



READINGS in
ISLAMIC DA'WAH

EDITOR
Mohd. Yusof Hussain



IUM Press

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METHODS IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC DA'WAI

Mohd Yusaf Hussain

process of *da'wah*, one should not only be serious to His cause but also stick to His fundamental message. It does not mean that a preacher should ignore the surrounding realities. At present, we are living in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, where different members of these communities are facing many important issues. As workers, of the Islamic movement, we cannot close our eyes from these issues. While we focus on our message, we should also participate fully in day-to-day issues and solve them.

Conclusion

This brief exploration into the universal methodological principles of the Methodology of *da'wah* of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) clearly demonstrates that there is no room in the structure of Islamic way of life for destructive and violent strategies. Islam stands for peace, prosperity, and civilisational development and avoids all confrontational policies and strategies. It is, therefore, unlawful and unIslamic to adopt illegal or violent strategies for the purpose of Islamic goals. These are the general principles which suggest that one can design suitable methods in the context of time and space. But no one can ignore principles who claim to be the follower of Islam. It is already discussed that preaching is not a responsibility of certain people, rather it is the fundamental duty of every Muslim. It is, therefore, indispensable for everybody to understand and grasp all these principles as an integral part of the Muslim personality. If we are determined to preach Islam to everybody, then we have to follow all these principles. If we follow some principles, and ignore others, then it will not bring good results. To achieve good results we are bound to take these principles seriously. Whether we are performing *da'wah* work among Muslims or non-Muslims, these principles must constitute our individual as well as collective methodology of *da'wah*.

Methods are means that a person uses to achieve his goals and purpose. Different goals and purposes may require different methods. A good method has to fulfill two criteria - it must be simple and it must be systematic.

Students and practitioners of Islamic *da'wah* have long realised the importance of methodology to deliver the message and also to get the attention and interest of the audience.

This chapter attempts to discuss the methods in contemporary Islamic *da'wah*. The first part of the chapter will focus on the methods of delivering the message of *da'wah* and the second part will focus on the methods of getting the attention and interest of the audience or target group.

Methods of Message Delivery

A *da'i* can choose a number of methods depending upon the size of the target group. The methods are conversation, informal talk, prepared speech or lecture, textual studies, *Khatbah*, discussion and dialogue.

Method Suitable for a *Diyad*

Dyadic communication is face-to-face encounter with another person. The appropriate method to be used is conversation. In a conversation the *da'i* can communicate the message of Islam in a relaxed manner. He can focus on issues that are of interest to the target person. He can tailor his conversation to the person's level of intelligence. The *da'i* can also encourage the other person to ask questions and give feedback.

Method Suitable for a Triad

Triadic communication is face-to-face communication among two persons. The two persons can be husband and wife, father and son or two close friends. In a *da'wah* context the third person is the *dā'ī*. The appropriate method to use in this context is also conversation. The *dā'ī* will talk to them about Islam. He will try to make his conversation as interesting as possible. He encourages them to give feedback and ask questions. He then gives convincing answers to these questions. Throughout the conversation he will try to make the two people feel relax and enjoy the conversation.

Methods Suitable for a Small Group

Scholars are divided on what constitute a small group. The sizes that have been suggested are between four to fifteen, four to twenty-one and four to thirty-nine. In this chapter we define small group as a group with a size of between four to thirty-nine.

There are three methods appropriate for communicating to small groups. They are speeches, discussions and textual studies.

A speech or talk can range from seven minutes to one hour depending on the purpose. The speech is usually informal and delivered in a conversational manner. The topics chosen are usually related to *īmān* (faith) and *ʿamal* (actual practice). The purpose is to remind the group of their responsibilities as Muslims.

A small discussion group is led by a facilitator who is the most respected person in the group. The topics discussed should be related to contemporary issues in Muslim societies. The purpose of a small group discussion is to enable the group members to understand the relevance of Islam in solving contemporary issues and problems in the Muslim society.

Textual studies involve reading and explaining religious texts. The texts used are the Qur'ān, books of *Ḥadīth* and books of Islamic teachings written by notable scholars.

In textual studies a *dā'ī* will first read certain sections of a particular text. He then gives his explanation of the text. In the case of the Qur'ān some *du'āt* would invite the audience to read after him.

Explanation of the text is given in simple clear language. If there are questions from the audience the *dā'ī* will answer them to their satisfaction of the audience.

Textual studies are an excellent way of educating the audience about Islam. Studies on Qur'ān ic exegesis (*tafsīr*) enable audience to understand the meaning, interpretation and commentary of the Qur'ān. Those of *Ḥadīth Nabawī* (prophetic *Ḥadīth*) enable audience to know and understand the sayings and examples of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Methods Suitable for a Large Group

A group comprising forty and more individuals is considered a large group. The appropriate methods to communicate with a large group are *khutbah* (sermon) mass lectures, panel discussions and dialogues.

A *khutbah* (sermon) is an oral presentation delivered by a *khātib* (person who delivers the sermon) to an assembled congregation. It has a fixed and important place in *ṣalāt al-juma'ah* (Friday prayer) *ṣalāt id al-ṣīr* (morning prayer to celebrate the end of the fasting month of *Ramadhan*) and *ṣalāt id al-aḥha* (morning prayer to celebrate the end of the annual pilgrimage to Makkah on the tenth day of *Dhū al-Hijjah*).

In *ṣalāt al-juma'ah* the *khutbah* is delivered before the *ṣalāt* (prayer) but in *ṣalāt id al-ṣīr* and *ṣalāt id al-aḥha* it is delivered after the *ṣalāt*.

In delivering the *khutbah* the *khātib* also acts as a *dā'ī*. He delivers the *khutbah* in a standing position from a *mimbār* (pulpit). The *khutbah* is divided into two parts and the *khātib* sits down for a moment between the two parts of the *khutbah*.

The purpose of the *khutbah* is to impart Islamic messages, to remind Muslims of their responsibilities, to motivate them to do what is good and right, and to warn them of the dire consequences of doing what is wrong.

The topics chosen are related to problems and challenges facing Muslims and how Islam solve these problems and challenges.

The Friday *khutbah* has an added advantage. The Muslims attending the *ṣalāt al-juma'ah* are "captive audience" in the sense that they are required to listen and focus their attention on the *khutbah*.

Mass lectures are lectures delivered to a mass audience. The number of people in the audience can range from a hundred to a few thousand. The three main purposes of mass lectures are to remind, to announce and to motivate the audience.

The *dā'ī* chosen to deliver a mass lecture is a person well-known and well-respected in the community. He, therefore, could attract a mass audience, sometimes in the thousands. The *dā'ī* is also an excellent orator. He could captivate a mass audience and maintain their interest for at least an hour. The topic given to the *dā'ī* to speak on is often of general interest.

Panel discussion is a new phenomenon in Islamic *dā'wah*. In Malaysia, it was introduced in the early 1990s when a forum on Islam (*Forum Perdana*) was shown on Malaysian television.

In a panel discussion, the chairperson will ask the three panelists questions on issues related to Islam. Each panelist is given about three minutes to respond to each question.

A religious forum is targeted at the educated sector of the Muslim community. Its purpose is to increase the understanding of an issue related to Islam.

A dialogue is an intellectual exchange of opinions on an issue between two scholars who hold different views on an issue. In the United States, Britain and France where Muslims are a minority, Muslim scholars have taken part in interfaith dialogues with Christians and Jews.

Interfaith dialogues in the West is viewed by Muslim scholars as a mean to educate members of other faiths on Islam.

Methods of Getting the Interest and Attention of Audience

A number of methods have been suggested by scholars on how to get and maintain the attention and interest of the audience of Islamic *dā'wah*. The methods are based on the Qur'an, *sunnah* and experience of *du'āi*. They are as follows:

1. Proceed from the known to the unknown. A *dā'ī* should start from matters that the audience already knows about Islam and from there proceed to the talk about matters that they have no knowledge yet.
2. Make Islam sound easy to practice. A *dā'ī* must present Islam in a way that makes the audience feel that Islam is a *dīn* (religion) suitable for this modern age and that it is easy to practice. It would be wrong to present Islam as a *dīn* (religion) that is difficult to practice. The *dā'ī* can quote a few relevant *Ḥadīth* to illustrate his point, such as:

"Indeed this *dīn* (of Allāh) is simple....."

(*Bukhārī*)

"Make it easy, don't make it difficult, don't make people run away from you."

(*Bukhārī*)

"An Arab Bedouin urinated in the Prophet's mosque. The prophet's companion rushed forward to punish the Bedouin. The Prophet stopped them saying: I gave him alone. Just clean up his urine with a bucket of water. Indeed, you have been raised to make matters easy and not to make matters difficult."

(*Bukhārī*)

3. Use gentle persuasion. A *dā'ī* should use gentle persuasion to get people attracted and committed to Islam. Harsh words and strong-handed tactics will only drive people away. In this regard Allāh (s.w.t.) says in the Qur'an:

"It is part of the mercy of Allāh that thou does deal gently with them. Were thou severe or harsh - hearted they would have broken away from thee."

Āh-'Imrān (3):159

4. Use rational appeal (*tafakkara*), i.e., asking the audience to think about the truth of the Qur'anic verses about the oneness and unity of Allāh (s.w.t.). The audience should not be made to accept this truth blindly. Examples of such verses are:

"If there were in the heaven and the earth other gods besides Allāh there would have been confusion in both."

al-'Abyā' (21):22

"Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing but are themselves created?"

al-'Arāf (7):191

"And rehearse to them (something) of Abraham's story. Behold, he said to his father and his people: What worship ye? They said: We worship idols and we remain constantly in

attendance on them. He said: Do they listen to you when you call (on them) or do you good or harm? They said: Nay, but we find our fathers doing this (what we do)"

al-Shu'ara' (26):69-74

5. Use a lot of reward appeal (*tanzih*), i.e., telling the audience of Allāh's promise of forgiveness and reward to those who accept Islam and follow strictly the teachings of Islam by quoting relevant verses from the Qur'ān:

"But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness we shall soon admit to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath - their eternal home; therein shall they have companions pure and holy; we shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening."

al-Nisā' (4):57

"Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main in Allāh's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allāh: They are the people who will achieve (salvation). Their Lord doth give them glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of Gardens for them wherein are delights that tennure. They will dwell therein forever. Verify in Allāh's presence is a reward the greatest (of all)."

al-Tawbah (9):20-22

6. Use the fear appeal (*tarkih*) whenever necessary, i.e. telling the audience of the painful consequence of not accepting Islam as *dīn* (religion) and as a way of life by quoting relevant Qur'anic verses, such as:

"Those who reject faith-neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allāh, they are themselves but fuel for the fire."

Āl-Imrān, (3):10

"Those who reject our signs, we shall soon cast into the fire; As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the Penalty;

for Allāh is exalted in power, wise."

al-Nisā' (4):56.

"... but those who deny (their Lord) - for them will be cut a garment of fire; over their heads will be poured boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as their skins. In addition, there will be maces of iron (to punish) them."

al-Hajj (22): 19-21

7. Use good examples (*qudwah hasanah*). The *dā'i* should set very good examples to his audience. His actions and deeds should match his words. Studies have shown that mankind is more influenced by what they see than by what they hear. The importance of *qudwah hasanah* is mentioned in the Qur'ān:

"O you who believe! Why say you that which you do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allāh that you say which you do not."

al-Saff (61):2-3

Applying the Methods

It is important that the methods be applied meticulously. They have to be mastered by repeated practice. In choosing the right method to use, a number of factors have to be considered. The factors include group size, religious and educational background and purpose of *da'wah*.

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