PRACTICAL DA'WAH METHODOLOGY IN MODERN CONTEXT

Assoc.Prof Dr. Hj. Su'aidi Dato' Hj.Safei, *D.S.M.*
Universiti Brunei Darussalam
drsuaidi@shbie.ubd.edu.bn

Abstract

Education has always been instrumental in the dissemination of religious ideas, rituals and values. In the Islamic tradition it is the classical method of propagation and, therefore, education as a means of instructing and motivating (prospective) believers is an integral part of *da'wah*. Contemporary *du'at* face great challenges to systematize and to apply the practical methodology within the new era of modern context. This paper discusses some suggestions that Muslim *du'at*, individually and collectively can undertake to accomplish *da'wah* goals: i) performing *da'wah* through a worldwide Islamic movement, ii) strengthening *da'wah* with technology, iii) using communication media and conducting seminars and workshops, iv) Displaying the real Islamic lifestyle
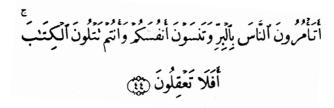
Introduction

Way, technique and method in English, *tariqah*, *manhaj* and *uslub* in Arabic are principles for doing something. Da'wah methodology is a discipline which concerns with the question of how da'wah is performed systematically and strategically.

Da'wah, or inviting people to Islam, is a must on every Muslim. It is not honey and dew. It is filled up with complications, problems and difficulties. Many du'at invite others, advise them, but at the same time they forget themselves. They think that they are saved from da'wah, that it is for others. Those who ignore the duty of reforming and training their own character and ruminate over the reformation and training of others are completely devoid of common sense. Their own house is on fire, yet they are carrying about buckets of water looking for a blaze anywhere else to extinguish. Such people are losers not only in this world but in the hereafter also. The Prophet s.a.w. observed during the night of ascension some people whose lips were being clipped with scissors of fire and Gabriel told him that those are the orators of the ummah, they preached piety and fear of God to people, but forgot to follow these teachings in their personal lives.

On one occasion, a person mentioned to Saidina Abdullah ibn Abbas that he wished to instruct people in piety and forbid them to commit evil deeds. He desired to propagate religion among people. Ibn Abbas enquired if he have acquired the proper qualifications for becoming a preacher and the person believed that he is capable of performing the task of a missionary. Ibn Abbas observed: "if you do not apprehend any condemnation in the light of three verses of the Holy Qur'an, do preach Islam."

The 1st verse:

$$\text{أَتَأْمُرُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ بِٱلْبِرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَتْلُونَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ}$$

$$\text{أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾}$$

"*Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practise) it yourselves,*
and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand" {al-Baqarah; 2:44}

Ibn Abbas then enquired: "Do you follow this verse in your practical life fully?". The man replied: "No". Ibn Abbas then recited the 2nd verse:
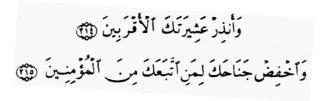
$$\text{لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ}$$

"O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not?" {al-Saf; 61:2}

Ibn Abbas then asked: "Are you sure you are following this verse?". The man replied "No". The 3rd verse:

$$\text{مَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَى مَا أَنْهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ}$$

"I desire not to do by your backs that which I ask you not to do" {Hud; 11:88}

Da'wah Methodology in the Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions

As far as the method of da'wah is concerned, we find a large number of verses in the Qur'an related to this subject. The basic teaching of da'wah methodology has been formerly laid down by the Qur'an. This tends to be conceptual guidance which was later applied in reality by the Prophet. It was then adopted by later Muslim missionaries.

Allah commanded the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. to start his da'wah mission with his family members including his relatives.

$$\text{وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ ﴿٢١٤﴾}$$

$$\text{وَٱخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ ٱتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾}$$

"*And admonish thy nearest kinsmen, and lower thy wing*
to the believers who follow thee" {al-Shu'ara'; 26:214-5}

As very well known verse which describes the method of da'wah in the Qur'an is in Surah al-Nahl. It clearly consists of the three ways to perform da'wah, namely *Hikmah* or wisdom, fair exhortation or goodly counsel and argumentation with a gracious manner:

$$\text{ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ}$$

"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation,
and reason with them in ways that are best and most gracious,
for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path,
and who receive guidance" {al-Nahl; 16:125}

Allah has reminded the Prophet to be kind, compassionate, low, humble, loving and friendly to all. It is only through love and mercy that he will be able to bring people together.

$$\text{فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ}$$

"It is part of the Mercy of God that thou deal gently with them.
Were thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee,
so pass over (their faults, and ask for)God's) forgiveness for them,
and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou has taken a decision,
put thy trust in God, for God loves those who put their trust (in Him)" {ali-Imran; 3:159}

In the process of da'wah every Muslim is to say the best or else satan may play his dirty tricks. Du'at are to use the best approach as they are talking to the mad'uw.

$$\text{وَقُل لِّعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا}$$

"Say to My servants that they should only say those things that are best,
for satan does sow dissensions among them, for satan is to man
an avowed enemy" {al-Isra'; 17:53}

Islamic workers should not address labourers with the language of grave diggers nor the atheists with tongue of emotionalists. They should use appropriate language at the proper place and time. As derived from the Prophet's hadith: "We are commanded to speak to people according to their mental capacity."

Da'wah Methodology in the Modern Context

The deliverer of the Islamic da'wah should convey to the people the systems by which they have to solve their worldly affairs. The secret of the success of the Islamic da'wah is that it is dynamic and able to deal with man as a man, and initiates in him a comprehensive change.
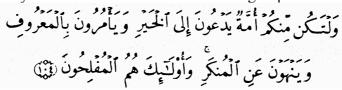
Da'wah operates on two fronts: (i) towards Muslims who are perhaps unaware of Islam, maybe because of growing up in the western lifestyle and missing out on a proper Islamic education, and (ii) towards our non-muslims neighbours and colleagues, many of whom may be searching for truth. At the very least, we may be able to counter-act the many incorrect stereotypes of Islam and muslims, no one else will do this for us, we have to speak up! and show by our behaviour what Islam is all about. By doing this, we may even bring people into the fold of Islam.

Successful *du'at* recognise that their role is not merely in conveyance of the message, but extends to the boundaries of continual *tarbiyah* (education) of young enthusiastic generations of believers. The *du'at* must plant the seeds of goodness in the hearts of the Muslim youth and then pledge to constantly raise them progressively in accordance with Allah's Law.

Contemporary Du'at face great challenges to systematize and to apply the practical methodology within the new era of modern context. Provided below are some suggestions that Muslim Du'at, individually and collectively can undertake to accomplish da'wah goal:

❖   **Performing Da'wah through a Worldwide Islamic Movement**

The Qur'an has obviously directed the Du'at to work within group:

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى ٱلْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَأُوْلَٰئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good,
enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong." {3: 104}

The method of da'wah through collective work or systematic organization was started when Dar al-Da'wah wal-Irsyad was founded by Shaykh Rashid Rida in the early 19th century. His ambition was to train Muslim Du'at within an established da'wah college and to send them into Christian lands for propagating the message of Islam. They were also sent into those Muslim countries in which attempts had been made to induce the Muslims to abandon their faith. This approach is quite similar to the idea of al-Maududi and Hassan al-Banna that da'wah and politics are inseparable and the mass movement should struggle to create an Islamic order within the society.

❖   **Strengthening Da'wah with Technology**

There seems to be a consensus on the need for preachers of Islam to utilise modern tools to carry out the task of da'wah. Today's society is very much technocentric. Technology has broken down physical, geographical and political barriers that once may have stood in the way of getting things done efficiently and effectively. Therefore there exists a valid need for the

formation of a new breed of Muslim preachers. This new breed of techno-da'ie is an important aspect of modern Islam. Without them, it would be difficult to present the true Islam in this post-modern world that we now live in.

The new generation in particular are becoming more techno savvy. So what better way to approach the post-modern generation than to apply that which they are most comfortable with? Why not use technology to narrow the gap between the da'ie and the community? ICT, for instance, could be utilised to the maximum by the techno-da'ie to disseminate information on Islam. Multimedia, to take an example, could be used to teach young children how to read the Qur'an correctly. Multimedia is interactive and combines the usage of most senses. This would make learning the Qur'an more interesting, especially to today's children.

ICT also presents an endless possibility to the techno-da'ie. Say, for instance, a techno-da'ie were to deliver a lecture in a mosque. He could make use of web-based presentation tools to make his talk more interesting. The audience would also be able to remember more effectively if multimedia is used.

Also, if classical works of Islam such as the voluminous Imam Syafii's Kitab al-Umm or Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah are produced in the form of CD-ROM, this would help the techno-da'ie carry these references anywhere. The techno-da'ie would just need to carry a couple of CD-ROMs as opposed to several volumes of very thick books around. All the techno-da'ie would need is of course a laptop, which is becoming lighter and much easier to carry as technology progresses.

The contents are already there; the Quran, prophetic traditions, history of Islam, stories of the prophets, texts on Islamic jurisprudence, scholarly works of Muslim ulama and many more. These materials need to be creatively repackaged using the latest technology so that they can be used in facilitating the task of da'wah.

Therefore, a link between Muslim preachers and technologies must be established in order for da'wah in the 21st century to be successful. Neither of these two groups can afford to conduct da'wah on their own. One lacks the state-of-the-art technical knowledge of disseminating information but has plenty of materials for da'wah, while the other has the technology but lacks the content. Logically these two groups should collaborate so that a win-win situation can be created. In the long run, Islam will benefit.

It must be noted that the techno-daie is not going to replace traditional and conventional methods of dakwah. This new breed of preachers should be seen as complementing and strengthening the da'wah movement.

Tools such as the palmtop and the personal digital assistant (PDA) should be used by audience of a religious lecture to take down notes. Listening alone is not sufficient. Research has shown that to fully understand what is being taught, one must listen and jot down what one hears. This, unfortunately, is rarely done by Muslims when it comes to learning.

❖ **Using Communication Media and Conducting Seminars and Workshops**

Ismail Faruqi suggested that the method of *mujadalah* should be applied in a kind of academic seminar on a large scale where Du'at can freely present and argue with other religions. This approach can achieve its objective because Islam puts in man's rational power to discriminate between the truth and false.

On the other hand, his approach may differ from Ahmad Deedat who eludes a charismatic and saintly appearance and his wit and charm temper what might otherwise be considered an acid tongue. He, moreover, regards Christianity as his chief enemy, and this creates tension between faiths rather than peaceful method required by Islam.

❖ **Displaying the Real Islamic Lifestyle**

The above discussion is thoroughly concerned with the method of direct da'wah or activitistic preaching which is directed to the non-Muslim. In fact, da'wah should also be directed toward the Muslim. It is called as indirect da'wah or Islamic lifestyle (*Da'wah bil-Hal*). It is to take Islam to non-Muslim, not by pulpit preaching and mailing Islamic literature but by doing what Muslim ought to do, living, drinking, eating, sleeping and behaving as Muslims are enjoined to do. This method is more attractive because people can practically see the beauty of Islam within the ummah.

Da'wah through humanitarian causes should be pondered thoughtfully in order to prove the fruit of Islam. Without such as this credibility, the whole effort of da'wah will be rhetorical and devoid of meaning. Unfortunately, it has been left to Christian missionaries to work on such lines.

Showing the fruit of the teaching is more effective than calling to something abstract and theoretical which is written on papers. For this purpose, Muslims should improve their achievement in every aspect of life. Problems such as poverty and illiteracy within the Muslim ummah should be overcome.

Conclusion

Education has a central and strategic role, especially when it is connected with effort to enhance human resources quality. It is caused by the realization for human standing and prestige increase. Socialization of Islamic values can be done only by high quality human resource.

One of the best means for Islamic worker to attain the gentle and effective method of da'wah is to know what he wants. This clear conception and analysis of goals dictates the method the work should follow. Knowing what he wants, the Islamic worker will save effort and time and will make well-planned moves. This will enable him to avoid taking arbitrary decisions which are the results of a lack of planning and proper calculations. Al-Hasan al-Basri was quite right in his saying: "The one who acts without knowledge is like the one who travels on no road, and the one who accomplishes what he doesn't want, spoils more than he amends."

Deliverers of the Islamic da'wah, are not looking for any worldly reward or expecting praise from people. They ask for nothing except the pleasure of Allah. May Allah keep us on the straight path, and accept our humble efforts for His love. Ameen.

References

Abdullah Hassan (2001). *Komunikasi untuk bakal pendakwah : panduan mengubah sikap dan tingkah laku orang lain.* Kuala Lumpur : PTS Pub.

Abdullah Muhammad Zin (1991). *Islamic da'wah (mission): the definition, conception & foundation.* Kuala Lumpur : Penerbitan Pustaka Antara.

Abdul Ghafar Don *et. al.* (2000). *Dakwah dan pengurusan Islam di Malaysia: konsep dan pelaksanaan.* Bangi : Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Akmal Hj Mhd. Zain (2001). *Bimbingan berdakwah: Teori & penerapan di alaf baru.* Kuala Lumpur: Al-Hidayah Publishers.

Bengkel Kader Da'wah (2001). *Ke arah kesempurnaan insan melalui da'wah yang berkesan.* Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

El-Mokhtar, Mohamed (1998). *Islamic education between tradition and modernity.* Publication of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

Hambali bin Haji Jaili. (2002). *Ke arah dakwah yang berkesan.* Bandar Seri Begawan: Terbitan Seksyen Hal Ehwal Semasa, Bahagian Berita, Hal Ehwal Semasa dan Sukan, Radio Telivisyen Brunei.

Jamal Badawi., Dr. (1987). *Islamic da'wah in the West lecture.* Leicester : The Islamic Foundation.

Masniah binti Haji Awang Damit @ Haji Abd Hamid. (2006). *Perkembangan pengislaman dan pemeliharaan mu'allaf, Pusat Da'wah Islamiah Negara Brunei Darussalam.* Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Mohammed Asin Dollah, Prof. Dr., (2003). *Islamic da'wah in the age of information and communication technology.* Kuala Lumpur: Faculty of Leadership & Management, Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia.

Mohd Radhi Ibrahim *et al.* (2003). *Intelektualisme dan Da'wah masa kini.* Kuala Lumpur: Fakulti Kepimpinan dan Pengurusan, Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia,

Nur Jaffriah Binti Haji Kasim (2006). *Islamic Da'wah in Brunei Darussalam since the second half of the 20th century : an analysis.* Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Poston, Larry (1992). *Islamic dawah in the West : Muslim missionary activity and the dynamics of conversion to Islam.* New York : Oxford University Press.

Seminar serantau pemikiran da'wah (2006). *Prosiding Seminar serantau pemikiran da'wah : peranan dan pengalaman*, anjuran Jabatan Usuluddin, Institut Pengajian Islam Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien. Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Shaikh Mohd Saifuddeen bin Shaikh Mohd Salleh. (2000). *Memahami Islam melalui teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi*. Kuala Lumpur : Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia.

Ulwan, Abd. Allah Nasih. (1989). *Membentuk karakter generasi muda* (translator, Kathur Suhardi) (Muhadharah fi takwin asy-syahshiyah al-insaniyah fi nadharil-Islam). Jakarta: Pustaka Mantiq.

Masniah binti Haji Awang Damit @ Haji Abd Hamid. (2006). *Perkembangan pengislaman dan pemeliharaan mu'allaf*, Pusat Da'wah Islamiah Negara Brunei Darussalam. Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Zulkiple Abd. Ghani. (2001). *Islam, komunikasi dan teknologi maklumat*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Pubs.

أبو السعود، عبد رب النبي علي (1992). *التخطيط للدعوة الاسلامية وأهميّته*. Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah.

المهدلى ، الدكتور السيد محمد عقيل بن علي (1999). *الدعوة الإسلامية فى العصر الحاضر*. Cairo : Dar al-Hadith.

نور عفوه فرحانه بنت حاج عبد الرزاق (2004). *الصينيون في بروناي دار السلام وكيفية دعوتهم إلى الإسلام*. Brunei Darussalam : Universiti Brunei Darussalam.