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## The Concept of Wasatiyyah in Governing the Muslim Community of Singapore

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**Abstract:** Wasatiyyah is the original nature of Islam, therefore Allah calls Muslims as ummatan wasatan. The principle of wasatiyyah is the reason why Islamic sharia can be relevant to be practiced anywhere and at all times, including in secular countries such as Singapore. This article discusses the concept of wasatiyyah implemented by MUIS and related institutions in governing the Muslim community in Singapore. The research method in this article is qualitative with a literature review approach. The collected data was analyzed using the opinion of scholars or experts in the field of sharia law. From the results of this study, the author concludes that in governing the Muslim community of Singapore, MUIS and related institutions have adopted the concept of wasatiyyah.

**Keywords:** Wasatiyyah, Muslim community, Islamic institutions, Singapore

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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic sharia is a law that is flexible, and not rigid. Thus, it can be implemented anywhere and in accordance with the development of the times. This is because Islamic sharia has an original nature, namely the nature of wasatiyyah or moderate. Without the nature of wasatiyyah, it is impossible for Islamic sharia to be implemented properly. Instead, it will only be a rigid and narrow law or otherwise too soft and loose.

The implementation of sharia in Singapore is a clear example, that when sharia is implemented with the concept of wasatiyyah then it can be implemented well even in a secular country where the Muslim population is a minority. As many know, Singapore is a country with a multi-ethnic population, its government adopts a secular and capitalist system (Hussin Mutalib, 2015). In general, the government took a hands-off approach to religion, while giving freedom to religious activities by all faiths implemented with minimal intervention (Hussin Mutalib, 2015).

This article discusses the concept of wasatiyyah implemented by MUIS and related institutions such as the Syariah Court, Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM), Asatizah Recognitions Scheme (ARS), Joint Madrasah System, and Wakaf Administration in administering the Muslim community in Singapore.

### METHODOLOGY

The research methodology in writing this article is a qualitative research with the form of literature review. Data were obtained through reading books and articles on the administration of the affairs of the Muslim community of Singapore by MUIS and other institutions. Furthermore, to analyze the data, in order to ascertain whether the administration has met the characteristics of wasatiyyah or not, the author refers to the views of scholars either personally or in the form of institutional agreement, such as scholars' muktamar discussing the concept of wasatiyyah.

### The concept of Wasatiyyah

Linguistically wasatiyyah comes from the word wasat which means middle as the word of Allah in surah al-Baqarah verse 143; "That is how We made you a wasat (middle) nation that you may be a witness for mankind and that the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad s.a.w) may be a witness for you". Furthermore,

according to the scholars the tafsir of the meaning of wasat from the perspective of 'urf of the Arab society does not only mean the middle. Wasat also contains the meaning of fair and the best (Ibnu Katsir, 1998).

There are various explanations by scholars about the concept of wasatiyyah in terms of terminology. One of them is as formulated by the scholars' conference in Bogor on May 26, 2018. They agreed on seven conceptual points, namely; 1) tawassut (middle), 2) i'tidāl (being fair), 3) tasammuh (tolerance), 4) shūra (deliberation), 5) islāh (seeking improvement). 6) qudwah (setting an example of goodness), 7) muwatanah (acknowledging the sovereignty of the state).

### **AMLA and the Institutions of Governing the Affairs of the Muslim Community of Singapore Mentioned Therein**

In terms of law enforcement in Singapore, Muslims in the country occupy a unique position. In addition to having the same position as other citizens in the constitution, pursuant to article 12 (1), in Singapore's lower court system, they also have exceptions in certain matters pertaining to personal problems. They have the right to seek settlement through the Islamic court system operated by the Syariah Court under a special law known as the Administration of Muslim Law Act or abbreviated as AMLA. (Noor Aisha dan Azhar Ibrahim, 2017). AMLA is a replacement to the previous law called the 'Muslim and Hindu Edowmen Body' passed in 1960 by the British government (Hussin Mutalib, 2015).

The existence of AMLA is a proof that, although Singapore is not an 'Islamic State', the Muslim community in this country does indeed have a distinctive sharia law, despite all its limitations. The content of AMLA has become a clear guideline for the Muslim community in Singapore in practicing its religious demands.

The position of AMLA as a special law that governs matters relating to the affairs of the Muslim community of Singapore, not just regulating the implementation of sharia alone. AMLA also serves as the legal basis for the establishment of governing bodies for the affairs of the Muslim community, namely; MUIS, Syariah Court, Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM) and Asatizah Recognitions Scheme.

### **Wasatiyyah Concept in the Administration of the Muslim Community in Singapore**

#### **The Concept of Wasatiyyah in the Administration of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS)**

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) was established in 1968 at the same time as the ratification of the AMLA itself. There are six main functions of MUIS, namely: i) To advise the President of Singapore on the affairs of the Muslim community in Singapore. ii) Manage halal certification. iii) Waqf management. iv) Manage the collection of zakat and fitrah and other charitable contributions to support and promote the religion of Islam or for the benefit of Muslims permitted by law. v) The administration of Madrasahs and Islamic education, carrying out other functions and duties as may be entrusted to the Majlis or under this act or any written law. vi) Construction and administration of mosques, development and management. In addition, MUIS is also responsible for the issuance of fatwas, the writing of Friday sermons and sermons, as well as the provision of financial assistance to the poor and needy Muslims.

The AMLA states that MUIS is a statutory institution of the Singapore government. MUIS is under the Ministry of Community, Youth and Social (MCYS), while in its operation it is under the control of the Ministry in-charge of Muslim Affairs.

To ensure that the Muslim community in Singapore practices moderation or wasatiyyah in religion, MUIS has formulated guidelines named 10 Characteristics of an Excellent Muslim Community, namely: 1) Adhere to Islamic principles and be able to adapt to changing contexts. 2) Appreciate the history and civilization of Islam and be able to understand current issues. 3) Appreciate other civilizations, confident to interact and willing to learn from other societies. 4) Has high morals and intact spiritual nature, able to overcome the challenges of modern society. 5) Progressive, practicing Islam is more than just a ritual and can adapt to the currents of modernization. 6) Able to adapt as a group that contributes in a multi-religious society and secular country. 7) Do not isolate themselves and accept a plural life without ignoring principles and values. 8) Believe that good Muslims are good citizens. 9) Bring prosperity to all and promote universal values and principles. 10) Be an example or inspiration for all.

#### **The concept of Wasatiyyah in the Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM) Singapore**

Despite living in a secular country, the Muslim community of Singapore enjoys the facilities provided to them by the government, in carrying out their practices and beliefs as adherents of Islam. Among them is, when they get married, they can register their marriage in the Muslim Marriage office or known as the ROMM. This exception can be referred to as a form of privilege for them, because even if they are a minority, they can still perform their marriage according to the provisions of sharia. In the implementation, they get married in front of a Kadi or Deputy Kadi who serves as the marriage registrar representing the ROMM. This matter is regulated in AMLA section 102 subsection 1.

Initially, the ROMM was a body ratified in law in 1880 under the Mohammedan Marriage Ordinances under the authority of the Governor of the settlement of the straits, which is a law with respect to marriage and divorce. The law was ratified in 1880 and named Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance V. In 1894 it was changed to Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance Amendment Ordinance XIII. Then in 1902 it was changed to Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance 1880 Amendment Ordinance 1902 XXXIV.

Furthermore, in 1957 the government of Singapore (then still under British colonial rule) formed a special committee that abolished Mohammedan Marriage Ordinances then introduce Muslim Ordinance. Furthermore, in 1966 Muslim Ordinance also repealed, and replaced with Chapter: 3 Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA). In 1978 the Muslim Marriage Administration was changed to the Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM).

AMLA in clause 6 specially regulates marriage and divorce matters, from section 89 to section 125. This law only regulates the implementation of marriage and divorce if the married couple are fellow Muslims. However, in section 89 there are the words "both parties or one of the parties". This means that at that time, interfaith marriages were recognized, that is, marriages between Muslim men and women of the Book (Jews or Christian).

In accordance with the provisions of the Syafi'i school of jurisprudence, the marriage can only be performed after the consent of the bride's guardian. However, if without reasonable reason the wali refuses to give consent then in section 95 it is stated that the marriage can still be performed by the kadi (as wali hakim) after first the kadi or vice kadi ensures that the conditions of marriage have been met.

The concept of wasatiyyah practiced by ROMM can be seen from the implementation of marriage law. As stipulated in the AMLA, marriage law in Singapore is conducted according to the Syafi'i school, but in certain cases the opinions of other schools are also taken into account, if the opinion of the school is considered more aslah (more beneficial).

### **The concept of Wasatiyyah in the administration of the Syariah Court**

Section 34 of AMLA regulates the establishment of the Syariah Court which is its opening states: "The President of Singapore may by notification in the Gazette establish a Syariah Court for the country of Singapore (in this section referred to as the Court)." Further, matters relating to the Syariah Court are regulated in sections 34 to 65B.

Initially the Syariah Court was ratified through The Muslim Ordinance 1957, began operations on 25 November 1958. At that time, the Syariah Court together with the Muslim Marriage Registration Administration (ROMM) was still based in the same place, namely a bungalow house located in Fort Canning Park. In July 1968, The Muslim Ordinance 1957 was replaced by an Act renamed the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA). The Act separates the functions and powers of the three most important Muslim institutions, namely; MUIS, ROMM and Syariah Court. The Act was further developed in 1999 and 2009. In 1999 the AMLA was enacted to strengthen the powers of the Syariah Courts and more resources were channeled to the Courts to facilitate the resolution of deadlocked cases.

In 2009 the AMLA was amended again to make it easier for the Muslim community to comply with Syariah Court orders. Syariah Court orders no longer need to be registered in the District Court before being enforced. Each individual has the right to make a complaint to the Magistrate in the Regional Court to reject the order of the Syariah Court (Ahmad Nizam, 2012).

The jurisdiction of the Syariah Court is mentioned in section 35, namely: i) marriage, ii) divorce which in Islam is known as fasakh, taklik divorce, khulu 'and talak, iii) engagement or annulment of marriage, iv) disposal or division of property due to divorce or annulment of marriage, v) payment of dowry, remittances, alimony and consolation or mut'aah.

The concept of wasatiyyah practiced in the determination of the law by the Syariah Court can see the implementation of divorce law. As stipulated in the AMLA, divorce in Singapore is also carried out according to the rules or laws of Syafi'i school of jurisprudence, but as explained earlier that in certain cases the opinions of other schools are also taken into account, if the opinion of the school is considered aslah (more beneficial).

### **The Concept of Wasatiyyah in the Asatizah Accreditation Body (ARB)**

In Singapore, every individual who teaches the teachings of Islam (ustaz/ustazah) is required to have a tauliah. This accreditation came into force in 2017. Nevertheless, It was first lectured in the 1990s by established ulama in Singapore who are affiliated to the Singapore Association of Islamic Religious Scholars and Teachers (PERGAS), then this discourse is proposed to MUIS so that it can be followed up. In 2004, MUIS formed an institution called the Asatizah Recognition Board (ARB) and appointed Ustaz Ali bin Hj Mohamed as its chairman and based in PERGAS. ARB is made up of established asatizahs appointed by MUIS, they serve for three years (MUIS, 2017).

The following year ARS was introduced, and voluntary registration was opened, which was followed up with ongoing evaluations and refinements. In September 2016, the Minister Responsible for the Affairs of the Muslim Community Yaacob Ibrahim declared that as of 01 January 2017 the ARS will be mandated (made a mandatory law) regulated in the AMLA. Thus, the *asatizah* (*ustaz-ustazah*) or presenters of religious knowledge in Singapore must have a *tauliah* (ARS certificate).

The mandatory of the ARS was finally ratified in the 24th amendment of the AMLA and ratified on 1 June 2016, in clause 5, section 87, subsection 5: The Majlis shall have power to order any person employed or to be employed as a teacher at any private religious school to submit to a test conducted by a board appointed by the Majlis.

The sentence is further strengthened by the threat of sanctions/punishment for those who are legally found to have violated the law of accreditation *asatizah*. Clause 9 which discusses the offenses of section 139 states that anyone found teaching to hold a festival in respect of the religion of Islam is liable to a fine not exceeding \$ 2000 or imprisonment for 12 months, or both.

Thus, the *asatizah* (*ustaz-ustazah*) or presenters of religious knowledge in Singapore must have a *tauliah* (ARS certificate). Through its official website, MUIS also stressed that the recognition of *asatizah* is not a policy that aims to restrict or control the movement or *dakwah* activities of *asatizah* in Singapore. On the other hand, recognition is a policy that aims to elevate the position of the *asatizah* and serves as a reliable source of reference for Muslims in Singapore. Recognition is only given to *asatizahs* who meet the minimum qualification standards set by the ARB (Muis, 2017).

In an interview with The Straits Times (January 20, 2020), the then National Mufti of Singapore Dr. Fatris Bakaram, stated that the *asatizah* here play an important role in making the Singapore Muslim community able to understand some of the difficult decisions made by MUIS.

### **The Concept of Wasatiyyah in the MUIS Fatwa Committee**

In the context of Singapore, a Mufti is appointed pursuant to the provisions of Section 30, Administration of Islamic Law Act (AMLA, 2009) which came into force in 1968. Prior to that, fatwas in Singapore were fatwas from a Singapore Chief Kadi, a local religious teacher or fatwas issued by the Johor National Mufti. (MUIS, 2017). In 1999, MUIS established a department called the Office of the Mufti, which aimed to assist the Mufti in religious matters, including public education programs, studies, as well as duties as secretariat to the Fatwa Committee.

In addition to deciding fatwas, sometimes the Fatwa Committee also issues *irsyads*, which are religious guidances. *Irsyad* was made by the MUIS Fatwa Committee to provide guidance to the Muslim community in Singapore on issues that are considered necessary. This is stated by MUIS (2020) in its website; *Irsyad* is a religious guidance issued by the Office of the Mufti. This *irsyad* aims to address various issues related to Islamic practices and perspectives on current development.

Sections 30 to 33 of the AMLA, provide for the appointment of the National Mufti, his jurisdiction, the Fatwa Committee and how the handling of fatwas as well as the flow of *fiqh* schools that are held. Pursuant to this act, the Mufti is officially appointed by the President of the Republic of Singapore and his appointment is declared in the Government Gazette. The Mufti is also *ex-officio* (member) in the membership of the MUIS Supreme Council and remains a Council Member until his retirement. The basic duties of the Mufti of Singapore include: 1) To chair the Fatwa Committee as determined by section 30-33 (AMLA). 2) Provide advice in the field of religion to the MUIS Supreme Council or other MUIS Committees. 3) Acting with the President and Secretary of MUIS in making immediate (sudden) decisions in times of emergency. 4) Declaring the beginning of the month of Ramadan and *Aidil Adha*. 5) Responsible for the Friday sermons and the second Hari Raya sermon issued by MUIS. 6) Test and approve the appointment of imams/*bilal-bilal* in mosques throughout Singapore. 7) Be a religious advisor in a matter that may arise from time to time.

The MUIS fatwa discussion process is based on the process of *ijtihad* which is in line with the tradition discussed by *ushūl* scholars, the main ones of which are argue with the legal basis of the *Syafi'i* school, namely; *al-Qur'an*, *al-Sunnah*, *al-Ijmā'*, *al-Qiyās*. This is as regulated in AMLA section 33.

However, the MUIS Fatwa Committee also uses the methods of narration commonly used by sects other than the *Syafi'i* sect, such as; *al-istihsān*, *al-istishāb*, *madzhab sahāba*, *sadd al-dhari'ā*, *al-'urf* dan *al-masālih al-mursala*. This matter has also become a stipulation in section 33 subsection 2.

It can therefore be stated that in *istinbath* (prescribing) the law the Fatwa Committee of MUI uses the concept of *taysir* (simplify). This is because, although it basically adheres to the views of the *Syafi'i* school, but still appreciates the views of other schools, and even takes into account the views of other schools if it is felt that the views of the *Syafi'i* school can not be used to answer the fatwa question that is facing.

Each fatwa issued by the MUIS Fatwa Committee is a *jama'i* (collective) fatwa and not *fardi* (alone), all fatwas are issued on the unanimous basis of all members of the Fatwa Committee who form the quorum for the discussion of the fatwas. If no agreement is reached on the law of a problem raised, then a fatwa on it cannot be issued (MUIS, 2017).

Instead, the matter will be referred to the MUIS Supreme Council which will discuss it and consider whether to issue an answer on it or not. If the Supreme Council decides to issue such an answer, it is considered a general guide (Irsyad) and not a fatwa (MUIS, 2017).

Based on the need, the Fatwa Committee will also invite experts in a particular field such as those related to science, in particular life sciences, medicine, economics and finance. The purpose is to provide an explanation that aims to help the members of the Fatwa Committee to better understand the issues faced (MUIS, 2017).

The decision of the fatwa through this jama'ī (collective) approach is in addition to following the guidance of Allah in the Qur'an (surah Ali Imran verse 159), it also strengthens the guarantee of its truth, as the meaning of the hadith of the Prophet s.a.w: Verily Allah will not gather my people or the people of Muhammad s.a.w in error, and the help of Allah upon the congregation (togetherness) and whoever is alone then he goes to hell. Furthermore, Imam al-Tirmidhi (1998) in his explanation of the hadith, he said that what is meant by al-Jamā'ah in the words of the Prophet s.a.w is (the agreement) of the scholars; jurists, scholars and hadith scholars.

The approach often taken by the MUIS Fatwa Committee in determining the law is to choose the easier one after seeing the strength of the argument and its dilālah, and get the consent of all members of the Fatwa Committee. This is to ensure that the fatwa issued really helps to solve the problem, so that the community does not bear the inconvenience or burden due to the law that is difficult and impractical to implement. (MUIS, 2017).

Simplifying and not making it difficult are among the fundamental principles in Islamic sharia, based on the word of God: And Allah has not made it difficult for you in the matter of religion, (Islam is) the religion of your father (Prophet) Ibrahim. QS. Al-Hājj: 78. Similarly, it is also in accordance with the meaning of the message of the Prophet s.a.w in al-Hadith: "Make it easy and do not make it difficult" (HR. Al-Bukhari).

Among the approaches taken by the MUIS Fatwa Committee is also in accordance with the sound method of fiqh; al-Masyaqqah tajlibu al-taysīr (al-Suyuthi, 2009), which means; Difficulty attracting convenience. Thus, the stance of the MUIS Fatwa Committee in deciding a fatwa is in line with the spirit of Islamic Shariah, which is to facilitate and not difficult.

The AMLA stipulates that every fatwa issued must first be guided by the Syafi'i school. However, if the opinion of the authoritative in the Syafi'i school is found not or less meet the needs and achieve maslahah, then the opinions of other schools of jurisprudence can be taken into account and applied (MUIS, 2017). For example, the basic legal principles of the Syafi'i school are only four, namely; al-Qur'an, al-Sunnah, al-Ijmā' and al-Qiyās, imam al-Syafi'i is known to reject istidlāl (argumentative) using the method of istihsān. In fact, in the book of al-Umm, Imam Syafi'i (1990) writes a special discussion of rejecting istihsān, he gives the title; Kitābu Ibtālī al-Istihsān or book on the void of Istihsān. However, as stated earlier, in issuing fatwas, the MUIS Fatwa Committee also uses other methods such as; al-istihsān, al-istishāb, mazhab sahāba, sadd al-dzari'ā, al-'urf dan al-masālih al-mursala (MUIS, 2017).

This is a proof, although formally (as stated in the AMLA) MUIS adheres to the Syafi'i school, but with the attitude of tasammuh, MUIS also adopts the method of istinbath the law outside of what is commonly used in the Syafi'i school (MUIS, 2017). This attitude of MUIS is in line with the hadith of the words of the Prophet s.a.w: The religion that God loves the most is the one that is "hanafiyah" (upright) but with tasammuh (tolerant). (HR. Al-Bukhari: 1/16).

### **The concept of Wasatiyyah in the Administration of Wakaf**

Wakaf activities in Singapore have been recorded since 1820. According to the facts stated by MUIS, the first wakaf registered was in the form of a mosque, which is now known as the Omar Mosque located in Kampung Melaka. The wakaf was a donation from Sheikh Omar Ali Aljuneid, a merchant of Yemeni descent from Indonesia. He has also endowed a mosque located on Bencoolen Street, along with several properties located in the vicinity. Furthermore, wakaf in Singapore continues to grow until its assets currently amount to 156 wakaf assets in the form of real estate worth \$ 769 million. (Warees, 2021).

MUIS is the only body entrusted by the AMLA to administer wakaf in Singapore. In section 58, subsection 2 states that: Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in any written law or in any instrument or declaration creating, governing or affecting the same, the Majlis shall administer all wakaf, whether wakaf 'am or wakaf khas, all nazar am, and all trusts of every description creating any charitable trust for the support and promotion of the Muslim religion or for the benefit of Muslims in accordance with the Musim law to the extent of any property affected thereby and situate in Singapore.

As an entrusted body, MUIS's efficiency in administering wakaf is so obvious that it has gained international recognition. For example, in 2006, MUIS received the "Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum" award from the Sultan of Dubai, for its success in using the concept of sukuk or Islamic bonds to finance the development of wakaf in Singapore. (Berita Harian, 2006). In addition, MUIS efficiency in managing wakaf has resulted in it being given ISO 9001 recognition.

Among the reasons for the success of wakaf administration in Singapore is the existence of the concept of wasatiyyah in wakaf administration in Singapore. The practice is, MUIS takes into account the views of other schools of thought outside the Syafi'i school, if it is found that the views of other schools are closer to

masalah. For example, in the provisions of the Syafi'i school, wakaf is only allowed in the form of immovable objects such as land, buildings and others. However, in the view of the Hanafi school, wakaf is required in the form of manqūl (movable objects) including money. So MUIS as the wakaf administrator in Singapore considers that nuqūd is permissible if the utilization of money as ra'sul māl (capital) does not make it ithlāf (exhausted).

In Singapore, wakaf nuqūd has been practiced but it is still limited to finance the Islamic religious education of qualified students, it is referred to as Wakaf Ilmu. In this type of wakaf (Wakaf Ilmu), all donations from the community and from Baitulmāl are used as capital for investment. Furthermore, the proceeds from this Wakaf Ilmu investment are then distributed and used to fund local Islamic education.

### **Wasatiyyah in the Administration of Islamic Religious Education (Madrasah)**

Madrasahs in Singapore have existed much earlier than the establishment of this republic. The first madrasah to be established was the al-Sibyān madrasah founded in 1905 by a scholar from Indonesia, located on Bussoroh Street Kampung Glam. In 1908 an immigrant from Egypt named Othman Affandi Ra'fat founded the Madrasa al-Iqbal al-Islamiyah which combined the Islamic education system with the Western system.

Madrasah al-Iqbal in addition to teaching religious subjects also teaches academic subjects such as mathematics, geography, history and engineering. Prior to that, madrasahs only taught tahfīz (memorize) al-Qur'an. Due to financial problems and the lack of interest of the Muslim community in Singapore who at that time still could not accept the concept of 'Western education', then madrasah al-Iqbal was forced to close its operations in Singapore and move to Riau Indonesia (Mohamed Fairuz Bin Ahmad, 2010).

In 1912, Syed Mohamed bin Ahmed bin Abdul Rahman Alsagoff founded the Alsagoff madrasah, initially the madrasah was located in his house, which is in Java Road, because many students registered, then then moved to its current location, which is in Jalan Sultan. In 1927 the madrasah al-Juneid was established. As for the Ma'arif madrasah established in 1936 by Sheikh Muhammad Fadlullah Suhaimi, it became the first madrasah to accept only female students. Currently, the Alsagoff madrasah is also only reserved for female students.

Furthermore, the passion for madrasah development resurfaced in the 1960s, culminating in 1966 with about 26 madrasahs. However, over time, of the 26 madrasahs that are able to survive only 6, that is: 1) Madrasa Al-Sagaff. 2) Madrasa Al-'Arabiyah. 3) Madrasa Al-Juneid, 4) Madrasa Al-Ma'arif, 5) Madrasa aAl-Irsyad, and 6) Madrasa Wak Tanjung.

In the matter of madrasahs, there was a polemic between the government and the Muslim community of Singapore. For part of Singapore's Muslim community; Madrasah is the solution they need to ensure that their sons and daughters get adequate religious education. On the same time, with the school in the madrasah, the female students from an early age have been able to practice wearing the hijab, an impossible thing to do if they attended a national school.

On the other hand, the Singapore government views madrasahs as 'problematic' educational institutions. In their opinion, madrasahs will produce graduates who have limited abilities or skills only in religious knowledge. Meanwhile, as a small country that does not have natural resources, Singapore is highly dependent on the ability of human resources that have skills. The existence of a madrasah that is reserved only for Muslim students, as well as its curriculum based on Islamic religious knowledge, has made the madrasah an object of attention and criticism.

The problem becomes even more serious when associated with the fact that employment in the religious field is very limited. This is because the Malay/Muslim Singaporeans are a minority. In a speech on Labor Day on May 2, 2002, Goh Chok Tong as Prime Minister stated: Issue not about madrasah's future, but the future of Muslim children ... 'Do you want them to grow up all being religious teachers and religious preachers, or do you want them to be trained in IT, to be engineers, doctors, architects, professionals? If the madrasahs were training 100 or 200 students a year, I think we can live with that. But if you are training 400, 500, 1000, 2000 in full-time madrasahs or in full-time religious education supplemented by some secular subjects, what will be the future of the Malay community? ... I cannot say, however, that some madrasahs may not close because we want to have standards.

Furthermore, following up on the government's concerns above, MUIS in 2008 introduced a policy called the Joint Madrasah System (JMS). However, this policy can only be implemented in 2009, by involving three madrasahs, namely; madrasa al-Juneid, madrasa al-Arabiyah, and madrasa al-Irsyad. With this policy, only al-Irsyad madrasa is allowed to accept students at the primary school level. While madrasa al-Juneid and madrasa al-Arabiyah is only allowed to accept students at the secondary school level. With the division of specialization, madrasa al-Juneid focuses on ukhrawi education, while madrasa al-Arabiah focuses on secular education.

MUIS 'move to merge madrasahs into JMS to resolve the polemic between the government's concern over the fate of madrasah graduates and the concern of the Singapore Muslim community that madrasahs will be closed, is a policy that meets the characteristics of wasatiyyah, that is, be fair in an effort to eliminate the concerns of both parties and prioritize islah (goodness). Thus, it can be hoped that the madrasa graduation has sufficient



supply, whether in the academic field including the skills required in the field of employment, or in the field of ukhrawi.

### Summary

From the analysis of the study in this chapter, the researcher found that although Singapore is not an Islamic country, and its Muslim community is a minority, but almost all sharia demands [in a broad sense, such as the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam] have been practiced without any hindrance from the government. Even if there are restrictions in some areas, but that is not a fundamental thing. Singapore Muslims also has their own laws, namely the AMLA law which has the characteristics of sharia law.

MUIS as well as the institutions entrusted by the AMLA to administer the affairs of the Muslim community of Singapore in accordance with their respective fields, has adopted the concept of wasatiyyah in his administration. The main feature of the concept of wasatiyyah used by MUIS is that it is not rigid against one scholar's view or denies another view. In addition, prioritize the concept of taysir and choose things that are more (brings benefits).

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