as well as Muslim countries to underscore the new global quest for a non-violent world and the need to stem the tide of religious radicalism and militancy. Western political and religious leaders, think tanks in Washington and European intellectuals began to urge that the silent majority of "Muslim Moderates" should be goaded to speak up and present a counter current against Muslim extremists or "terrorists". In Pakistan, a country beset by the centrifugal forces of deep political strife, intra-religious tensions and sectarian violence, coupled with political and military pressures from USA pursuing the "War on Terror" in this Muslim country, the then President, Gen. Parvez Musharraf, became the first Muslim political leader to trumpet the slogan of "Enlightened Moderation" in his country and overseas. It was his fervent desire that the whole Muslim world, particularly the OIC, would speedily agree to adopt his slogan of "Enlightened Moderation" in the beginning of the 21st century as the new global Muslim "mantra" that would also be most agreeable to the USA and her European allies. In Indonesia a new organisation focusing on "Moslem Moderates" was formed. We note that several institutes on Wasatiyyah have been established in the world today. We do not know whether all of them are based on the holistic meaning of the Qur'anic concept or not. It should be made clear, however, that religious or cultural "moderation" is but one aspect of Wasatiyyah, not the whole of it. Therefore we should be careful when we use the term al-Wasatiyyah, not to confuse the part with the whole. The core values of Justice and Excellence should not be separated from the value of Moderation in the discourse on al-Wasatiyyah.



THE TERM WASAŢIYYAH is from the noun WASAŢ in Q.2:143

وَكَذَالِكَ جَعَلْنَكُمُ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِنَكُونُواْ شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ ٱلرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمُ شَهِيدًا اللَّ

"And thus we have made you a JUST community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you." (Q. 2: 143)



A) WASAŢIYYAH AS "JUSTICE" (AL-`ADL)

The most important meaning of wasaţiyyah which makes the Ummah suitable to become a "witnesses over mankind" is justice; which includes justice to Allah SWT, justice to the religion of Tauhid (affirmation of the absolute and uncompromising oneness of God, His Dominion and Lordship over the whole of existence), justice to human beings and all creatures, justice to nature, and justice to oneself. Without this quality of comprehensive justice and fairness, the Ummah cannot be the witnesses against those peoples or human beings who have failed to fulfil the Divine Trusts placed upon their shoulders.



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It is reported by Imam Ahmad on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudarī that the Prophet (S.A.W.) interpreted the word "wasat" in verse 143 of Surah Al-Bagarah (Q.2) to mean justice (al-`adl). Justice requires being in the middlemost 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 judgements, decisions or solving disputes. The absolute commitment of this "Just Community" is to uphold the truth and execute the commandments of Allah SWT, with the fear of incurring the displeasure of Allah SWT as a corresponding spiritual attitude, lest there be even the slightest possibility of deviating from the Divine norms of justice and fairness.



Hence the word "awsatuhum" in verse 28 of Surah al-Qalam (Q.68) has been interpreted by the Qur'an commentators to mean "the most just of them" (a'daluhum). This interpretation is confirmed by al-Imam al-Rāzī in his *Tafsīr* in which he says, "The most just place for deciding something is to be in the middle, because its judgement with regard to all its sides is the same and is equal." (al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*).

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The noun "al-wast" (literally, meaning middlemost), according to the commentator, Abū Su'ūd, is "originally a name for something whereby the connection of all sides to it is of equal distance, such as the centre of a circle. Then the word is borrowed in order to describe the praiseworthy human qualities, by virtue of those qualities being in the middle of blameworthy qualities which surround it in the modes of excessiveness (tafrit) and laxity (ifrat)."

(al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-`Āmmah li al-Islām*,1977)

BELIEVERS ARE COMMANDED BY ALLAH SWT TO UPHOLD JUSTICE EVEN IF IT IS AGAINST SELF-INTEREST

﴿ يَكَأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِللهِ وَلَوَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنُ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنُ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَى بِمَا فَلَا تَتَبِعُواْ ٱلْمُوى آن تَعَدُلُواْ وَإِن تَلُورُ الْوَ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَإِن تَلُورُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَإِن تَلُورُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ مَا اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ مَا لَوْ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ اللّهُ اللَّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ الللللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ اللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ اللللّهُ الللّهُ الللّهُ الللللّهُ الللّهُ اللللّهُ الللّهُ الل

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever acquainted with what you do."(Q. 4:135)

Source: http://guran.com/4

cont.

JUSTICE AND BENEFICENCE ARE ALLAH'S MAJOR COMMANDMENTS

Q. 16:90
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدُلِ وَ الْإِحْسَنِ وَإِيتَآيٍ ذِى الْقُرْبَ
 وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنصَرِ وَالْبَغِيِّ يَعِظُكُمْ
 لَعَلَّصُهُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ الْمُنْ

Indeed, Allah commands 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.

Source: http://quran.com/16

B) WASA TIYYAH AS SPIRITUAL-MORAL EXCELLENCE AND OVERALL GOODNESS (AL-KHAIRIYYAH) OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN EMBODYING ALL THAT IS GOOD AND IN ENJOINING THE RIGHT/ GOOD AND PROHIBITING THE WRONG/EVIL

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوَنَ كَالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عِلْلَةً وَلَوْءَامَنَ أَهْلُ ٱلْكِتَبِ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَلَوْءَامَنَ أَهْلُ ٱلْكِتَبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمَّ مِنْهُمُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْرَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَأَكْرَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَالْكَانَ مُثَوِّمَ اللَّهُ وَمِنُونَ وَاللَّهُ وَمِنْ وَاللَّهُ وَمِنْ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَلَيْ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَالْتَعْمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَلَا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَالْمُؤْمِلُولُولُولُولُولُولُولُولُولُولِ وَاللَّهُ وَا لَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَلَا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ وَالَ

"You are the best community brought fourth [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient." (Q. 3: 110)

Source: http://quran.com/3

Cont.

One of the wise sayings of the Arabs is "Khairu al-umūr al-wasaţ " (The best of affairs is the middle). Therefore when it was said that the Quraish tribe is "awsat al-`Arab" in terms of genealogy and locality, it means that it was the best tribe just as when it was said that the Prophet (SAW) was "wasatan fi qawmihi" it means that the Prophet (SAW) was the noblest among his people genealogically.

(al-Qaradāwī, 1977)



C) WASA MYYAH AS "MOST BALANCED QUALITY" OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH

The Muslim Community is required by Allah SWT to be "...a Community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes and is realistic in its appreciation of man's nature and possibilities, rejecting both licentiousness and exaggerated asceticism." (Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'an, p.30). It is a Community that avoids the extreme of negligence or laxity (*tafrit*) as well as the extreme of exaggeration or excessiveness (*ifrat*)

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"On further analysis, the expression 'a community of the middle way' might be said to summarize, as it were, the Islamic attitude towards the problem of man's existence as such: a denial of the view that there is an inherent conflict between the spirit and the flesh, and a bold affirmation of the natural, God-willed unity in this twofold aspect of human life." (Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 30). It should be pointed out that it is this aspect of al-wasatiyyah, i.e. the quality of "balanced" or "moderation" which receives the most attention today. As a consequence the qualities of "justice" and "goodness" or "excellence" as fundamental criteria of WITNESSING OVER MANKIND are being neglected, sidelined or forgotten.

Some examples of "balanced" quality; moderation in economic life and communication

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَى عُنُقِكَ وَلَا نَبْسُطُهَ كُلَّ ٱلْبَسَطِ فَنَقَعْدَ مَلُومًا مَحْسُورًا ال

"And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent." (Q. 17: 29)

قُلِ ٱدْعُواْ ٱللَّهَ أَوِ ٱدْعُواْ ٱلرَّحْمَانَ ۚ أَيَّا مَّا تَدْعُواْ فَلَهُ ٱلْأَسَمَاءُ ٱلْحُسُنَىٰ وَلَا تَحْهَدُ بِصَلَانِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَٱبْتَعِ بَيْنَ ذَالِكَ سَبِيلًا ١٠٠٠ عَمَا وَٱبْتَعِ بَيْنَ ذَالِكَ سَبِيلًا ١٠٠٠ عَمَا وَٱبْتَعِ بَيْنَ ذَالِكَ سَبِيلًا ١٠٠٠ عَمَا وَٱبْتَعِ بَيْنَ ذَالِكَ سَبِيلًا ١٠٠٠

"Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names.' And do not recite [too] loudly in your prayer or [too] quietly but seek between that an [intermediate] way." (Q. 17: 110)

Source: http://quran.com/17

Balance or moderation in personal conduct and behavior

وَلَا تُصَعِّرَ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْنَالٍ فَخُورٍ (١٠) مُغْنَالٍ فَخُورٍ (١٠)

"And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful" (Q. 31: 18)

وَٱقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَٱغْضُ ضِ مِن صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنكُر ٱلْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ اللَّ

And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys." (Q. 31: 19)

Source: http://quran.dom/31

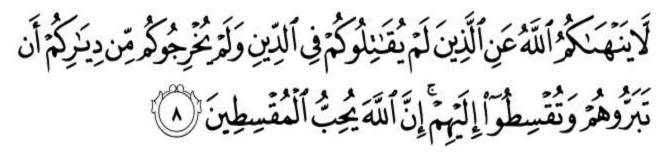
Balance between other-worldly goals and this-worldly responsibility

وَٱبْتَغِ فِيمَآءَاتَىٰكَٱللَّهُٱلدَّارَٱلْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَسَكَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِن كَمَآ أَحْسَنَ ٱللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ ٱلْفَسَادَ فِي ٱلأَرْضِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿ ﴾

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters." (Q. 28: 77)



Peaceful relationship with others and religious tolerance are the norm to be observed by the Muslim Community



"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (Q. 60: 8)

Source: http://quran.com/60

An exception to peaceful relationship

"Allah only forbids you from making allies with them those who fight you because of your religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Q. 60: 9)

Balance in economic consumption

يَنَأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَحُرِّمُواْ طَيِّبَتِ مَاۤ أَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعَلَّيَّهُا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا يَحُرِّمُواْ طَيِّبَتِ مَاۤ أَحَلَّ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعَلَّيَهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُعْتَدِينَ اللَّ

"O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors." (Q. 5: 87)

وَكُلُواْمِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُواْ اللَّهَ ٱلَّذِي أَنتُم بِهِ عَلَا مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

"And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And fear Allah, in Whom you are believers." (Q. 5: 88)

Source: http://quran.com/5

Balance and moderation required in the propagation of Islam

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." (Q. 16: 125)

Source: http://quran.com/16

D) WASAŢIYYAH AS "STRAIGHTNESS" (AL-ISTIQĀMAH)

The straight way or the straight path, is also the middle position as compared to the crooked, winding or wrong paths surrounding it. For this reason the Muslim is taught to ask God Most Gracious to guide him or her to the Straight Path seventeen times a day while reciting Surah Al-Fātiḥah (The Opening) during the five daily prayers. The Muslims and the Islamic Ummah on the Straight Path implies the avoidance of the excessiveness or the negligence of religious communities throughout history which have earned the wrath of Allah (S.W.T) or which strayed away from the right path.

F) WASAŢIYYAH AS EVIDENCE OF "STRENGTH" (AL-QUWWAH)

Being in the middle is a point of strength as well, just as strength is represented by the youths who occupy the intermediate position between the weakness of childhood and the weakness of old age. Likewise the sun at noon time is at the hottest position when compared to the beginning and the end of the day!

(al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Khaṣa'iṣ al-`Āmmah li al-Islām, 1977)

EXTREMISM (al-Ghuluww) IN RELIGION IS PROHIBITED BY THE PROPHET (S.A.W.)

The Prophet (S.A.W) did not prohibit the good things (*al-ṭayyibāt*) in this world for human consumption and physical wellbeing, but those good things were never a part of his primary concern as he preferred to live a life of simplicity, frugality, humility and moral restraint. In one of his famous supplications, the Prophet (S.A.W) showed his holistic and comprehensive vision of life, and proper attitude towards his religion (*al-dīn*), the world (*al-dunyā*), the Hereafter (*al-ākhirah*), life (*al-ḥayāh*) and death (*al-mawt*):

"O Allah, improve for me my religion which safeguards all my affairs; and improve for me my worldly existence for in it is my livelihood; and improve for me my Hereafter for to it is my return; and make this life an increase for me in all that is good; and make death as a relief for me from all that is bad."

CONT...

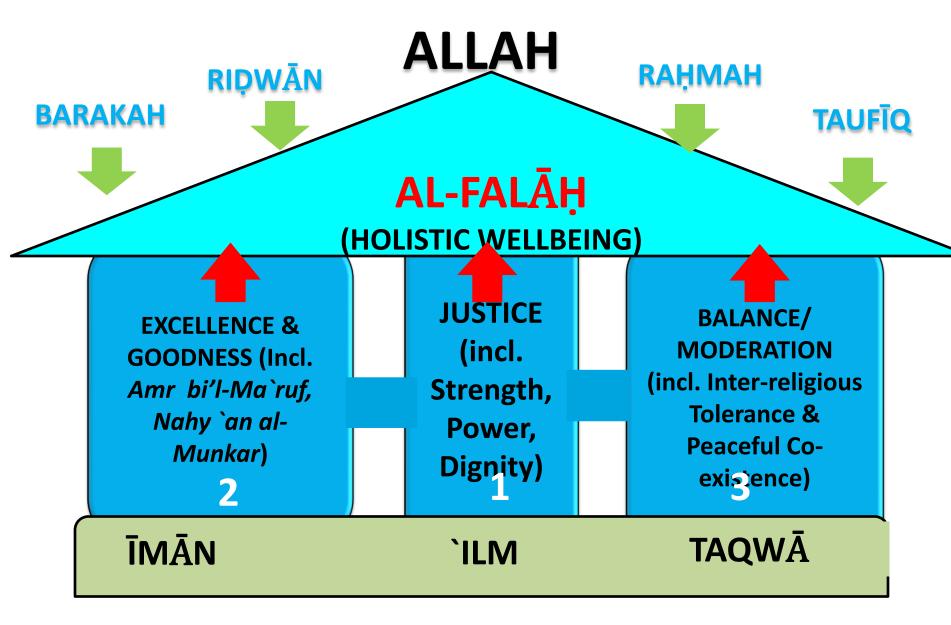
The Prophet (S.A.W) used to urge his Companions to strike the proper balance between their religiosity and their worldly affairs, and between the legitimate pleasure of the body and the felicity of the spirit. Whenever he came to know that some of them were showing an excessiveness in one direction, he would, with his wisdom put them back on the evenly balanced path. Once he saw a Companion who was preoccupied with prayer, fasting and nightly vigils at the expense of his physical wellbeing, his wife and community. He said to him:

Verily, your body has a right on you, and your wife has a right on you, and your visitors and guests have a right on you. Therefore give to each one that has a right upon you his/her right.

CONT...

However, when he witnessed some of the Companions enthusiastically waiting and desiring to get a share of the booty brought back by Abū 'Ubaidah from al-Baḥrain, he seized the opportunity to warn them of the "temptation of this world" (*fitnat al-dunyā*) and its deceptions and illusions (*al-ghurūr*), saying:

"Rejoice (for a while) and become weary (after that). By Allah, it is not poverty that I am afraid for you: I am afraid that material wealth (al-dunyā) would be spread over you abundantly as it spread over those before you. Then you will be competing with one another for it as they had competed for it, and then it will destroy you as it had destroyed them."



THE WASATIYYAH STRUCTURE



CONCLUSION

1. In understanding and explaining the important concept of Wasatiyyah, we should be careful not to emphasise one quality while neglecting other qualities , because those 3 qualities of JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE and BALANCE are in fact organically intertwined and inter-related. We are not doing the right thing to the Divine principle of *Wasatiyyah* if we choose to highlight only one aspect of its holistic meaning, namely "moderation" to the detriment of other qualities, although the issue of moderation is highly relevant to the present global challenges of religious extremism, ideological dogmatism or ethnic fundamentalism.

2. It is important to bear in mind that the meaning of the term "MODERATION" varies from people to people, government to government, or from community to community. What Islam considers proper, appropriate or religiously correct behaviour or action of its adherents may be perceived by others as "IMMODERATE" or "FANATICAL" or "EXTREME". Therefore it is important to understand Islamic concepts from the authoritative sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as from reputable and reliable Islamic religious scholars. We need to remember that Islamic scholarship's highest aim is to seek the pleasure of Allah Most Gracious, not the pleasure or favour of human forces, however influential or powerful they may be.

3. In explaining or elaborating the concept of Wasatiyyah we should not forget the issue of fulfilling the role of being A)"WITNESSES OVER MANKIND" and B) "ENJOINING ALL THAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT AND PROHIBITING ALL THAT IS BAD AND WRONG" which are made obligatory upon the Muslim community, being Divinely designated as "The Just and Best Community" brought forth for mankind. To fulfill this key "civilisational witnessing" and leadership mission, the Muslim community has to continue striving for comprehensive excellence in religious and worldly sciences.



 Although Muslim societies have not given due attention to the concept of Wasatiyyah in its holistic meaning, many leading Muslim scholars, reformist thinkers and Islamic intellectual organisations did attempt to highlight its importance since the period of colonialism until today. Therefore Islamic institutions of higher learning should not lose sight of the primary religious obligation of educating the Ummah to become possessors of comprehensive excellence - materially, spiritually, morally, intellectually, scientifically, professionally, culturally — as an essential requirement of holistic Qur'anic Wasatiyyah.



- Towards achieving that ultimate goal, it may be useful for Muslim religious scholars and aspiring young Muslim leaders committed to pursuing the ideals of *Wasatiyyah* to consider the eight recommendations given by al-Qaradawi in his work on the Islamic Renaissance (2002). The eight recommendations are:
- 1. Facilitation (al-tais $\hat{E}r$) in the giving of formal legal opinion (al-fatw \hat{E}), and emphasizing glad tidings (al-tabsh $\hat{E}r$) in Islamic propagation (al-da \hat{N} wah) efforts.
- 2. Combining the principles of the Pious Ancestors (alsalafiyyah) and the requirements for renewal (alstajdÊd), or combining authenticity (alsalélah) with contemporary requirements (alsalahahah).



- 3. Balancing between the permanent principles (al-thawÉbit) of Islamic law and the changing conditions (mutaghayyirÉt) of the time.
- 4. The coupling (al-muzÉwajah) of religious duty (al-wÉjib) with the social reality (al-wÉqiÑ) (or understanding of the social reality).
- 5. Engaging in dialogue (*al-liwÉr*) and coexistence (*al-taNÉyush*) with other people, and practicing tolerance (*al-tasÉmul*) with those who differ.
- 3. Adopting the principles of consultation (al-shĒrÉ), justice (al-ÑadÉlah), freedom of peoples (Íurriyat al-shuÑËb) and human rights (ÍuqËq al-insÉn).

7. Being just (*inîÉf*) to women, liberating them from the oppression of customs inherited from eras of backwardness, and from the oppression of foreign customs coming from the civilization of disintegration.

8. Presenting Islam as a balanced, integrated civilizational mission (*risÉlah ÍaìÉriyyah*), for the revival, liberation and unification of the *Ummah*.

(Al-Qaradawi . *al-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah min al-Murahaqah ila al-Rushd*, 2002: 146 – 147)



To enlighten the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim public, there is a great need for more scholarly publications in English on the following aspects of Wasatiyyah:

GENERAL

- > WASAŢIYYAH OF SHARĪ'AH ISLĀMIYYAH: Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF `AQĪDAH ISLĀMIYYAH: Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF AKHLĀQ ISLĀMIYYAH: Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF ḤAṇĀRAH ISLĀMIYYAH: Ideals and realities
- > AHL AL-SUNNAH WA AL-JAMĀ`AH AS MANIFESTATION OF WASAŢIYYAH: Ideals and Realities



Cont.

- > WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAMIC GOVERNANCE: Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAMIC ECONOMY: Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL CULTURE: Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAMIC CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT: Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAMIC COMMUNITY (UMMAH): Ideals and Realities
- ➤ INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREATS TO WASAŢIYYAH OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA: Ideals and Realities



SPECIFIC TO UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

- WASAŢIYYAH OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE : Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP : Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT : Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT : Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT : Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF TEACHING AND LEARNING : Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF RESEARCH CULTURE : Ideals and Realities
- > WASAŢIYYAH OF STUDENT POLITICS : Ideals and Realities
- WASAŢIYYAH OF PEACEFUL COEXSISTENCE : Ideals and Realities



THANK YOU