

The Concept of *Al-Qaṣd Wa Al-I'tidāl* From The Qur'ānic Perspective

Zahoor Ahmad Wani

Research Scholar, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi

Wani40@gmail.com

Abstract

The concept of *al-Qaṣd wa al-I'tidāl* is one of the main characteristics of Islam and Muslim Ummah. It exists in Islamic Epistemology from all perspectives, inclusive of principles, essentials, doctrines, dogmas, worship, morality, worldview and practice. The Holy Qur'an is a rich record of several verses explaining this very essential principle of Islam which is signified in various connotations; referred to as *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*- straight path, *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl*- just and middle course of action, *al-qist*- to do justice or put things in order, and also as *al-ḥaq*- the way of truth and wisdom. There are many Prophetic traditions that elaborate the method of *al-Qaṣd wa al-I'tidāl* and its features.

In the proposed paper an attempt will be made to study those verses of the Holy Quran and the Prophetic traditions which deal with this important notion and highlight those connotations mentioned in the Holy Quran and their relationship with the principle of *al-Qaṣd wa al-I'tidāl*. Furthermore, it will also revisit some of those holy accounts which support this concept and encourage faithful to espouse a balanced way of life.

Focusing on textual and material resources, this study will apply the exploratory and descriptive design using the content analysis method.

Keywords: Islam, *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl*, *al-wasatiyyah*, moderation, extremism, *al-ifrāt*, *al-tafrīt*.

Introduction

The concept of *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl* is one of the main characteristics of Islamic *Sharī'ah* and Muslim Ummah. This notion of Islam was profoundly promoted since very beginning. There are numerous Qur'anic verses and examples from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) very explicit about this basic method of Islam. It is not confined to a partial implementation or enforcement of Islamic religious teachings, rulings or systems but it is a comprehensive method to be applied in every aspect of life by every individual or group or nation. From creed, (*'aqā'id*), essentials (*arakān*) and worship (*'ibādāt*) to ethics (*akhlāq*), societal engagements (*mu'āsharat*), and daily affairs (*mu'āmalāt*) etc,

Islam is entirely based on the method of *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl*.

Though *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl* (more often *al-wasatiyyah* in the contemporary Islamic epistemology), as a theme and genre of Islamic scholarship is relatively recent, most probably dating back to the early twentieth century but the conception and essence of this Islamic principle has a longer history and it occurs in Islamic epistemological discourses from the very beginning when Muslim Scholars showed a great zeal in the field of knowledge and went beyond their territories to receive it wherever they found.

They played a great and unforgettable role in the advancement of the world knowledge but in this effort, a group of Muslim scholars were also affected by some of these foreign material resources specifically by the anti-religious theories of the Greek philosophy. They were deviated from the moderate nature of Islam and became advocates of either extremism and exaggeration or negligence and reductionism and consequently many sects such as *Jabariyyah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Murjiyyah*, *Mushabbiha*, *Lā adriyyah*, *Khārjīs*, *Rāfḍīs*, *Bāṭnīs*, *Karrāmītīs*, and *M'utazilīs* etc emerged.

At this point, scholars of sound knowledge and intellect arose to deal with these deviated groups and called people towards the moderate and balanced teachings of Islam.

Since then from time to time, whenever immoderate tendencies have been found in the society, Muslim scholars through their epistemological discourses based on the Quran and *hadīth* promoted and propagated this basic concept of Islam. In this line, they embroidered it with different terms. For example, Ibn Taimiyyah in his *fatāwās* and other works has termed it as *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*. He has also written a book on the subject entitled with *Iqtiza al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm*. His disciple, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah terms it as *al-tariq al-ḥaq*.¹ Al-Shatibi calls it *qaṣd al-sabīl* when he explains the verse 9 of the chapter 16, *Al-Nahl*, as "a system of life which is

¹ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin*, eds. Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1973), 1:16.

free from exaggeration and shortening.”² Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftazānī has named it *al-‘adālah* in the sense of optimal equilibrium and moderation.³ Shah Waliullah of Delhi has coined ‘*Mastak-e-wast*’⁴, Muhammad ‘Abduh, *dīn al-ḥiṭrah*⁵, Ibn Ashur, *samāḥah*⁶, Al-Faruqī, *al-tawāzun*⁷, and Sayyid Fadlullah has prescribed it as *al-tawāzun wa’l-‘adalah*.⁸

In short, the concept of *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl* has been described with different terms in the Islamic epistemological discourses and all these terms have been borrowed from the Quran and *ḥadīth*.

In this respective paper an attempt will be made to know the Qur’anic perspective on *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl* by studying some amongst many Qur’anic verses and *ahadith* that deal with different aspects of this concept.

To begin with we will first highlight the synonym terms to this concept mentioned in the Holy Quran and the *ḥadīth* and their relationship with the principle of *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl*. Furthermore we will revisit some of those holy accounts which support this concept and encourage faithful to espouse moderation and balanced way of life and then end the paper with the conclusive remarks.

The Concept of *al-Qaṣd wa al-I’tidāl*

The concept of *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl* is an approved way that forbids a soul to work toward two disliked poles of excess (*ifrāt*) and negligence (*tafrīt*) but it is to keep the balanced and straight path without cutting through the boundaries of any position.⁹

Lexically, *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl* is combination of the two terms, *al-qaṣd* and *al-i’tidāl* (taken from the Qur’anic term, *al-‘adl*) which occur frequently in the Holy Qur’an and the *ḥadīth*. They are defined as “moderation and equilibrium—*al-tawassuṭ wa’l-i’tidāl*—in all affairs, and it is, as such, synonymous with *al-wasāṭiyyah* (the contemporary term for the concept).

Al-Qaṣd: The first term *al-qaṣd* means to intent, to hold straight path or to choose middle way among many crooked ways¹⁰. Ibn Manzur and al-Zubaidi define *al-qaṣd* as ‘the balanced one which neither leans towards excessiveness nor to negligence.’¹¹

Ibn Manzur has further quoted Ibn Athīr who in the *ḥadīth* “*Kan Abyaz Malīḥan Muqaṣṣadan*” explains the word ‘*muqaṣṣad*’ as neither tall nor short and fat but a balanced personality.¹²

Literally the term *al-qaṣd* means to choose the straightway which leads to correct destination as al-Qasmi has defined it under the verse 9 of the chapter 16, *al-Nahl*: “*And it is up to Allah to explain the Straight Path (qaṣd al-sabīl) but there are some ways that go not straight.*” He further writes that the above mentioned verse of the chapter, *al-Nahl* and the verse, “*This is My path - a straight one (mustaqīmān). You shall follow it, and do not follow any other paths, lest they divert you from His path*”¹³ of chapter *al-An‘ām* are quite similar in their message wherein Almighty Allah urges human beings to follow the right and just way (Islam) and avoid other crooked and violating ways and it is now upon human being which one he is going to choose.¹⁴

Al-Tabari defines ‘*qaṣd al-sabīl*’ in the above verse as ‘the straightway which has no crooks.’¹⁵ When Mawdudi states the verse, “*And be moderate in your pace...*”¹⁶

he opines that the verse doesn’t simply explain the swiftness of walking rather it means not to walk like an arrogant nor put up a false show of politeness and

² Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi, *al-I’tisām*, (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyah al-Kubrā, n.d.), 58-59.

³ Sa’d al-Dīn b. Mas’ūd b. ‘Umar al-Taftazānī, *Sharah al-Talwīḥ ‘alā al-Tawḍīḥ*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1996.), 2, 48-49.

⁴ Manazir Ahsan Gilani, *Tadkira Shah Waliullah*, (Lahore: Naved Publishers, 2003), 20.

⁵ ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Farfūr. *Al-Wasāṭiyyah fī’l-Islām* (Amman: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1988), 156.

⁶ Muhammad Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Treatise on Maqasid al-Shariah*, trans. Mohammad El-Tahir El-Mesawi, (Washington-London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), 88.

⁷ Ismail Raji al-Faruqī, *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, Washington-London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

⁸ Seyyed Mohsin Fadlullah, *al-Jihad: Dirasah Istidlaliyyah Fiqhiyyah Hawl Mawdu‘at al-Jihad wa Masa’iluh*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Malak, 1998), 7-8.

⁹ Zahoor Ahmad Wani, “al-Wasatiyyah: A Distinctive Feature of Islam”, *Excellence International Journal of Islamic Studies and Theological Research*, 1,3, (2016), 1-15.

¹⁰ Al-Qamoos al-Waheed, s.v. “Qaṣd”.

¹¹ Lisan al-Arab, s.v. “Qaṣd”; Taj al-Urūs, s.v. “Qaṣd”.

¹² Lisan al-Arab, “Qasd”.

¹³ Al-Quran, 6 (Al-An‘ām): 153.

¹⁴ Moḥammad Jamāluddīn al-Qāsimī, *Maḥāsīn al-Tawīl*. (al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, V. 3.61).

¹⁵ Abū J’afar Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Tawīl al-Qur’ān*, eds. Aḥmad Moḥammad Shākīr (Riyāḍ: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 2000), 16: 170. (Al-Maktabah al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

¹⁶ Al-Quran, 31 (Luqman):19.

piety rather be a self-actualized person in all walks of life.¹⁷

The term *al-qaṣd* and its derivatives have frequently occurred in the Holy Quran such as in the verse 66 of the chapter 6 (*al-Maida*), verse 42 of chapter 9 (*al-Tawbah*), verse 32 of chapter 31 (*Luqman*), and in the verse 32 of 35 (*al-Faṭir*) and everywhere it holds the message of moderation and equilibrium.

Al-I'tidāl: *Al-itidal*, meaning equilibrium or moderation, is closest-conceptual synonym to *al-wasatiyyah*, so much so that *al-wasatiyyah* finds its true expression in *al-itidal*. The antonym of *al-itidal* in Arabic is *al-tatarruf* (excess) which is also the opposite of *al-wasatiyyah*. It is derived from the word *al-'adl* which means just or justice.

Al-Manawi defines *al-i'tidāl* as middle compared to *al-ifrāt* (excess) and *al-tafrīt* (negligence) which means to deal with things in an appropriate manner whether the matter is linked to the intellect such as the implementation of laws or related to logic such as in the different means of measurement. He has further quoted a narration “*bil 'adl qāmat al-samāwāt wa al-ardh*” which he explains that if any of the four elements of the universe would be imbalanced; out of proportion or contrary to divine wisdom; the world wouldn't be such a balanced and systematized model.¹⁸

The verse of the chapter *al-Infitar*, “*Who created thee, then perfected thee, then proportioned thee aright.*”¹⁹, has been interpreted that Allah Almighty has created humans as a just and proper creature. Whether it is his stature or his features, he is a masterpiece.²⁰ According to Ibn Ashur, *al-'adl* here is *al-t'adil* which means that human being has been created a balanced creature; his paired internal and external organs, his stature and well designed face and features everything is such a great sign of divine equilibrium and balance that if any of them is displaced, the whole system will be disorganized and deteriorated.²¹

¹⁷ Abul A'alā Maudūdi, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, (Lahore: Idārah Tarjumān al-Qur'ān, n.d.),

¹⁸ Muhammad Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Manawi, *al-Tawqīf ala Muhimmāt al-Ta'rīf*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1410AH), 1:506. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61)

¹⁹ Al-Quran, 82 (*al-Infīṭār*): 7

²⁰ Hafiz 'Imaduddīn Abul Fidā Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Trans. Moḥammad Jūnāgarī (Lahore: Maktaba Quddūsiya, 2006), 4:583.

²¹ Muhammad Tahir ibn al-Ashur, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, (Tunisia: Dar Sehnūn li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1997), 30: 175. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

Qur'anic Synonymous for *al-Qṣd wa al-I'tidāl*

This balanced and straight path has been also described with other synonymous terms in the Holy Quran and *ḥadīth* which are as follow.

Al-Wasaṭ:- The word ‘*wasat*’ has two expressions; first is *wasat* (/vəsət/) with the vowel sound ‘*ə*’ denoted by the symbol (*·*) of the middle letter and it is a noun. Sometimes, in Arabic, it is used as an adjective like *al-qaṣd* that remains always singular whether its noun is singular or plural and feminine or masculine. Another expression is *wasṭ* (/vəsṭ/) with diacritical marks (*^*) on the middle letter. This is the adverb of place and has the meaning of among and between. Al-Aṣfahānī defines the second word as a place that is located in the middle of equal length around it.²²

The term, *al-wasatiyyah*-famously used for the concept in the current discourses- is derived from the word *wasat*. Actually, this term was taken and elaborated from the word *ummatan wasaṭan* (the moderate nation), which is found in the exhortation of Allah almighty:

“Thus, We have made of you an *Ummah* justly balanced (*ummatan wasaṭan*), that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.”²³

Muḥammad Mustaqīm defines the term *al-wasatiyyah* as a middle path approach, which means performing obligations and duties in a moderate, balanced, and fair in line with the requirements of religion as Islam is very concerned with comprehensive balance and moderation in all aspects of life.²⁴

According to al-Qaradawi, *al-wasatiyyah* means being middle or just between two conflicting positions, with no inclination to one of them to deny the right of the others.²⁵

Al-Qisṭ: The word *al-qisṭ* is the Arabic derivative of the Roman word ‘*qistas*’ which means balance and

²² Husain ibn Moḥammad al-Aṣfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dar al-M'ārif li al-Ṭaba' wa al-Nashr, n.d.), 523. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

²³ Al-Quran, 2 (*Al-Baqarah*): 143.

²⁴ Mazlān Ibrāhīm, Jaffary Awang et al., “Wasatiyyah Discourse according to Muslim Scholars in Malaysia”, *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences* 71, no 1 (2013), 6-14.

²⁵ Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Islām kā Nazriya I'tidāl or uske Aḥam 'Anāṣir*, trans. Ilyās N'umānī (New Delhi: IFA Publications, 2014), 7.

pair of scales. Because the scale is considered as the sign of justice, the word *al-qisṭ* has also been used to describe the meaning of justice and fairness. The word is used as a noun and verb both; as a noun, it often means justice, scale, share and due installment etc., and, as a verb, it is used sometimes as *qasata yaqsutu* (with the diacritic mark (◌) on the middle letter of the aorist tense) and as *aqṣata yuqsitu* and in both forms it means to do justice and rectify. Sometimes it is also used as *qasata yaqsitu* (with the vowel mark (◌) under the middle letter of the aorist tense) and this time it is taken as the opposite of justice which is injustice, tyranny and violation of rights.²⁶ Al-Mutrizi defines it as to do justice and put something in order.²⁷ Like *al-ʿadl* and *al-waṣṭ* this word is also used as an adjective that remains always singular whether its noun is singular or plural and feminine or masculine like *mizānun qistun*, *mawāzinu qistun*.²⁸ *Al-qisṭ* and its derivatives are often used in the Holy Quran in the same meaning mentioned above.

Ibn Kathir describes the word *al-qisṭ* in the verse “Say, “My Lord advocates justice...”²⁹ as to be just and maintain fairness in all matters of life.³⁰ Ibn Ashur believes that the order of maintaining justice and avoiding two bad poles of excessiveness and negligence in the verse is general and covers all matters of life and all words and acts of human being.³¹

Explaining the verse, “O you who believe! Be steadfast for the cause of Allah and just in bearing witness. Let not a group’s hostility to you cause you to deviate from justice. Be just, for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah; Allah is well aware of what you do.”³², Ibn Kathir writes that every individual of this *Ummah* is being addressed here to maintain justice in all times and in every situation.³³

Syed Qutub expressed the same view in the verses, 151-153 of *al-Anʿām*. He writes that maintaining equality and justice by means of measurement is metaphorical to maintaining justice and balance in all worldly affairs. There are some other commandments in these verses of 151 and 152 indicating different

aspects of spiritual and material life where Allah Almighty directs people to observe justice and moderation to the best of their ability and in the very next verse of 153 Allah calls it His Straight Path (*siraṭ al-mustaqīm*) which is the only path to be followed and rest other ways are to be left.³⁴

Another verse containing the term *al-qisṭ* is “We shall maintain proper justice on the Day of Judgment. No soul will be wronged the least. For a deed even as small as a mustard seed one will duly be recompensed. We are efficient in maintaining the account”³⁵. Al-Qasimi defines the word *al-qisṭ* here as the just and upright. He explains that in the Day of Judgment everyone will be required just and fair and not a single deed will be increased or decreased from one’s book of deeds.³⁶

Hadrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates that a companion came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said his slaves are disobedient to him. They prevaricate and deceive me and as so I scold and beat them. How will be my matter with them? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied that on the Doomsday both parties will be treated equally. So if your scolding and beating them are found equal to their deceit and disobedience, there will be no harm to any party then and if the punishment is found less than the disobedience and deceit, you will be compensated for the rest from their deeds but if it is found that your punishing them is more than their deceit and disobedience, they will be compensated from your deeds then. Hearing this, the companion became sad and started crying. The Prophet asked him, “Don’t you have heard the verse “We shall maintain proper justice on the Day of Judgment””? The companion uttered: O Prophet of Allah! There is nothing better than to keep myself away from them. Be witness that I set them free.³⁷

Al-Ṣiraṭ al-Mustaqīm: Scholars emphasize that without understanding the term *al-Ṣiraṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight path) employed in the Qurʾān, one cannot comprehend the true objective of *al-qaṣd wa al-iʿtidāl*.

In interpreting the term *al-ṣiraṭ al-mustaqīm*, al-Ṭabarī refers to the opening chapter *al-Fāṭihah* of the Qurʾān and explains that the scholars have reached

²⁶ Al-Qamus al-Jadid, s.v. “Qisṭ”.

²⁷ Abu al-Faḥ Ali ibn al-Muṭrizi Al-Mutrizi, *al-Mughrab fi al-Tarīf al-Mʿurab*, (Aleppo: Maktabah Usāma ibn Zaid, 1979), 2: 176.

²⁸ Lisan al-Arab, s.v. “Qisṭ”.

²⁹ Al-Quran, 7 (al-Aʿrāf): 29.

³⁰ Ibn Kathīr, 2:254.

³¹ Ibn ʿĀshūr (1997), 8:87.

³² Al-Quran, 5 (Al-Maida):8.

³³ Ibn Kathir, 2: 232.

³⁴ Syed Qutub, *Fi Zilāl al-Qurʾan*, 3: 174 (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.).

³⁵ Al-Quran, 21 (al-Anbiya): 47.

³⁶ Al-Qasmi, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

³⁷ Abū ʿIsā al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turās al-Arabī, n.d.), 5: 320, [3165]. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

the consensus that it refers to clear or straight path in which there is no crookedness for people to follow to obtain felicity. This meaning is also stated in all Arabic dictionaries.³⁸

The well known Syrian exegete of the Qur'an, Al-Qasimī has gathered all those connotations which have been taken in different commentaries of the Qur'an in the light of the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions (may Allah be pleased with them). They are, for example, *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* means Islam, the Holy Qur'an, the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*, worship and devotion to Allah or the way of fear and acquiescence of Allah. Likewise, some have meant 'to carry out good deeds and avoid prohibited ones and the others have meant 'obedience of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*'. He further propounds that all these interpretations are very near in their meaning and are right. Then he concludes that *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* is "enforcing every commanded action with punctuality without procrastination and abandoning forbidden things."³⁹

While elaborating the verse: "This is My path - a straight one (*mustaqīm*). You shall follow it, and do not follow any other paths, lest they divert you from His path."⁴⁰, Hadrat Ibn Masud (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (may Allah's peace be upon him) drew a line and said: "This is the way of your lord." Then he drew some lines to its right and some to its left and said: "These are many ways and all lead towards Satan." Then he recited the above verse.⁴¹

There are numerous verses in the Holy Quran (verses 1:7-8, 2: 112, 3: 101; 6 times in the Chapter 6; 7: 16, 16: 76, 36: 4, 46: 13 and 67: 22 and many more) where the term *al-sirat al-mustaqīm* and its other derivatives have been used to define the principle of *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl* and urge mankind to adopt this balanced way.

Al-Ḥaq: The literal meaning of the word is truthful, just, right, proper, truthfulness, righteousness, justness, propriety, consonance and conformity and its opposite is *bāṭil* (noun) and *buṭlān* (verb) which means untruthful, wrong, fallacious, falseness, refutation and vanity respectively.⁴²

Among many meanings mentioned by al-Asfahani, one of them is "any word or act which must be

appropriate and proper to the time, place and situation is called *al-haq* or on *al-haq*.⁴³

The word *al-haq* has been interpreted with different meanings at different places in the Holy Quran. They are, for example, (1) one of the names and attributes of Allah; al-An'ām, 6: 62, (2) The Holy Quran; al-Zukhruf, 43:29, (3) Islam; al-Isrā, 17: 81, (4) in the meaning of *al-'adl* (justice), al-Nūr, 24: 25, (5) *al-ṣidq* (truth and genuineness); al-An'ām, 6: 73, (6) straightness and what the wisdom demands; Al-M'uminūn, 23: 71.

Ibn Kathir, explaining the above verse 71 of al-M'uminūn, narrates that a person met the Prophet (peace be upon him) in some way and the Prophet called him towards Islam upon which he got angry. The Prophet asked him then: "What do you think if you are going on a wrong way in some uninhabited, desolated area and a person, whom you trust is truthful and very honest, guides you towards the right, straight and very clear path, would you follow him?" He replied, "Yes, definitely." The Prophet (peace be upon him) pleaded him, "Please, believe me then, I swear that you are on a wrong and very dangerous way than this worldly tough and narrow way. I call you towards the straight and right way, so follow me."⁴⁴

Al-Qasmi defines that *al-haq* is the midway between *al-ifrāt* (excess) and *al-tafrīt* (negligence) same as Islam is the moderate and balanced path between extremism and liberalism.⁴⁵

Sheikh al-Tantawi in his exegesis, *al-Tafsir al-Wasiṭ*, explains the verse, "And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know (it)."⁴⁶, that some hostile scholars of Bible used to change the meaning of verses in the Bible which attested to the prophet-hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and where they could not change or elucidate the verses with their ulterior motives, they used to omit them. The above mentioned verse directs this kind of Christian and Jewish scholars to not mix the truth with the falsehood. Because you might succeed in this wrong practice but you can't control the common sense of people which clearly supports the true and just message of Islam.⁴⁷

"Say, 'O People of the Book, exceed not the limits in the matter of your religion unjustly, nor follow the low desires of a people who went astray before and

³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, 1: 166.

³⁹ Al-Qasmi, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

⁴⁰ Al-Quran, 6 (Al-Ana'm): 153.

⁴¹ Al-Qasimi. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

⁴² Lisan al-Arab, v.s "Ḥaqaq".

⁴³ Al-Asfahani, 1: 126.

⁴⁴ Ibn Kathīr, 5: 484.

⁴⁵ Al-Qasmi, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.)

⁴⁶ Al-Quran, 2 (al-Baqarah): 42.

⁴⁷ Al-Tantawi, 1: 109.

caused many to go astray, and who have strayed away from the right path.”⁴⁸ This verse also speaks about the same matter and asserts people to not exaggerate in the religion and go astray by following the people who elucidate the religious texts with their ulterior motives to keep people away from Islam and thus choose the immoderate ways.

In the following verse, “They said: “O our people! Verily! We have heard a Book (this Qur’an) sent down after Musa (Moses), confirming what came before it, it guides to the truth (al-ḥaq) and to a Straight Path.”⁴⁹, the word *al-ḥaq* has been explained with *al-ṭarīq al-mustaqīm*.⁵⁰

Ibn Ashūr reflecting on the verse, “And the judging on that day will be just (al-ḥaq)”⁵¹, states that the word, *al-ḥaq*, here means justice and equality (*al-‘adl* and *al-taswiya*) and as such the verse means that on the Day of Judgment people will be given their due rewards equally and accordingly, no one will be upgraded or degraded unjustly, instead everything will be judged on the basis of proper justice and equality.⁵² Similar meaning has been illustrated in another verse with the word *al-qist*, “And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything.”⁵³ Al-Tabari and al-Qasmi share the same observation.⁵⁴

The word, *al-ḥaq* has occurred more than 200 times in the Holy Quran, most of the times it has been identified as synonymous with the concept of *al-qaṣd wa al-i‘tidāl*. It can also be said that it (the way of *al-ḥaq*) is not only a way but it is the goal of every believer to achieve it by following and practicing the principle of *al-qaṣd wa al-i‘tidāl*.

Qur’ānic Accounts Supporting the Concept

Apart from these words and terms of the Holy Quran and *hadith*, there are some other verses and traditions also which though do not contain any synonymous words to *al-qaṣd wa al-i‘tidāl* but they indeed fortify this very concept. For example:

About the Universe and whatever is in it, the Holy Quran reads “And the earth - We have spread it out wide, and placed on it mountains firm, and caused

[life] of every kind to grow on it in a balanced manner.”⁵⁵ Al-Qasimi writes that everything in the universe is balanced in number, weight, shape and in all other aspects. There is no architectural fault, disproportionate and inappropriateness in anything.⁵⁶ Al-Tantawi also reports the same.⁵⁷

The verses of the chapter 55, “And the skies has He raised high, and has devised [for all things] a measure, so that you [too, O men,] might never transgress the measure [of what is right].”⁵⁸, also talks about the same matter; the balance of the universe as al-Tantawi has quoted a *hadith*, “The skies and the earth have been established on justice and balance” which also supports the above interpretation.⁵⁹

Ibn Kathir commentating the verse 5 of 10 (Yūnus), asserts that all wonders of the universe have a specific and wise purpose of creation.⁶⁰ The sun, the moon and their rotations all are designed under a specific and certain system which has no disorder or mismanagement.⁶¹ Thus the universe and its creations all are based on the principle of *al-qaṣd wa al-i‘tidāl*. These all divine commandments and religious fundamentals call human being to reside a modest lifestyle in coherence with the moderate and balanced code of life; the system of Islam.

Creation of Human Being: Even the creation of human being himself is based on moderation and balance. Allah Almighty says, “Verily, We create man in the best conformation.”⁶²

Ibn Kathir explains the term *aḥsan al-taqwīm* (best confrontation) as all the appropriate and balanced qualities, physical as well as mental, corresponding to the functions which this particular creature is meant to perform.⁶³ According to Mohd Asad, “The concept of ‘the best conformation’ is related to the *Qur’anic* statement that everything which God creates, including the human being or self (*nafs*), is formed in

⁴⁸ Al-Quran, 5 (al-Maida): 77.

⁴⁹ Al-Quran, 46 (al-Aḥqāf): 30.

⁵⁰ Al-Tabari, 22: 140.

⁵¹ Al-Quran, 7 (al-A‘rāf): 8.

⁵² Ibn Ashur (1997), 8: 30

⁵³ Al-Quran, 21 (al-Anbiya): 47.

⁵⁴ Al-Tabari, 12: 309; al-Qasmi. (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.).

⁵⁵ Al-Quran, 15 (al-Hajr): 19.

⁵⁶ Al-Qasmi, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.).

⁵⁷ Muhamma Sayyid Al-Tantawi, *al-Tafsir al-Wasīṭ*, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.), 8: 30.

⁵⁸ Al-Quran, 55 (al-Reḥmān): 7-8.

⁵⁹ Al-Tantawi, 14: 131.

⁶⁰ Ibn Kathīr, 4: 248.

⁶¹ Ibn Kathīr, 3: 304.

⁶² Al-Quran, 95 (al-Ṭīn): 5.

⁶³ Ibn Kathīr, 8: 435.

accordance with what it is meant to be.”⁶⁴ Al-Tabari also concluded with the same meaning.⁶⁵

Mawlana Mawdudi has come with a unique explanation. He writes that since the most sublime model of the excellencies and unique merits of mankind’s are the prophets, an oath has been sworn by the places associated with the prophets of Allah to bear testimony to man’s having been created in a most balanced and finest models.⁶⁶

The Balance between Worldly Life and the Life Hereafter: The teachings about how to live in this world is also based on *al-qaṣd wa al-i’tidāl*. Islam never encourages human being to live a very ascetic life denouncing all comfort and good things Allah has bestowed him, nor does Islam allow a person to be overly materialistic to the extent of forgetting his Creator and the rights of fellow creatures. Islam teaches humans a moderate and balanced way of life where they enjoy both the worldly affairs and the religious duties in equilibrium. The Holy Quran instructs, “*And seek the abode of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has given thee, and forget not thy portion of the world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to thee, and seek not to make mischief in the land. Surely Allah loves not the mischief-makers.*”⁶⁷ According to Mohd Asad, “and forget not’... etc., is a call to generosity and, at the same time, to moderation.”⁶⁸

The verse of al-Baqarah “*Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the Fire.*”⁶⁹, also talks about the balance and moderation in both lives.

Mohd Asad, referring to the verses, 31-32 of 7 (al-A’rāf), comments that by declaring that all good and beautiful things of life - i.e., those which are not expressly prohibited - are lawful to the believers, the Qur’an condemns, by implication, all forms of life-denying asceticism, world-renunciation and self-mortification.⁷⁰

The prophetic traditions also discourage asceticism and advocate moderation in all matters of life. **Al-Tabrani narrates that Uthman bin Maz’ūn (may Allah be pleased with him) once asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): “O Prophet of Allah, please**

permit me to undergo castration (ikhtisa’) to eliminate sexual desire”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him, “O Uthman! Verily Allah has changed the life of asceticism to a way of life (Hanif religion) which is easy.”⁷¹

The Acts of Worship: While performing acts of worship a believer is commanded to adhere to moderation. The verses, 9-10 of 62 (*al-Jum’ah*) is the best example in this line.

Islam doesn’t approve people to overburden their selves in worship and adopt hardship in religious rituals. “*Allah does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear.*”⁷² For example, prayer (*ṣalāh*) is an obligation upon all believers but its performance and requirements are adjustable, and certainly not nullified, to a certain extent keeping in consideration the best caliber of the individual's ability. A sick person/ disabled can perform standing, if not possible, then sitting, if not then laying down because Islam is not intended to cause difficulty or unnecessary inconvenience. Hadrat Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that once the Prophet (peace be upon him) entered (the mosque) and saw a rope hanging in between its two pillars. He asked, “What is this rope?” The people replied, “This rope is for Zainab, when she feels tired, she holds it [to keep standing in the *ṣalāh*].” The Prophet said, “No. Remove it. You should offer *ṣalāh* (prayer) as long as you feel active, and when you get tired, sit down.”⁷³

Imam Muslim reports that Jaber Bin Samurah (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “I used to observe prayer with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his prayer was of a moderate length and his sermon too was moderate in length.”⁷⁴

Balance in Economic Consumption: Islam teaches human beings the middle course in expenditure and urges them to be moderate in spending too. It is evident that the term *Iqtisād* (derived from *al-qaṣd*) which is the Arabic word for the science of economics, essentially signifies moderation in spending as opposed to either way extravagance or niggardliness.

⁶⁴ Mohd Asad, The Message of Quran, 1291

(www.islamicbulletin.org).

⁶⁵ Al-Tabari, 24: 597.

⁶⁶ Mawdūdi, 6: 387.

⁶⁷ Al-Quran, 28 (al-Qaṣaṣ): 77.

⁶⁸ Mohd Asad, 820.

⁶⁹ Al-Quran, 2 (al-Baqarah): 201.

⁷⁰ Mohd Asad, 287.

⁷¹ Abu al-Qasim Al-Tabrani, (Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61), 5: 311.

⁷² Al-Quran, 2 (al-Baqarah): 286.

⁷³ Muḥammad ibn Ismā’īl al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, eds. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), 1: 386, [1099]. Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.

⁷⁴ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj al-Qushairī al-Nīshāpurī, *Saḥīḥ al-Muslim*, edis. Muḥammad Fuwād ‘Abdul Bāqī (Beirut: Dar Iḥyā al-Turās al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 1: 472, [681]. Al-Maktabāh al-Shāmilāh, V. 3.61.

It could be further understood from following accounts from the Holy Quran and *Sunnah*. The verse of the Quran, “*And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependants], or even destitute.*”⁷⁵, teaches believers to be moderate in spending.

According to Mawdudi, if verses 27 and 29 of the above chapter are read together, it becomes obvious that the Quran instructs the people to pursue the golden mean; i.e. they should neither be so cost-conscious as to prevent the circulation of wealth nor so extravagant as to destroy their own economy. On the contrary, they should learn to behave in a balanced manner so that they should spend money where it should be spent and refrain from becoming spendthrifts so as to avoid getting into trouble.⁷⁶

“*And who, whenever they spend on others, are neither wasteful nor niggardly but [remember that] there is always a just mean between those [two extremes].*”⁷⁷

This is another wonderful verse. It teaches that *Ibād al-Reḥmān* (the servants of the Most Gracious) are who adopt moderate way and spend some (wealth) in good causes, and keep at least some necessary amount for one’s needs. As such it is not desirable in Islam to go to the extreme of spending everything even if one is giving in charity, nor is desirable to go to the opposite extreme of keeping everything (on account of stinginess).

Ibn Kathir reports a *hadith* from Hadrat Ibn Masud (may Allah be pleased with him) that “One who is moderate (in spending) shall not be afflicted with penury.”⁷⁸

Moderation in Personal Conduct and Behavior: It is always good in personal conduct also to follow a balanced course and moderate way. Instructing Muslims on the best way of behavior and personal conduct, Quran says: “*And be moderate in your walking, and lower your voice.*”⁷⁹

The verse means, walk in a moderate manner, neither slow and lazy nor excessively fast, but be moderate, somewhere in between these two extremes and do not exaggerate in speaking and raises your voice unnecessarily.⁸⁰

Another Quranic verse which further concretizes the claim of moderation in personal conduct is, “*For [true] servants of the Most Gracious are [only] they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with [words of] peace.*”⁸¹

Hawna in the verse means serenity and dignity, as the Messenger of Allah said: “When you come to the prayer, do not come rushing in haste. Come calmly and with tranquility, and whatever you catch up with, pray, and whatever you miss, make it up.”⁸² The second part of the verse means that when ignorant people talk to them with harsh words, they do not respond with the same, rather they overlook, and say only good and moderate words. Ibn Kathir reminds that this is what the Messenger of Allah did: the more ignorant the people, the more patient he would be.⁸³

Bukhari has recorded a narration from Hadrat `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that a group of Jews asked permission to visit the Prophet (and when they were admitted) they said, “*As-Samu `Alaika* (death be upon you).” I said (to them), “Nay! Death and the curse of Allah be upon you!” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “O `Aishah! Allah is Kind and Lenient and likes that one should be kind and lenient in all matters.” I said, “Haven't you heard what they said?” He replied, “I said (to them), ‘*Wa `Alaikum* (and upon you).’”⁸⁴

Similarly, Muslim also reports from Hadrat `Aishah (with some extra words) that the Messenger of Allah said: “O `Aishah! Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness, and He rewards for gentleness what He does not reward for harshness or for anything else.”⁸⁵

These are some accounts from the Holy Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that develop precisely *al-qaṣd wa al-i`tidāl*, into a theme and genre in the epistemological discourses and state clearly its essentiality and significance for a believer to adopt moderation in all walks of life.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, it could be said that the concept of *al-qaṣd wa al-i`tidāl* is the clear reflection of the Quran and *ḥadīth*. It is physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual and it is at once a philosophy and a way of life. It is because of this that for many scholars as well as for Sheikh Ibn Usaimen and

⁷⁵ Al-Quran, 17 (al-Isra): 29.

⁷⁶ Mawdūdi, 2:611.

⁷⁷ Al-Quran, 25 (al-Furqan): 67.

⁷⁸ Ibn Kathir, 1: 124.

⁷⁹ Al-Quran, 31 (Luqman): 18.

⁸⁰ Ibn Kathir, 6: 338-339.

⁸¹ Al-Quran, 25 (al-Furqan): 63.

⁸² Ibn Kathir, 6: 122.

⁸³ ibid, 6: 122.

⁸⁴ Al-Bukhari, 6: 2549, [6528].

⁸⁵ Muslim, 4: 2003, [2593].

Abdul Rehman al-S'adī, it is nothing but the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.⁸⁶

Nowadays when religious extremism has been emerged as one of the biggest challenges the World is facing and as such advancement and propagation of this Quranic notion is the call of the time to confront the monsters of religious extremism and radicalism. Though some Muslim scholars and institutions have started the process but these efforts are very less or nothing when we see how big the challenge is. Therefore, it is needed that many national and international institutions and platforms must be utilized for the advancement of *al-qaṣd wa al-i'tidāl* which facilitate project-based works, including high caliber research on well-identified issues in this field, exchange specialists and scholars through study visits, seminars, and interactive engagements and training mosque *imāms* and *khatībs* to promote the word of peace and moderation and avoid any sectarian view which might divide the *Ummah*. This and many other initiatives could be taken to advance this Qur'anic principle to tackle the current challenges the *Ummah*.

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⁸⁶ Abdul Reḥmān ibn Nasir al-Sa'dī, *al-Qawa'id al-Ḥassān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, V.3.61), 68.