

**Wasathiyyah Paradigm in Tafsir Al-Azhar by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka):  
A Study of Theory and Implementation**

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**Abstract**

As a multi-religious and multicultural country, Indonesia has shown a peaceful face with its plurality in accordance with the motto of Bhineka Tunggal Ika. But on the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a potential for conflict and even friction to violence in the reality of religious life. This potential arises due to the attitude of not being able to accept differences in interpretation, understanding so that they claim and blame each other. So a moderate attitude becomes important to implement in an effort to create religious harmony. Islamic moderation is the solution to extremism and radicalism (including terrorism) in the name of religion. Recently, the government has continued to narrate the *wasathiyyah* attitude or religious moderation carried out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. What is done is part of a continuous and consistent effort to create a more harmonious religious and inter-religious life by promoting the spirit of the middle way, balance, proportion and tolerance. Of course, the concept of Islamic moderation that is raised is inseparable from religious normative sources including interpretations of religious texts. This research will examine further and in depth the concept of *Wasathiyyah* from the view of tafsir to become one of the literatures of Indonesian Muslims from various circles. There are several reasons that encourage the author to choose this tafsir book, namely: *First*, Tafsir al-Azhar is a monumental work of Hamka that is written and compiled until completed in full 30 *juz* in the socio-political situation of the old order government. Even this work was partly written when Hamka was a prisoner in prison. *Secondly*, Hamka was a scholar, political activist and a great writer in Indonesia. His work is written in Indonesian or Malay, so it is widely accessed and researched. This research is a literature review with a qualitative descriptive method that explores the concept of *wasathiyyah*, its values and characteristics in the Quran and its Tafsir. That the value of *wasathiyyah* contained in the interpretation of the verses can certainly be a guide to be implemented in religious life so that a harmonious life can be created and minimize the conflict between religious communities in Indonesia.

**Introduction**

Azyumardi Azra, a Muslim scholar, said that Indonesian Islam is *wasathiyyah* Islam which displays Islamic moderation in Indonesia, even mentioned as one of the characters and characteristics of Islam that is unique to Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Its actualisation is not only in the doctrinal area, but also seen in empirical, historical, sociological and cultural realities.<sup>2</sup> Even so, the moderation of

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<sup>1</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *The Relevance of Wasathiyyah Islam from Protecting Campus to Actualising Piety*, (Jakarta: Kompas, 2020), p.x.

<sup>2</sup>M. Kholid Syeirazi, *Wasathiyyah Islam: Understanding the Anatomy, Narrative and Contestation of the Islamic Movement*, (Jakarta: PT. Rene Turos Indonesia, 2023), p. vx.

Indonesian Islam faces various challenges of radicalism, extremism and terrorism originating from the understanding and practice of transnational Islamic movements.

Islamic moderation is the solution to extremism and radicalism (including terrorism) in the name of religion. In other words, moderation (*wasathiyyah*) is the main character of Islam that must be implemented in every aspect of people's lives. Syaikat 'Ulyan strongly believes that Islamic moderation is the best way to create stability in world security.<sup>3</sup> Hasyim Muzadi also asserts that moderation or *wasathiyyah* is a balance between tolerance and strong beliefs.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Said Agil Siraj states that *wasathiyyah* is a combination between the text of the Qur'an and Hadith with reason.<sup>5</sup> likewise, Yunahar Ilyas provides an understanding of *wasathiyyah* as an attitude in maximizing common sense and intelligence, rejecting extremism and not ignoring.<sup>6</sup>

In the author's note, that the narrative of Islamic moderation or religious moderation narrative as a discourse and concept and practice has indeed been going on for a long time, it's just that the massive campaign and mainstreaming of Islamic moderation or religious narrative in Indonesia began to be carried out intensively again at the end of the period of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Lukman Hakim Saifuddin in the 2018-2019 range. Furthermore, the government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Ministry of Religious Affairs (previously called the Department of Religious Affairs) continues to narrate and echo religious moderation for the wider community in an effort to maintain harmonious relations between religious communities and between extreme left and extreme right groups in carrying out religious teachings. The mainstreaming of religious moderation gave birth to different responses in various circles of society both at the upper and lower levels, educated people and ordinary people.

The Qur'an has provided guidance on *wasathiyyah* or moderation as an attitude, in social facts and reality there are still behaviors of some Muslims who have a tendency and lead to extreme attitudes, in religion, such as in thought, namely the monopoly of religious understanding that considers its understanding the most correct (*truth claim*), violence in the name of religion, including conflicts of religious organizations, and so on. In addition, in the Islamic repertoire in Indonesia, we can also find a form of liberal interpretation of religious texts, which has an impact on the emergence of conservative, fundamentalist and radical groups.<sup>7</sup>

So, the author is of the view that today's facts in Indonesia that continue to narrate Islamic moderation or religious moderation carried out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a representation of the Government are part of a continuous and consistent effort to create a more harmonious religious and inter-religious life by promoting the spirit of the middle way, balance, proportion and tolerance. Of course, the concept of Islamic moderation that is raised is not separated from the normative sources of religion, *including the* interpretation of religious texts.

The study of *wasathiyyah* or moderation in Islam still and still has the urgency to present the treasures and good and correct understanding, in an effort to create Muslims as *ummatah wasathan*. The reason is, as the opinion of Sheikh Ahmad al-Thayyib during his visit to Indonesia stated that it is important for humans to make their religious teachings with centric *wasathiyyah* Islam which

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<sup>3</sup>Shaukat Muhammad Ulyan, *Al-Wasathiyyah fi al-Islam Tariq li Amni al-Mujtama'at*, (Riyad: Markaz al-Dirasat wa al-Buhuts Nayef University, 2012). p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Sofiudin, *Dakwah bi al-Hikmah Reactualising the Teachings of Walisongo: The Struggle and Thought of Hasyim Muzadi*, (Depok: al-Hikam Press, 2017), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>Rahmad, "Kiai Said Affirms NU to Keep Islam Modeat". See. <http://m.radarbangsa.com>.

<sup>6</sup>Haedar Nashir, "Wasat}iyyah in Word and Real World" See <https://s3pi.umy.ac.id/>

<sup>7</sup>Budiono, A, "Religious Moderation in the Perspective of the Qur'an (Review of Tafsir Surat al-Baqarah: 143), *JADID: Journal of Quranic Studies and Islamic Communication*, no. 1, (2001), p. 85-116.

balances and unites the truth of its elements and unites the opposite poles, free from excess (*ifrat*) and deficiency (*tafrith*).<sup>8</sup>

This research will examine further and in depth the concept of *Wasathiyyah* from the tafsir product into one of the literatures of Indonesian Muslims from various circles. There are several reasons that encourage the author to choose this tafsir book, namely: First, Tafsir al-Azhar is a monumental work of a Hamka written, compiled until completed in full 30 *juz* in the socio-political situation of the old order government. Even this work was partly written when Hamka was a prisoner in prison. Secondly, Hamka is a scholar, political activist and a great writer in Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> His work is written in Indonesian or Malay.<sup>10</sup>

### Understanding of *Wasathiyyah*

The word moderation also comes from the Latin *moderatio* which means moderation (neither excess nor deficiency). It also means self-control (from extreme excess and deficiency). In English, the word moderation is often used in the sense of average, core, standard, or non-aligned. In general, moderation means promoting balance in terms of beliefs, morals and character, both when treating others as individuals, and when dealing with state institutions. In Arabic, *wasathiyyah* etymologically comes from the word *Wasatha*, which means middle, moderate and fair in everything. In addition, the word *wasath* also means *al-Nishf* which is the middle between two sides.<sup>11</sup> The word *wasath* or *wasathiyyah*, which is equivalent to the words *tawassuth* (middle), *i'tidal* (fair), and *tawazun* (balanced). People who apply the principle of *wasathiyyah* can be called *wasith*. In Arabic too, the word *wasathiyyah* is translated as 'the best choice'. Whichever word is used, they all imply the same meaning, namely fairness, which in this context means choosing a middle way position between various extreme options.<sup>12</sup>

As for the term, *wasathiyyah* intended by the author is a proportional attitude shown in the practice of religion so that it does not lead to an attitude that exceeds the limits of either the extreme left (liberal) or the extreme right (radical), including neither *ifrat* nor *tafrith*. According to al-Qardhawi, *wasathiyyah* is the same as *al-Tawazun*, which is an effort to maintain a balance between two contradictory or contradictory sides, so that no one is more dominant.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Khalid Shalah, "Shaykh al-Azhar *Wasathiyyah al-Islam fi Jami'i anashiri al-Haq wa al 'Adl*", See. <http://m.youm7.com>. Therefore, understanding the concept of Islamic moderation or religious moderation and its implementation in Indonesia remains very important. This effort is a form of dealing with the challenges of radicalism and extremism in religious life which often depart from the wrong understanding because they tend to be rigid textualists. Even so, Quraysh Shihab in this case states that Islamic moderation is not only needed as an idea or realising how important it is to be implemented, but it also requires knowledge of *fiqh al-Maqashid*, *fiqh al-Awlawiyat*, *fiqh al-Muwazanat* and *fiqh al-Malat*. All of these become considerations in implementing Islamic moderation. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Islamic Insights on Religious Moderation*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2020), p. 180.

<sup>9</sup>In Presidential Decree No 113/TK/Year/2011 dated 9 November 2011, Hamka was designated by the Government as an Indonesian National Hero. See Dasman Djamaluddin. "Remembering the Great Writer Hamka" in *Network and Renewal of Nusantara Tafsir Scholars...*, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup>The mention of Malay is based on Hamka's acknowledgement that Indonesian linguists had formulated a unified opinion at the Indonesian Language Congress in 1954 in Medan. The Indonesian language is a language that originates from and is based on Malay. Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Volume I, "Introduction"..., p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Abu Manshur Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Azhariy, *Tahzib al-Lughah*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turas al-Arabi, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Kamus al-Munawwir*, (Surabaya, Pustaka Progressif, 1997), pp. 1557. See Quraish Shihab, *Wasathiyyah, Islamic Nationality Insight on Religious Moderation*, (Ciputat: Lentera Hati, 2020), p. 2. See also Compilation Team of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation* ..., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Yusuf al Qaradhawi, *al-Khashais al-'Ammah li al-Islam*, (Beirut: Muassah al-Risalah, t.t), cet.II, p. 131

According to Abdul Karim al-Zaid is a concept that has a breadth of meaning that includes every praiseworthy character (*khaslah mahmudah*) between the two extremes (*tharfani mazmumain*), such as between generous and stingy, extravagant, brave and cowardly attitudes.<sup>14</sup> In the book *Strategi al-wasathiyyah* published by the Ministry of Waqf and Islamic Religious Affairs of Kuwait as quoted by Muchlis Hanafi, *wasathiyyah* is defined as a method of thinking, interacting and acting based on an attitude of *tawazun* (balanced) in dealing with two conditions of behavior that are likely to be analyzed and compared, so as to bring out an attitude that is in line with the situation and does not contradict religious teachings in principle and prevailing in society.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, based on this definition, *wasathiyyah* can provide protection to anyone from the possibility and opportunity to fall into an excessive.<sup>16</sup>

### Principles of *Wasathiyyah* in Islam

Discussing of *wasathiyyah*, Islam as a religion has provided life guidance in the Qur'an to be proportional, fair and balanced. So, the values of moderation itself in principle already exist and are very accommodating to be implemented in life. Among the principles that have become part of the teachings in religious practice are justice (*'adalah*), balance (*Tawazun*) and tolerance (*Tasamuh*). For this reason, Muslims should take the path of splendor in implementing religious teachings, this can make it easier for them, especially in principle Islam is a religion that provides space for ease in carrying out Allah's commands. Yusuf Qaradhawi mentioned that as Muslims must spread mercy to all nature as a manifestation of Islam which is *rahmatan li al-'Alamin*, by presenting a face that is shady not scary, understanding the teachings properly through religious texts and implementing them proportionally.<sup>17</sup> In the following, the author explains some of the principles of *Wasathiyyah* in Islam:

#### 1. Justice (*al-'Adl*)

Justice is one of the main principles and values brought by all the heavenly laws. So that when Allah sent His messengers then at the same time His books were revealed. Allah says: "Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Justice) so that man may be just." (QS. al-Hadid/57: 25). If we look at the Qur'anic guidance, the justice that is desired is certainly in various matters, not only in legal matters, such as determining the decision of two people in dispute, but also in personal justice both in speech and action. When we speak, we should speak the truth, even when dealing with close relatives. (QS. al-An'am/6: 152). When carrying out a debt contract, the one who writes the note must also write honestly and correctly. (QS.al-Baqarah/2: 282)

In relation to leadership, the Qur'an positions it as a "divine covenant" with a consequent responsibility to uphold justice and reject injustice. The Quran also raises the discourse of justice in a variety of meanings including tawhid, prophethood, leadership, personal matters and community matters. Anyone who wants to obtain personal perfection, then there must be a fair attitude in him, including a way to get happy in the hereafter.

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad 'Abd al-Latif al Farfur, *al Wasathiyyah fi al-Islam*, (Beirut: Dar al- Nafais, 1414/1993), p. 18

<sup>15</sup> Muchlis M. Hanafi, "The Concept of al-Wasathiyah in Islam", *Harmoni: Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious*, Vol. VIII, No. 32, (October-December, 2009), p. 40

<sup>16</sup> Compilation Team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation...*, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Yusuf Qaradhawi, *Fiqh Maqashid Syariah; Islamic Moderation between the Textual and Liberal Schools*. (East Jakarta: Al-Kautsar Library Publisher, 2017), p. 41.

## 2. Balance (*al-Tawazun*)

The word *Tawazun* comes from the word *Tawazana yatawazanu Tawazunan* which means balanced.<sup>18</sup> This word has another meaning, which is to give something its due, by not adding something or subtracting it. This middle and balanced attitude has consequences for humanity, equality and justice. However, this middle stance does not mean that it is not firm and has no arguments. In fact, those who are balanced in this way are firm, though not harsh. Such an attitude is more inclined to the justice taken not to cause harm to other parties. Not being excessive, proportional and necessary is a balance that means neither liberal nor extreme. Being balanced is a good service for the realization of harmonious relations between humans and human relations with God, the Creator.<sup>19</sup>

When we look at the creation of the human body with all its limbs, it is very clear that we find the intention of a balance. Allah created humans with *fitrah insaniyyah* which includes the five senses, heart, soul and mind. All of this is clear evidence of Allah's power to create balance and can be directly felt by humans. In carrying out daily activities, whether personal activities, family matters, the world of work, or social community activities, every Muslim should be balanced and proportional and put something more priority. Not everything should be done equally in all matters. When working, work well with integrity according to duties and obligations, when it's time to rest, then give the body the right to get it. There are times when you are busy with work, but still give time to your family.

## 3. Tolerance (*al-Tasamuh*)

The word tolerance in practice often creates pros and cons. Pros and cons cannot be avoided when in the name of tolerance on the one hand, but crashing religious norms on the other.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is important to clarify the meaning of tolerance. The word tolerance comes from the Latin word "tolerar" which means to be patient, bear with, refrain, and respect the arguments of others or other people's religions and beliefs. It is also said that tolerance is willing to respect or accept other people's different opinions.<sup>21</sup> The word tolerance covers a variety of attitudes such as respecting, allowing for the attitudes taken and respecting the arguments of others, or communities that are not the same or different beliefs from oneself.<sup>22</sup>

Tolerance in Arabic is called *al-Tasamuh* which means tolerance or respect and appreciation for others, either to Muslims or to non-Muslims. Tolerance is another fundamental teaching as wisdom (*hikmah*), universal benefit (*maslahah 'ammah*), compassion (*rahmah*) and justice (*'adl*).<sup>23</sup> In its implementation, tolerance is a value that can create peace in religious social life amid religious plurality in Indonesia. In the Javanese philosophy of life, there is something called *tepo seliro* which means a tolerant attitude. This attitude prioritizes self-introspection over something. So if you don't

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<sup>18</sup> The word *Tawazun* with its word changes in the Qur'an, including the following: *waznan*, (QS.al-Kahf/18: 105); *mawazinuh* (QS. al- A'raf/7: 8, QS. al-Qari'ah/101: 6 and 8; *al-waznu* and *al-mizan*, (QS. al- Rahman/55: 7 and 9); *mauzun*, (QS. al-Hijr/15: 19; and *al-Mizan*, (QS. al-An'am/6: 152, Hud/11: 84, QS. ash-Syura/42: 17 and QS. al-Hadid/57: 25).

<sup>19</sup> Dusti Samad, "Practicing Islam in Religious Moderation." in <https://profduski.wordpress.com>

<sup>20</sup> Abdullah, *New Dictionary*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Islam, 1993), p. 199.

<sup>21</sup> *Council and Library Language Dictionary*..., p. 4554.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Education and Culture, *Big Indonesian Dictionary*, (Jakarta : Balai Pustaka, 1996), p. 1065.

<sup>23</sup> Adeng Muchtar Ghazali, "Theology of Religious Harmony in Islam "Case Study of Religious Harmony in Indonesia", (Analysis: Journal of Islamic Studies, 2013), p. 271-292.



like to be hurt, then don't hurt others. This attitude seeks to maintain friendships and stay away from commotion and conflict with others.

Internally, Muslims themselves also need to be open-minded, accepting differences and respecting them. Therefore, differences in *mazhab*, recitation groups, community organizations (mass organizations) and differences in understanding and views, should not be used as an excuse to create conflict and not respect each other. Meanwhile, related to interactions with non-Muslims, Islam also puts rules and orders to continue to do good and tolerance to them. This tolerant attitude is shown by continuing to respect them in social affairs, but remaining firm and having a stance when it comes to matters of worship, faith and sharia as Allah says in QS. al-Kafirun/109: 6: *lakum dinukum waliyadin* (for you your religion and for me my religion).<sup>24</sup> Islam is a religion of *rahmatan li al-'Alamin* that brings mercy to all nature, revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. In the Qur'an, it has been emphasized that religious differences are not the cause of the inability to create a bond of brotherhood between fellow human beings even though their religions are different.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Characteristics of *Wasathiyyah***

Islam is a moderate religion that intends to be in the best position, the middle that does not teach extremity behavior in all its aspects. That *ummattan wasatan* is a people in the middle, not inclined to side with the right or the left. Rather, they are balanced and fair. Thus, the teaching of Islam in substance is to eliminate all forms of extremity in many cases.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, *wasathiyyah* invites its adherents (in this case Muslims) to be able to be open both in terms of interacting, dialoguing with all parties include in interactions between religions, cultures, and civilizations. This is because Muslims cannot be witnesses or be just if they are closed (exclusive) or close themselves off from the environment and global developments that present diversity and the dynamics of life that move dynamically. In part, it is important to explain the features and characteristics of *wasathiyyah*:

#### **1. Understanding Reality**

There is a good saying to be learnt that nothing is permanent in this life, nothing changes but change itself. This is a reality as a human being created by God with all its potential that can change, develop and progress. In today's modern era, we get a lot of pluralistic societal realities, different conditions make many fatwas that appear as a response to the problems of the people. For example, in Indonesia there is the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issuing a different fatwa on one case with Fatwa institutions in other countries, both in Muslim majority or minority countries. Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia in the application of its teachings remains adjusted in the life of the state and nation. Even so, the general view is still based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

When the verses of the Qur'an are used as a basis, the implementation is still in accordance with state regulations. If it is forced to be as the text of the verse, then even this will create disharmony in

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<sup>24</sup>It should be emphasized here that tolerance has clear limits in the form of the principle of justice as Allah mentioned in QS. al-Mumtahanah/60: 8-9. This verse implies a proportional interaction pattern that tolerance can continue to work as long as the other party is fair to Muslims, namely not fighting Muslims on religious grounds, not expelling Muslims from their place, or conducting propaganda with certain parties to expel Muslims. If this is the case, then there is no tolerance there. The Quran has also provided guidance to keep looking for common ground (if any) and to recognize the existence of the other party when there is no common ground within the framework of social life without blaming each other. (QS. al-Saba/34: 24-26).

<sup>25</sup>See also M. Quraish Shihab, *Insight into the Quran: Maudhui Interpretation of Various Problems of the People* (Bandung : Mizan, 2005).

<sup>26</sup>Izzan, "Cultivating Tolerance Values in the Frame of Religious Diversity," *Kalam*, no. 11 (2017), p. 169.

the life of the nation and state. For example the words of Allah: "And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed (because he denies it), then they are the disbelievers." (QS. Al-Maidah/5: 44). Textually normative, the above verse explains that anyone who judges by anything other than what was revealed by Allah is a disbeliever.

So, there are those who think that the application of this law must be realized, including in the context of the state and all aspects of life. Of course this can be a problem for the harmony of state life if it imposes its will. It would be very difficult for this view to be implemented in Indonesia. This is why we must understand the reality that the Indonesian state is not an Islamic state.<sup>27</sup> So, it is unrealistic if the above interpretation is forced to be applied in the Indonesian context. For anyone or any group that struggles in the implementation of Islamic law (sharia) is allowed and there is nothing wrong as long as they pay attention to the reality of different societies in understanding the teachings of Islam without having to impose their wishes, let alone to make damage (anarchist).

## 2. Not excessive fanaticism

Actually this trait if it exists in a person in practicing his religion is fine and even good and justified. However, if fanaticism makes other people humiliated, brings discord and hostility, to damage brotherhood for brothers and sisters, brothers of the nation or fellow human beings in general, this is the case that must be avoided.<sup>28</sup>

A Muslim is indeed required to believe in his teachings, *istiqamah* and always do good. However, in the practice of social life, religious and national life still does not have to leave a tolerant attitude on the other hand as part of religious teachings. In an effort to avoid excessive attitudes and religious or cultural fanaticism, it is necessary to synergize all plurality of religious believers to fight for harmony among adherents without having to sacrifice matters of faith.

This assertion can be taken from the verse "for you your religion (to be believed and practiced) and for me my religion" (QS. *al-Kafirun*/109: 6). This statement proves that there is mutual recognition of the existence of religion and belief, so that each religious adherent can practice what he believes in properly and correctly, without making absolute arguments to others and each of them does not deny his belief. The attitude of *ta'assub* and fanaticism will become more dangerous when this attitude is manifested in the form of coercion, verbal violence to criminals.<sup>29</sup>

## 3. Making religion easy.

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<sup>27</sup>In the context of Indonesia, only the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam is given the *privilege* by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to implement Islamic law sharia. This condition is also accepted by the people of Aceh as a religious reality there. The local government has made laws and regulations on the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Aceh. According to article 3 paragraph (2) of Law No. 44 of 1999, there are 4 privileges granted to the Aceh Region, namely: 1). Organization of religious life. 2). Implementation of customary life. 3) Implementation of education and 4). The role of ulama in regional policy making. See <https://www.ms-aceh.go.id>.

<sup>28</sup> Unwise religious beliefs are often counter-productive in socio-religious life. This kind of fanaticism often leads to conflict. As we know, religion certainly invites to good things, then when a person increases confidence in the teachings of his religion and gets better faith, sometimes there is a change in attitude that views other people who are not the same as enemies, blamed to be given certain claims because they do not match what the person understands earlier. This is where conflict sometimes comes from. Dadang Kahmad, *Sociology of Religion*, (Bandung: Rosda Karya, 2006), Cet. IV, pp. 165. See also Ratu Vina Rohmatika and Kiki Muhammad Hakiki, "Religious Fanaticism Yes, Religious Extremism No," *Al-Adyan Journal*, Volume. 13, no. 1 (2018)

<sup>29</sup> Whoever stays in *taksub* and fanaticism, it will be difficult for him to unite with any party, because the fusion will only be valid if he has a *wasat/hiyyah* (moderate middle) attitude. Excessive fanatics are always distant from others, so this distance will increase and it will be difficult to get close. Mohamad Kamil Hj Ab Majid, *Fanatics and Taksub in Islam: An Analysis of al-Qaradawi's Views*, pml. 32. See <https://ejournal.um.edu.my>.

Islam is a rational, comprehensive religion, in accordance with human values that make it easy. Islam demands that its followers become pious people in both ritual and social matters.<sup>30</sup> If we really carry out the teachings of religion properly and correctly, it is found that Allah always makes it easy based on the rules and regulations that apply. Pursuing piety in ritual and social matters can also be realized.

Islam recognizes the urgency of fulfilling the desires of human nature. However, the fulfillment of these desires must be within the rules so that humans do not fall to the lowest level like animals. Therefore, practicing religious laws is an easy matter - in the sense that the laws are in line with and in accordance with human nature, not in accordance with human tastes and desires. Allah says: "(By such a decree) Allah wants you to have ease, and He does not want you to endure hardship." (QS. al-Baqarah.2: 185- QS. Al-Hajj/22: 78).<sup>31</sup> In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad also said in his hadith from the Companion Anas bin Malik that: "Make it easy and do not make it difficult, give good news and do not make people run away." (HR. Bukhari).<sup>32</sup>

### About Tafsir al-Azhar.

Tafsir al-Azhar is the best work ever produced by Hamka. As a monumental work of his time, this tafsir is written in Indonesian with the old spelling (also known as Malay). According to Indonesian linguists, at the time of the Indonesian language congress in Medan in 195, it was agreed that the Indonesian language originated from Malay.<sup>33</sup> Here are two reasons that encouraged Hamka to quickly complete the writing of his tafsir and publish it. *Firstly*, personally Hamka found motivation in himself to compile a complete tafsir as a response and to accommodate the wishes of the young generation of Islam at that time in various regions in Indonesia. Hamka asserted that the young generation of Islam at that time had an extraordinary *ghirah* in religion.

However, another problem was that they had not found a path that could lead them to their destination. Hamka likened that "the house is in sight", but "do not know the way there", and also wrote "for them this is specifically the first time this tafsir has been compiled."<sup>34</sup> *Secondly*, the condition of the preachers or preachers who have limited Arabic language skills, even if there are quite good Arabic, but minimal general knowledge. Therefore, Hamka felt motivated to make his

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<sup>30</sup> When we are required to be a pious person, sometimes we will face the urge of lust. In this condition, humans are in doubt whether to remain consistent with the guidance of piety or follow their lusts. Allah warns man when he is at this point in His words: ""(Allah said,) 'O David, We have made you ruler over the earth, so judge between men with right and do not follow your lusts, for they will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Verily, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment, for they forget the day.'" (QS. Shad/38: 26) Ibn 'Āshūr said that lust inclines towards pleasure and ease. While lust is not easily controlled to get perfection. Whereas to arrive at perfection, cannot be separated from struggle and sacrifice. Striving to stay away from and fight against all lust. Because, whoever is controlled by lust, the humiliation he will get. Therefore, misguidance is made by Allah as a result of indulging in lust. Muḥammad at-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir...*, juz. 23, p. 244.

<sup>31</sup> As a religion that provides convenience in its teachings, the scholars stated that there are two kinds of convenience, *first*, the actual convenience. This ease means that Islam is in line with human nature and as a moderate religion. *Secondly*, the ease that is based on causality, namely because of the cause, therefore a matter becomes easy because of it. See al-Izzu ibn Abdus Salam, *Qowa'id al-Ahkam fi Mashalih al-Anam ...*, vol. 2, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Shahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Wuḍū', Bāb Ṣabb al-Ma'ala al-Baul fi al-Masjid*, Hadith no. 217, juz. 1, pp. 89

<sup>33</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 1, (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1989), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, Vol. 1, p. 4.



tafsir by adjusting the context of the society of the time, so that it became literacy and reference for all circles of society, including for preachers (Islamic preachers).<sup>35</sup>

Tafsir al-Azhar was written in a new atmosphere in a Muslim-majority country, while they were thirsty for religious guidance, thirsty for knowledge of the secrets of the Qur'an. Thus, the disputes of the madhhabs were avoided in his interpretation. Hamka himself, as the author of the tafsir, recognized that he did not *adhere* to one school of thought, but tried to approach the meaning of the verse, decipher the meaning and *lafaz* of Arabic into Indonesian, and give people the opportunity to think. This means that in interpreting verses, Hamka is not inclined to one school of thought, but embraces all schools of thought that are united in one study.

Hamka recognized that Sayyid Qutb's work has influenced him a lot in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. From his interest in some of the tafsir, has given color in Tafsir al-Azhar. Even so, *Tafsir al-Azhar* is characterized by *adabi ijtimai* with an Indonesian social setting as its target object. This style in its explanation reveals a lot of the content of the verses of the Qur'an carefully, using interesting and beautiful language by correlating it with the existing cultural system and social facts that occur.<sup>36</sup>

Hamka's work is a 30 juz tafsir, 3 juz is written in 10 volumes. Each volume is written with the name of the letter along with the number of verse numbers. If correlated with the systematic writing of tafsir, then *Tafsir al-Azhar* is included in the category of *tartib Usmani*. Because Hamka in writing his interpretation is arranged coherently from the beginning of Surah al-Fatihah until it ends in Surah al-Nas.

### **Interpretation of verses related to *wasathiyyah* in *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka.**

#### **1. Be Fair and Balanced.**

One of the important things that should not be ignored in discussing *wasatiyyah* is fairness and justice. In fact, the word justice is one of the central themes mentioned in the Qur'an. Allah says: "*And likewise We have made you (Muslims) "a people in the middle" that you may be witnesses to the people and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness to you.*" (QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 143). So this verse informs us that the Ummah of Muhammad is a Ummah that is in the middle, pursuing a straight path; not solely focused on the world and even becoming a slave to the world with all its materials, nor only paying attention to the hereafter, while the world is still also lived. Islam comes second to meet that way of life. It is like when we are commanded to seek the bounty of Allah, including wealth as much as possible, then do not forget to pay zakat for the poor, help others, multiply the practice and continue to worship Allah.<sup>37</sup>

According to Hamka, this is what is meant by *ummatah wasathan*, which is the ummah that treads the middle path, lives life realistically, still believes in the hereafter, then produces goodness in life. When seeking property and wealth, it is used to uphold justice, maintain physical and spiritual health. In addition, Muslims should consider the intelligence of the mind important, but also obey worship in order to refine feelings. Because this world is a way to get success as capital for success in the hereafter.

Hamka ended his explanation by saying that being a rich Muslim is the capital to be able to do a lot of good. Therefore, as long as Muslims remain on the straight path, they will remain the best

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<sup>35</sup> In other words, the field of da'wah for the Muballigh requires a strong reference that comes from the Qur'an. With the presence of this tafsir, it can facilitate the preachers in facing a nation that is starting to be intelligent. Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar ...*, Volume 1, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Hussein al-Zahabi, *al-Tafsir wa al-Mufasssirun*, (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), Juz. III, p. 213.

<sup>37</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 1, Juz.2, p. 332.

people and the chosen people. Muhammad's Ummah will be a witness to other Ummahs, and the Prophet Muhammad will also be a witness to what his ummah has done.<sup>38</sup>

According to the author, what is interpreted from the verse above can be knowledge and legitimacy for Muslims in Indonesia to be fair and balanced in running their lives. It is not wise to focus on world affairs to forget the interests of the hereafter, and vice versa, it is not good if you only pursue the happiness of the hereafter with all personal worship but ignore world affairs that can make you live happily and benefit others. So, the attitude of proportion in living life is a *wasathiyyah* value that can be implemented by Muslims.

## 2. Freedom of Religion

It is a fact that the continuity of life so far presents diversity in the form of nations, languages and religions. So embracing a religion is a call of the soul and in the name of guidance. Therefore, there is no compulsion for humans to embrace a particular religion. Allah says: *"There is no compulsion in (embracing) the religion (Islam), indeed the difference between the right path and the misguided path is clear. Whoever disbelieves in taghut and believes in Allah, then indeed, he has taken hold of a very strong rope that will not break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."* (QS. Al-Baqarah/2: 256).

Hamka explicitly mentions at the beginning of the interpretation of this verse with the sentence "If the child has clearly become a Jew, it should not be forced to embrace Islam." The belief of a religion should not be forced because the truth and error are obvious. Anyone can use their intellect to think and weigh when choosing the truth, so that if the mind is healthy it will avoid and stay away from misguidance. Islam provides space for a person to think well in search of the truth, then let go of just following and the influence of lust, then the truth is definitely obtained. If the value of truth has been found, faith in Allah will present itself, growing and independent of other influences. It's just that, this condition and atmosphere of mysticism will never exist from an imposition, but comes from self-awareness.<sup>39</sup>

Hamka added that this verse is clear information about the truth of Islam as a religion. Islam does not justify coercion for those who want to embrace it, but Islam invites to think about the truth of Islam. If someone thinks clearly, then the guidance of Islam will reach him, because this verse is the main basis of Islam. And Islam has confirmed that there is no compulsion in religion as mentioned from the cause of the revelation of this verse with the story of the expulsion of Bani Nadhir from Medina and there was a child from the Ans}ar who became a Jew and then the father asked the Prophet Muhammad to invite him to return to Islam even though by force.<sup>40</sup>

The author can emphasize here that in the context of religious life in Indonesia, the spirit and value of this interpretation is very contextual and relevant to be implemented. Constitutionally, there are 6 religions that are recognized and protected by the State, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hindum Buda and Confucianism. So for those who have embraced and believe in one religion, they have the right to carry out their beliefs according to the religion they adhere to. There is no intimidation and coercion to embrace a particular religion. With this, there will be mutual respect and respect between religious adherents.

## 3. Not insulting other religions and their symbols.

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<sup>38</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, Vol.1, Juz 2, p. 334.

<sup>39</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, Vol. 1, Juz 3, p. 624.

<sup>40</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, Vol. 1, Juz 3, p. 624.

Insulting and criticizing are bad things that are not in accordance with religious teachings. Insulting is the same as showing hatred. So, Islam regulates its followers to respect others, including those with different beliefs, without insulting them. Allah says: "And do not revile those whom they worship besides Allah, for they will revile Allah without knowledge. Thus, We have made every people to honor their works. Then to God is their return, and He will tell them what they have done." (QS. al-An'am/6: 108).

Hamka explains that Allah warns believers not to abuse and insult the idols worshipped by the ignorant. It is enough to provide rational arguments about the evils of worshipping idols without having to denounce them. If the believers also insult and abuse their idols, then we no longer have a reason to explain the evil of their actions. When Muslims insult the idols they worship, then they will do the same thing by insulting the God of the Muslims, namely they insult and insult Allah as well.<sup>41</sup> Hamka also mentions that this verse provides wisdom that differences of opinion that lead to mutual insults and reproaches show that someone is not knowledgeable.

According to him, it is necessary for Muslims to hold fast to their religion, so as to avoid quarrels that lead to mutual contempt. This is because the verse indicates that such behavior only arises from a lack of knowledge. As the famous saying goes: *"If there is nothing in the brain to be expelled, even though the mouth wants to speak too, then finally the contents of the intestines are expelled!"*<sup>42</sup> Likewise, according to Hamka, if Christians who hold their religion properly and correctly, they will certainly not use words that can hurt, speak lies and curses in carrying out their religious propaganda because one of the contents of the gospel they hold is: "Have mercy on your enemies."<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, the author underlines that what Hamka interpreted in this verse can be a guide for Indonesian Muslims whose social and religious life is very close to diversity. That multi-religion becomes a necessity in Indonesia, which constitutionally provides freedom for every religion and its adherents to hold and practice its teachings. So, it is true what applies both theologically normative and constitutionally that each religious adherent is prohibited from insulting each other's religious symbols including the God they believe in. Because this attitude shows religious maturity, mutual respect, and respect for each religion with the symbols and beliefs inherent in it. Thus, for the author, this *wasathiyyah* value is very important to be implemented in maintaining religious harmony and national unity.

#### 4. Plurality is Undoubtedly.

Allah has created the universe and humans with diversity and differences that have become *sunnatullah*. Allah says: *"And if your Lord had willed, He would have made mankind one people, but they are always at variance, except those whom your Lord has mercy upon. And that is what Allah has created them for. The sentence of your Lord is fixed: 'I will surely fill the Hellfire with jinn and men (who disobey).'"* (QS. QS. Hud/11: 118-119).

In his tafsir, Hamka mentions that humans can all be united, get along well and there is no fighting. Likewise, it could have been harmonious in building, harmonious in the family and

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<sup>41</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 3, juz. 7, p. 2134. According to Hamka, as is understood, those who worship idols also recognize that Allah still exists and remains One. They worship idols - they say - only as intermediaries who will convey their requests to Allah. But when their hearts are hurt because they have cursed their idols, without any consideration of knowledge, they end up cursing Allah. Their hurt at the Muslims for cursing their idols is avenged by cursing Allah. Thus the situation will not get better, but more chaotic.

<sup>42</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 3, juz. 7, p. 2135.

<sup>43</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 3, juz. 7, p. 2136.

peaceful all if the Lord God willed it. All of that is impossible if God is not able to predestine everything. Look and prove how the life of bees that produce honey or ants that make nests. The conditions of bees and ants all get along, there is no dispute. That's how it happens, but Allah has another destiny. Humans remain in dispute or difference. The difference is undoubtedly as there was Fir'aun, and Moses, there was Abu Jahal and the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>44</sup>

Hamka also reiterated that the difference is a perfect grace and enjoyment, if humans are good at living it. Therefore, good intelligence and religious awareness are needed, so that this difference can bring benefits to life. However, there are others who see this difference as an injustice so that *hasad* and jealousy arise until there is a commotion. Such people usually try to get everything for themselves, when in power oppress others, when they get a gift, they forget about the one who gave the gift. Then such people will get nastiness as Allah's promise at the end of verse 19: *"I will fill Jahannam with jins and human beings."*<sup>45</sup>

The author argues that one of the problems in religious life that sometimes arises is not being able to accept differences. Indonesia, which is multicultural and multi-religious, presents unavoidable diversity. For this reason, this verse is an important clue for people in maintaining harmony in religious life. Muslims in particular should be able to take the *wasathiyyah* value in this verse. The most important thing is how to carry out the teachings of the religion believed while respecting other religions. Because the guidance to believe is absolutely God's.

## 5. Wise in Action

Being wise is being able to speak, behave and act appropriately. This is because this attitude provides *maslahat* value for the perpetrator. Allah says: *"And do not let your hands be tied around your necks, nor do you overextend them, lest you become disgraced and regretful."* (QS. Al-Isra/17: 29).

In this verse, Hamka explains that this verse means that humans should not be stingy and should not be wasteful, royal or wasteful. The Qur'an has given a parable of the stingy person with a person who shackles both hands to his neck, so that his hands are difficult to use when opening his money box. As for the "unlocked" spendthrift, he is compared to a person whose hands are just loose, without any calculation. Therefore, both of these attitudes are equally despicable in God's sight. Hamka correlates his interpretation with QS. al-Furqan/25: 67, namely: *"And (among the servants of the Most Merciful) are those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, between the two in a reasonable manner."* For this reason, Hamka emphasized that being stingy and wasteful is a despicable act and can bring harm to oneself. Being stingy causes hatred from people and hurts oneself and leads to exclusion from society. Meanwhile, an extravagant attitude can be an address that this person's life will be uncertain, lose a number of assets and the wealth obtained has no blessing. When he is rich, he will be praised by many people, but when he goes bankrupt and falls into poverty, he will be alone. That is why it is mentioned in the continuation of the verse: *If you are stingy and wasteful "then you will be disgraced and regretful."*<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Hamka further explained that the difference also applies to the existence of people who think big, and who think simple. There are humans who are given intelligence so that they can know the secrets of nature; create technology such as electricity, radio, television, apollo planes and even fly to the moon. Conversely, there are also humans who can only fish by the river, or have worked hard with all their might but can only get a liter of rice for one day's meal. See Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 5, juz. 2, p. 3567.

<sup>45</sup> Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar...*, vol. 5, Juz, 12, p. 3572.

<sup>46</sup> Hamka also stated that a person who is hunkered down will be disgraced in his social life, because he does not realize he has been enslaved by his property. He could have broken ties with his family because of his love for the

What Hamka interpreted can be accepted to be implemented. The author underlines that implicitly there are values that can be implemented in realizing *wasathiyyah* in religious life. If the use of wealth in charity is not too stingy and not too generous, then this also applies to the acceptance of facts in religion. That multi-religious life requires this kind of wise attitude. That way, conflicts between religions, organizations and groups can be avoided when each party is wise in speech and action when different in views and beliefs.

### **Conclusion.**

The study of *wasathiyyah* theory is still popular and relevant to always be narrated. Moreover, there are still facts that show in religious, social, and political life that often lead to attitudes that are not in line with *wasathiyyah* values. Hate speech is still real when different choices, insulting and demeaning each other often occur because of differences in views and so on. For this reason, according to the author, Islam is very accommodating to the undoubted diversity and provides guidance for its people on how to respond to it. So being *wasathiyyah* does not mean to not take a stand between the two extremes, or rejecting both, nor does it mean being soft or weak. Moderation means maintaining a balance so that one extreme is not so dominant that it ignores or dismisses the other. Moderation brings together in harmony the elements that are good and suitable for each pole and at the levels needed so that an attitude is born that is neither excessive nor deficient. While the value of *wasathiyyah* in *Tafsir al-Azhar* as explained above remains urgent to be understood and implemented in an effort to create religious harmony in the context of nation and state.

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treasure. Whereas people who are careless, wasteful and extravagant, as if their hands are just loose and unlocked, will eventually regret themselves when the property has run out because the exit is no calculation. See Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar ...*, Vol. 6, Juz m 15, p. 4043.



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