Wasatiyya in the Life of the "Sahaba"

(A Historical Approach in the Light of Risale-i Nur)

Mohamed Hussain Farook[1]

Abstract

Islam is the religion of simplicity, moderation, balance and just that leads its followers to the straight path. Moderation is an important fundamental characteristic of Islam. The teachings of Islam emphasize the importance of understanding 'Qur'an and the 'Sunnah' based on the understanding of 'Sahaba'. However, the most important factor that caused conflicts and deviations in the Muslim community after Prophet Mohammed is the result of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the concept of moderation. Thus, in order to provide a thorough understanding of the concept ''wasatiyya" this paper will discuss its implementation during the time of ''Sahaba'' based on the historical perspective in the light of Risale-i Nur.

Keywords: Wasatiyya, Sahaba, Ummah, The Messenger, Risale-i Nur.

[1] Head of the Arabic department Ayeshah college of higher education - Sri Lanka

ـدراسة تحليلية في ضوء رسائل النور الوسطية في حياة الصحابة ـ

محمد حسين الفاروق

المستخلص

الإسلام هو الدين الوسطية والاعتدال والتوازن والعدالة يقود أتباعه إلى الطريق المستقيم. الوسطية سمة من سمات الأساسية المهمة في الإسلام. تؤكد تعاليم الإسلام على أهمية فهم "القرآن والسنة" وفقا لفهم الصحابة رضوان الله عليهم. لأن العامل الأساسي الذي أدى إلى النزاعات والانحرافات في المجتمع الإسلامي بعد النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم هو نتيجة سوء فهم في الوسطية وتأويلها إلى وجه لا يليق بها. لذلك تهدف هذه الورقة لإبراز فهم شامل لمفهوم "الوسطية" وكيفية تطبيقها في فترة "الصحابة" رضوان الله عليهم بناءً على المنظور التاريخي في ضوء رسائل النور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوسطية، الصحابة، الأمة، الرسول، رسائل النور

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of *'Wasatiyya'* based on the life of 'Sahaba' from a historical perspective in the light of Risale-I Nur. "Al-wasat" (Moderation) is one of the most important characteristics of Islam) Al-Qardawi, 1983, .128). It aims at balancing extreme and fanatical acts in every aspect of human life. The moderation and balance are the souls of the religion of Islam (Abdul Azeez Bar guz,, .13).The calls for moderation and just are the fundamentals in the texts of revelation, 'Sunnah' of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the positions of 'Sahaba'.

The approach of *'wasatiyya'* means practicing Islamic teachings in a holistic and perfect manner in each aspect of individual and community life by increasing the quality of life of the *ummah*. This continuous improvement encompasses development in education and humanity. (Abdullah Mdzin, 2013, .14) In addition, **'wasatiyya' means** being fair, balanced and obedient to the teachings of Islam and not to be extreme to either religious or worldly affairs.

However, the Jews and Christians deviate from Islam in the matter of 'wasatiyya'. The Christians lay too much importance on spiritual life by neglecting worldly matters and invent the monasticism. Finally, they went away from the religion of moderation, which was revealed by Allah. Hence, Allah described them as "those who go astray, (Quran, 1/7) while the Jews are inclined more to the worldly matters and have neglected the life of hereafter and moved away from the straight path (Az-Zuhayliyi 1991:8). Therefore, Allah described them as "those who earn anger" (Quran, 1/7).

Among these two radicalisms, the 'Sahaba' community laid importance on both worldly affairs and the life of the hereafter and their life including the spiritual and physical aspects in a balanced manner besides allotting rights and human needs fairly and equally. They were not extreme and not obsessive in any religious belief, therefore their ethics, practice and every matter were in a state of stability as revealed by Allah (Al-Zuhayli,1991.7) Thus, Allah satisfied over them and describes their life as "straight path" (Quran, 1/7).

Therefore, based on these discussions, it can be recognized that the concept of moderation has been applied by the 'Sahaba' in their entire life and they left us a comprehensive and integrated approach capable of solving the demands and

problems of the community in specific and world in general. Thus, the Prophet Mohamed has made it obligatory of following the 'Sahaba' and adhering to their way of life.

The primary objective of this paper is to explore how the 'Sahaba' applied the concept 'Wasatiyya' in their lives in the light of Risale-i Nur written by Badiuzzaman Said Nursi. He has presented inspiring solutions to the humanity in his works. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi closely dealt with this topic in his works, and examines the topic of 'wasatiyya' generally in the context of 'Risalatus Sahaba','Risaltul Iktisad' and the 'Isharatul I'jaz fi Mazannil Ijaz'.This paper is divided into four sections.The first section deals with the brief conceptual definition of Terms of 'wasatiyya' and 'Sahaba'. The second part examines how the Prophet Mohamed educated the 'Sahaba' on moderation. The third section deals with the importance of following the 'Sahaba's' way of life. The final part examines the view of the 'Sahaba' regarding worldly life.

Conceptual Definition of Terms

1.1. Definition of 'wasatiyya'

Al-wasatiyya is an Arabic term originating from the word '*wasat'* which means opting for the middle position (Al-Isfahani, 2009, 869). In the linguistic usage of the Arabs, the "*wasat*" word indicates three meanings:

1. **Al-Adl (justice)**

"قال أوسطهم" (Quran, 68/ 28) "This means that the most just of them and the best of them. (Tabari,2000)". IbnuFaris said: the word 'Wasata' indicates justice and fairness. (Ibnu Faris, 1979, .108)

2. **Al-Hairiyya and Al-Afdaliyya (Charity and Best)**

*'Wasaṭiyyah'*also means that the best choice is following *hadeeth. It* refers to the fact that "The Prophet was the best (*wasat*) of the Quarshie descent." (Ar-Razi, 1999, .84)

3. **Ash-Shey baina Jayyid and Ar-Radi**

Al-Jawhari said: 'The thing between good and bad' (Al-Jawhari, 1987.1167)

The term "moderation" cannot be applied to an order unless it has the features such as Straightness, Interfaces, Easy, Justice and wisdom.

According to Al- Qardawi, 'wasatiyya 'is meditation or parity between two opposing parties, so that no one of them to influence, and expel the opposite side, so that one of the parties does not take more than its right and overshadows the counterpart and hurts it" (Al-Qaradhawi,2011,.13)

According to Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "*Wasaṭiyyah"* is defined as recommended posture that occurs to the people of sound nature and intellect, distinguished by its aversion to both extremism and manifest neglect". (Mohammad Hashim Kamali, 2015:9)

In the opinion of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, the meaning of moderation is to follow the path of the Prophet Mohamed. This is due to the fact that Prophet Mohamed was created with the most moderate character in a perfect form, his actions and all aspects of life proceeded on moderation and equanimity. His biography shows clearly that he always acted with moderation and equanimity, and avoided excess and negligence (Nursi, 2011, .27).

Besides, he said "Yes, God's Noble Messenger conformed completely to the command:"*Therefore stand firm in the Straight Way as you are commanded"(*Quran 11/, 112*)* and moderation is apparent in all his acts, words, and conduct."

Furthermore, in explaining the concept 'wasatiyya' Nursi gave the following examples: "since his (Prophet Mohammed) reasoning faculty was free of wiliness and stupidity, which is excess and deficiency-resembling its corruption and darkness, it always functioned with wisdom, the middle way and means of moderation. Similarly, far from rage and cowardice, which is the corruption of the power of anger and its excess and deficiency, his power of anger was always employed with sacred courage, which is the middle way and means of moderation of that power. And so too, purified of licentiousness and frigidity, which is the excess and deficiency of the power of animal appetites and its corruption, his power of passion always took chasteness, the means of moderation of that power, as a guide, at the degree of maximum virtuousness. In all his practices, daily conduct, and in carrying out the injunctions of his Shari'a, he chose the way of moderation and avoided excess and deficiency, and wastefulness and prodigality, which is wrongdoing and darkness. He

avoided wastefulness absolutely and took frugality as his guide in his speech even, and in eating and drinking (Nursi, 2011.27)."

There are several words that have been used to indicate the meaning of moderation in the Qur'an and Hadith. For instance, Adl, Mizan, Sirat Al-Mustakeem, Kist, Kasd, Istikamet. All these words are indicating the meaning of moderation. The opposite of wasaṭiyya is İfrat (excess) Tefrit (Neglecting) Guluv (hyperbole) Tugyan Ifsat Udwânand 'Te'addî' Zulüm taṭarruf, which denotes "inclination toward the peripheries" and is known as "extremism," "radicalism," and "extra."

1.2. Definition of Sahaba

There are different opinions among the scholars regarding the definition of companions or 'Sahaba'.

According to Ibnu Hajar, "The Sahabi is the one who met the Prophet Mohamed, believed him and died for Islam and who was accompanied with him for a short or long period of time, who narrated from him or not, who fought with him or not, who saw him or not because of illness and did not sit down with him"(Ibnu Hanbal,1999.11)

2. The importance of following the 'Sahaba'

Islam is the religion of simplicity, moderation, equity and perfection that leads its followers towards the righteous path. Moderation is an important aspect of Muslims' daily life. The lifestyle of the prophet Muhammad is a perfect exampleof moderation. He had always encouraged his *'Sahaba'*community to adopt *'wasatiyya* 'approach in their daily lives. Hence, they implemented the approach based on *'wasatiyya* 'in all aspects of their lives including personal life, family life, leadership, administration, *da'wah*, education, economic, management, social issues and all other aspects of life. That is why Allah mentioned them in the Qur'an as **"moderate community" (**Quran, 2/142**).**

In addition, it is believed that the 'Sahaba' community is the only generation that did not have any deviations, which only started to appear amongst the next generation, close to the end of their time. The Prophet warned Ummah about those who deviate from the religion of moderation after him, so he ordered them to observe his 'Sunnah' and the path of his Companions.

Therefore, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi indicates that the following ‘Sunnah’ is the only way to avoid deviations, and this is also the path of the ‘Sahaba’ and the Righteous Predecessors. He refers the word of Imam Rabbani to emphasize the concept ‘Sunnah’: “Imam Rabbani Ahmad Faruqi said: “I saw while traversing the degrees in my spiritual journey that the ranks of the saints that were most brilliant, splendid, subtle, and sound were those who made following the Prophet’s practices the basis of their way. Even ordinary saints of those ranks appeared more splendid than the highest saints of the other. (Nursi, 2012.8)”

Moreover, Prophet Mohamed said: “For indeed, those who will be alive after me will see many differences; so hold to my Sunnah and to the Sunnah of the rightly guided Khalifahs after me, adhere them and cling tightly to it and beware of newly-invented matters, for every newly-invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is deviation (At-Tirmidhi,1998.341).”

Furthermore, he said: “The Jews split up into seventy-one sects, the Christians split up into seventy-two sects, and this Ummah (Muslims) will split up into seventy-three sects; all of them are in the hell of fire except one." Someone asked: "which is that one. messenger of Allah? He replied: "Whoever is upon that which me and my companions upon. (Tirmidhi, 1998.322)

This is a clear proof that what the ‘Sahaba’ were upon is guidance and the moderation, so whoever follows them will be upon the balanced and straight path. Hence,the verse mentioned above was first referred to those ‘Sahaba’ and then those who followed them.

3. Prophet Mohamed’s Teachings on moderation

When Badiuzzaman speaks about the virtuous of the ‘Sahaba’ in his **27th word**, he said: “The consensus of the Ahlussunna was Al- jam-a'a that come after the prophets, the most virtuous of mankind are the ‘Sahaba’. There are certain proofs that those are sound out of those narrations refer to minor virtues”

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi emphasizes the virtuous of ‘Sahaba’ in his “**27th word**” by mentioning three reasons-one of them is that they accompanied the prophet and learned from him directly. He said: “The conversation of the Prophet is like an elixir. Hence, those who experienced it for a minute will receive the lights of the truth equivalent to many years of spiritual journey”. There was a reflection in

each conversation, and they have molded them accordingly. It is well-known that through the light of prophethood, sublime, reflection, following and imitating, a truly exalted level may be reached; like through allegiance to his sovereign and following him (Nursi, 2012, 162)".

Nevertheless, he explained in his text, "they (The pre-Islamic era of 'Sahaba') were with full of bad habits, endeavors and savage customs to which they were fanatically attached. Through the message and teachings of Islam, he decked out the various wild, unyielding peoples of that broad Peninsula with all the finest virtues and made them teachers of the entire world and masters of the various civilizations. However, it was not an outward domination; he conquered and subjugated their minds, spirits, hearts, and souls. He became the beloved of hearts, the teacher of minds, the trainer of souls, and the ruler of spirits". Therefore, the testifying of their righteousness by the Prophet who said: "The best of my Ummah is my generation, then those who follow them and then those who follow them (Nursi, 2007.24).

3.1. Relevant examples of the teachings of Moderation

"A group of three men came to the house of the wife of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, "Where we are 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? He said to them 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. Hence, he who does not follow my tradition in religion is not from me (not one of my followers)." (Al-Bukhari, 1996, 354)

This hadeeth indicate show the Prophet trained the 'Sahaba' on his middle path when they deviated from it. The story of Salman al-Farsi with Abu ad-Darda' also confirms that the Prophet's approach to worship was balanced and moderate.

In addition, Prophet Muhammed made a bond of brotherhood between Salman and Abud-Darda'. Salman paid a visit to Abud-Darda' and found Ummu Darda' (his wife) dressed in 'shabby' clothes and asked her why she was in that state. She replied: "Your brother Abud-Darda' is not interested in (the luxuries of) this world. In the meantime, Abud-Darda' came in and prepared a meal for Salman. Salman

requested Abud-Darda' to eat (with him) but Abud-Darda' said: "I am fasting." Salman said: "I am not going to eat unless you eat." So, Abud-Darda' ate (with Salman). When it was night and (a part of the night passed), Abud-Darda' got up (to offer the night prayer) but Salman asked him to sleep and Abud-Darda' slept. After some time Abud-Darda' again got up but Salman asked him to sleep. When it was the last hours of the night, Salman asked him to get up and both of them offered (Tahajjud) prayer. Then Salman told Abud-Darda': "You owe a duty to your 'Rabb', you owe a duty to your body; you owe a duty to your family; so you should give to everyone his due. Abud-Darda' came to the Prophet and reported the whole story. Prophet said, "Salman is right" (Al-Bukhari.1996, 116).

4. The view of the 'Sahaba' regarding worldly Life

According to the religion of Islam, Muslims (its followers) are required to have to maintain a balance between their outlook towards this world and the hereafter. Allah says in his holy book:

"By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world. Be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you... (Nursi, 2012.495***)"***

Based on this concept, 'Sahaba's' view regarding the world was very strange. It was strikingly balanced, they were by no means giving to world little value in their lives, and they gave up it easily and very simply. Yet on the other hand they were working hard and diligently, cultivating, trading, making money, some of them were very rich and owners of lands have exceeded hundreds of acres. In the view of 'Sahaba', the world was not a goal or not a target for them. However, it was a means to please Almighty God, and a passage to the Hereafter.

Badiuzzaman analyses this issue by answering a question he was asked. The question was: "they say that the saints and possessors of perfection abandoned the world". It is even stated or said in a Hadeeth: "Love of this world is the source of all error." However, there was considerable involvement in worldly affairs in the life of 'Sahaba'. It was not abandoning the world; some of them were ahead of the civilized society of their time. The question was: How is it that you say that even the least of such Companions was of greater worth than the greatest saint?"

Bediuzzaman answers that “It has been proved decisively in the Second and Third Stopping-Places of the Thirty-Second Word that to love the face of the world which looks to the hereafter and that which looks to the ‘Asma’ul Husna’ or divine names is not the cause of loss, but the means to perfection and attainment. However, as far as one goes in those two faces, the further one goes in worship and knowledge of the creator. The world of the Companions was in those two faces. They saw this world as the arable field of the hereafter and sowed and reaped it. They saw beings on the face of the world as the mirrors of the ‘Asma’ul Husna’ and watch or gazed on them yearningly. As for the transience of the world, that is its transitory face, which looks to man’s base desires. (Nursi, 2012.169)”

Badiuzzaman brings different interpretations to properly deal with worldly matters in a balanced manner. In this regard, a person is able to "love" the good things in this world for the sake of Allah, such as tasty foods, fruits, cleric or ‘Valiy’, children, life, friends, prophit, childhood, youth and in general the world. According to Badiuzzaman, this kind of love towards the world has been evidenced in the life of the ‘Sahaba’, but in a very balanced manner (Nursi.2012.307).

Furthermore, he explains that the world should not be kept in the heart rather in the hands (Nursi, 2015.119). In other words, this world is the realm of wisdom, the realm of service and it is not the realm of reward or realm of recompense. The wage for deeds and acts of service here is given in the Intermediate Realm and the hereafter. Actions here produce immediate fruits in the hereafter. This being the truth of the matter, the results of actions that look to the hereafter should not be sought in this world. If they are given, they should be received with not gratefully, but regretfully. This is due to the fact that in the Paradise, the more fruits are picked the more they grow. Hence, it is hardly sensible to consume in this world in fleeting fashion the fruits of actions that pertain to the hereafter, which is lasting. It is like exchanging a permanent lamp for one that will last a minute and then flicker out. (Nursi.2013.237)

In providing further examples to explain the concept at hand and how the ‘Sahaba’ dealt with it, Badiuzzaman stated that the ‘Sahaba’ was not given up their right even if it was a cent in the matter of the world. On the other hand, they were willful to give or sacrifice whatever they have for the sake of Allah. The following is an event that corroborates or confirms this fact:

Abdullah Ibnu Umar was one of the famous Companions of the Prophet, the son of the greatest and most important Khlipha Umar Al-Faruq, and the most distinguished and learned among the Companions of the prophet. One day, while shopping in the market, in order to be economical and to preserve the confidence and integrity on which trade depends, he disputed hotly over something worth a few cents. One of the Companions saw him and imagining the Illustrious Successor of the Prophet on Earth, the Calipha Umar's son's wrangling over a few cents to be an extraordinary stinginess; he followed him in order to understand his conduct. Next, he saw that Abdullah was entering his blessed house and had spotted a poor man at the door. He chatted with him for a bit, and the man left. Then he came out of the second door of the house and saw another poor man. He chatted with him for a while too, and the man left.

The Companion, who was watching from the distance, was curious. He went and asked the poor men: "Abdullah paused a while with you. What did he do?" Each of them replied: "He gave me a piece of gold." "Glory be to God!" exclaimed the Companion, and thought to himself: "How is it that he wrangled like that over a few cents in the market, then was completely happy to give away two hundred cents in his house without letting anyone know? (Nursi, 2010.41)" This story indicates that the 'Sahaba' took care of the path of moderation in the love of the world. Besides, they have worked for the world and for the hereafter altogether.

Conclusion

It is possible to conclude that 'Wasatiyya' is part and parcel of the Religion of Islam. Historical evidence indicates that 'Wastaiyya' has been an integral part of the Islamic practices in the routine life. The core presumption of 'Wasatiyya' is that there has to be a moderate position in the human conducts. In general, 'Wasatiyya' is the fundamental Islamic teachings of moderation against extremism.

In addition, historical facts indicate that Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) lived a moderate life against extremism. He taught his 'Sahabas' to follow his path accordingly. Hence, the 'Sahabas' led their life according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed whose core is 'Wasatiyya'.

Moreover, the 'Sahabas' in turn taught the Muslims to live according to the teachings of 'Wasatiyya'. Therefore, learning from the 'Sahaba's life is affirmed by the practice of "'wasatiyya" which is the approach advocated by Islam. The

‘Wasatiyya’ approach is comprehensive and integrated into nature, which is highly beneficial in solving the issues and needs of the Ummah.

References:

Al-Quran kareem

1. Yusuf Al-Qardawi, Khasaisul Aamma Lil Islam, Muassasatur Risala, Beirut, 1983.
2. Abdul Azeez Bar Guz, Ash-Shuhudul Hadari Lil Ummatil Vasat Fi Asril Avlama,The Ministry Of Awqaf And Islamic Affairs, Kuwait.
3. Abdullah Mdzin, Wasatiyyah Approach: The Definition, Conception and Application, Institut Wasatiyyah Malaysia.
4. Wahba Az-Zuhayliy,Al-Tafsir Al-Munir Fi Al-‘Aqidahwa Al-Syari‘Ahwa Al-Manhaj, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Mu‘Asir, Beirut, 1991.
5. Al-Zuhayli.
6. Al-Isfahani, Ragib, *Mufredatualfazi’l- Kur'an*, Darul Ma’rifa, Beirut, 2009.
7. Tabari, Tefsiru At-Tabari, Muassisatur Risala, 2000,
8. Ahmed Ibnu Faris, Mu’jam Maqayis Al-Lughah, Darul Fikr, Kitabul Waw, 1979.
9. Ar-Razi, Fahruddin, *Mafatihu’l-Gayb***,** Daru Ihya-U Turasul Arabi, Beirut, 1999.
10. Al-Jawhari, As-Sihah Tajul Luga Ve Sihahul Arabiyya, Darul Im, Beirut, 1987.
11. Al-Qaradhawi, Kalimat Fi Al-Wasatiyyahwa Ma’alimuha, Daral-Syuruq, Kaherah,3rd Edition,2011.
12. Mohammad Hashimkamali, The Middle Pathofmoderationin Islam, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015.
13. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi,Sunnet-I Seniye,Iktisad Ve Tesettur Risaleler,Altinbasak Matbaasi,Istanbul,2011,
14. Ahmed Ibnu Hanbal, Fadhailus Sahaba, Daru Ibnu Jawziya, Riyadh,1999,
15. Tirmidhi, Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Dar Al-Garb Al-Islami, Beirut, 1998,
16. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, Sozler Mecmuasi, Altinbasak Nesriyat, Istanbul, 2012.
17. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, Besh Risalesi, Altinbasak Nesriyat, Istanbul, 2007.
18. Al-Bukhari, Sahih Al-Bukhari, Dar Al-Salam, Riyadh,

19. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, Mesnevi Nuriye, Hayrat Nesriyat, Isparta, 2015
20. Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, Mektubat, Hayrat Nesriyat, Isparta, 2015