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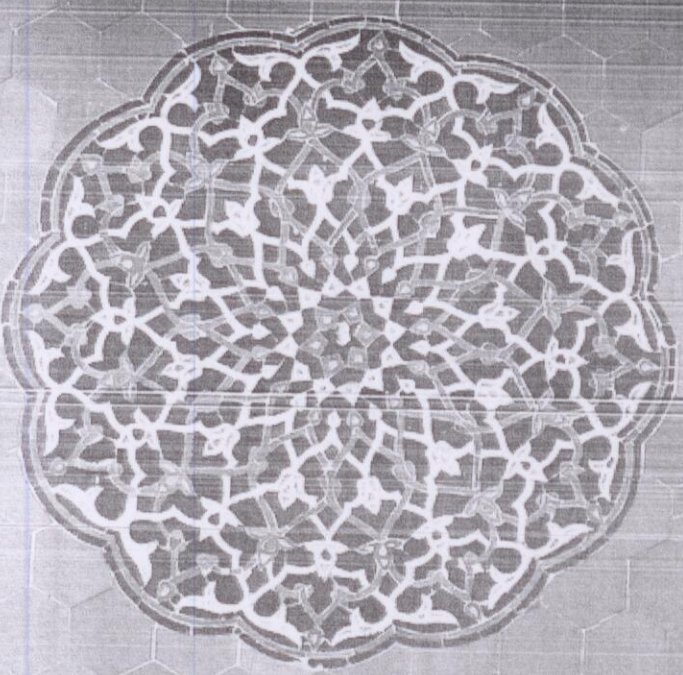
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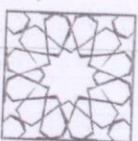
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PROMOTING ISLAM TO NON-MUSLIMS

A STUDY IN *Da'wah bi'l-Hikmah* AS A STRATEGY*

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A B S T R A C T

Is there a specific strategy to promote Islam to non-Muslims? The fact is, *Da'wah* approaches have been diverse and numerous. The stereotyping of one particular approach at the expense of other possible methods has resulted in lessening creativity in *Da'wah* work. The present writers feel that *Da'wah* approaches and methods need to be tailored to suit the needs of various localities taking full cognisance of the peculiar problems and prospects of each locality. This obviously calls for more accommodation with respect to adapting and adopting local customs and realities in promotion of *Da'wah* activity. The writers firmly believe that owing to dissimilarities of people(s) with respect to their commitment to and practice of Islamic teachings *Da'wah* work requires multilevel strategy using multiple fair means and thus feel that varying efforts made by various *Da'wah* organisations need to be given due recognition since together they fill the gaps necessary to be filled in to reform the society. Addressing such a wide spectrum of people with diverse socio-politico-religious orientations is a great responsibility, which demands prudence, diligence and experience; the essence of *Da'wah bi'l-Hikmah*.

* Earlier versions of this article were presented in two conferences organised by the Muslim Converts Association of Singapore in 2000 and Abin Islamic Outreach in 2003. A chapter entitled "The Concept of *Da'wah bi'l-Hikmah* and its Application in the Modern World," was also contributed in Ridzuan Wu, *Readings in Cross-Cultural Da'wah* (Singapore: The Muslim Converts Association, 2001), pp. 3-30. The current paper is a part of the author's substantially revised and ever-expanding research on this aspect of *da'wah*, written in collaboration with an able colleague Asiah Binti Yaacob.

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Introduction

To promote a thing is to "help it to develop [i.e. advance] and be successful [i.e. gain wider acceptance]."¹ It also means [a] to make sure people know about a product... by offering at a reduced price or advertising it..., [b]... arranging a large public event, and [c] to try to persuade people to believe or support an idea or way of doing things.² In promoting a thing there are prerequisites which are considered pertinent for the success of the promotion activity which in turn determines the success of the thing promoted. Factors like the inherent quality and the utility of the product, its packaging, location and the target of its promotion and the quality and ability of the promoter are all essential requisites for the success of the product. This is true not only in respect of the promoted thing, it is also true in respect of the promoter himself in the aspect of his inherent quality and utility, the way he carries himself, the location or ambience in which he places himself and the audience he surrounds himself with. It is also possible that a thing may attain success without the success also of its promoter. This is due to the inherent quality and utility of the thing itself which draws the attention of one who intends to benefit from it. It is also equally possible that a thing of little or no value can still be promoted successfully, if the promoter is able to convince the people. These possibilities are, however, mainly valid in the world of advertisement and promotion, where various strategies are normally employed to promote a thing, be it good or otherwise. And

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1. Della Summers, et. al., eds., *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 3rd edn. (England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1995), pp. 1131–1132.

2. See, *ibid.*, p. 1132.

strategies, of course, are well-planned series of actions for achieving a particular aim, especially against an opponent.³ Does this then, effectively mean that the promoter considers the buyer as his opponent that he has to employ strategies to 'entrap' him? This may be true in the world of business competition, where the promoter of a thing devises all sorts of strategic thrusts in the forms of strategic attraction, penetration and marketing to lure the buyer. This is, of course, an entrapment. But then how can this term be used with respect to Islam; a way of life? Is Islam a mere tangible commodity like other things that it requires a promoter and a strategy for its advancement? Does Islam consider non-Muslims as opponents that the Muslims have to devise some strategies to defeat or to lure them to Islam? These are some logically following questions one may ask in respect of the present topic. It is absurd to consider Islam as a mundane commodity to be peddled that Muslims have to resort to some profit-making strategies to 'get rid of the old stock' to bring in new ones in place of it nor are they there to defeat the non-Muslims in the battle of ideology that they have to employ strategy of some sort to achieve the aim of promoting Islam to non-Muslims. Hence, the usage of the term strategy to mean the approach or manner of propagation may not be useful in the promotion of Islam to non-Muslims because of its clear negative connotations. The purpose of propagation or *Da'wah* is to attract the minds and hearts of the non-Muslims by liberating them from the tyranny of ignorance which has deluded their minds from knowing and accepting the truth about the reality of Existence (*al-Haqq*).⁴ stated in the articles of Islamic Faith. According to Islamic teachings *Da'wah* is an individual and collective *Shar'ī* obligation. *Da'wah's* being an individual *Shar'ī* obligation is rooted in various *āyāt* of the Qur'an including the following stating:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْمُرُونَ بِالْبَيْتِ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَتْلَى الْقُرْآنُ فَاُولَٰئِكَ
اُولَٰئِكَ يَنْهَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا
اُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْعُقُوبَةُ ۗ وََاَنَّا لَنُورِثُكَ
اُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْعُقُوبَةُ ۗ وََاَنَّا لَنُورِثُكَ

3. See, *ibid.*, p. 1422.

4. See, for example, the Qur'an 14: 1 and 5.

Lo! Those who hid the proofs and the guidance which We revealed, after We had made it clear to mankind in the Scripture: such are accursed of Allah and accursed of all those who curse; except those who repent, amend themselves and make it (the truth) manifest. Those are the ones towards whom I relent, I am the Relenting, the Merciful.⁵

Similarly, *Da'wah*'s being a collective *Shar'ī* obligation is also ingrained in various *āyāt* of the Qur'ān including the following *āyah* which states:

وَأَنذَرْتُكُمْ إِنَّمَا يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ

المفطور

Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining all that is right, and forbidding all that is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.⁶

A Muslim is expected to do his utmost for the propagation of Islam to his level best. There is no one recipe to fulfil the obligation of *Da'wah*. Every Muslim needs to contribute his bit to propagate the message of Islam by all available fair means. Those whom Allah has bestowed with knowledge need to utilise their knowledge in propagation of the message of Islam. As for those who have been gifted with good health and or wealth are obliged to contribute by spending their time, energies and wealth in the path of Allah. This is what Allah refers to when in the words of the Qur'an He announced:

﴿ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ

وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَيْنَهُمُ الصَّاعِقُونَ

Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with

5. See, the Qur'an 2: 159–160. The present authors have not taken the English translation of the meanings of the *ghayr* of the Qur'an from a particular English translation of the meanings of the Qur'an rather they have opted to take these translations from various English translations of the meanings of the Qur'an. Present authors have, however, made modifications, wherever necessary, for more clarity.

6. See, the Qur'ān 3: 104.

their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah. Such are the sincere and truthful [in the declaration of belief].⁷

At another place in the Qur'an the same has been declared in the following words:

وَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ ۖ فَمُلَئِمْهُم مِّنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَأَنذَرْنَاهُمْ يَوْمَهُمْ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْلِطُونَ ۚ

الاعظم

Certainly Allah has exchanged from the believers their lives and wealth for their places in the Heaven: they [if required] fight in the way of Allah and slay and be slain. It is a promise [with Muslims of all ages in human history] which is binding on Him [declared] in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who fulfilleth his covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that you have thus made, for it is the supreme triumph.⁸

Thus, a believer's position in Heaven is determined according to his degree of devotion and sacrifice in the Divine cause. All such devoted efforts and sacrifices are termed as helping Allah. Referring to all such activities, Allah says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُخْرِجْ أَعْدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّا هُمْ فِيهِ﴾

O, the ones who believe, if you do help Allah, He will help you and make your foot-hold firm.⁹

These divine statements serve as encouragement, from various angles, for a believer to exert his utmost efforts in contributing his share to the service of his Creator, i.e. in propagating the message of submission to none but the Creator alone in all affairs. There are many more such divine messages which the *Da'wah* scholars have collected in their writings which they have written to exhort Muslims to share the message of Islam with others. However, little

7. See, the Qur'ān 49: 15.

8. See, the Qur'ān 9: 111.

9. See, the Qur'an 47: 7.

guidance and training; rather he was minutely following the Divine commands in this regard. One should, therefore, never hasten to conclude that the events in the life of the Prophet (peace be on him) were merely of his own making. Though in a bit different manner it is true for the events in the life of every human that they are not their own making, the post-revelation activities of the Prophet (peace be on him), especially, cannot be interpreted in the light of mere strategy,¹⁸ because such an interpretation will degrade the significance of revelation and his Prophethood. Even though the Prophet (peace be on him) himself did not witness the spread of Islam beyond the confines of Arabia, he nevertheless laid the foundation for such an expansion to be witnessed by his followers, by sending letters to rulers of surrounding areas as well as to the rulers of Byzantine and Persian Empires inviting them to accept Islam. After his demise and with the subjugation of the apostatised tribes following the *Riddah* wars most of the Arabian Peninsula was secured as the land where the Islam and Islamic Caliphate were firmly established in a couple of months. Meanwhile, the aggression of the Byzantine and Persian Empires in response to the Prophet's peaceful invitation towards the truth of Islam kept on growing encountering which paved the way for a very rapid expansion in the areas coming under the Islamic Caliphate.¹⁹ Commenting on this

18. See, the Qur'ān 53: 3; for detailed treatment of the issue, see, [Tāj al-Jin] 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Suhkī, *al-Ashbāh wa 'l-Nazā'ir*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1411/1991), vol. 2, p. 210; Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Lakhnī al-Shā'ithī, *al-Muwāfāqāt*, ed., Abū 'Ubaydal Maṣhūr b. Ḥasan 'Alī Salīmān, 7 vols. (Al-Khubār, KSA: Dār Ibn 'Alfān, 1417/1997), vol. 4, p. 335; also see, Muḥammad al-Tāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *Ibn Ashūr: Treatise on Maqāsid al-Shari'ah*, tr., M. al-Tāhir al-Masawi (Herndon, VA: IIT, 2006).

19. The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) sent letters to Heraclius of Byzantine, Mughawis of Egypt, Negus of Abyssinia, the polytheist leader of Persia and other rulers and chieftains. See, for details, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, Bāb Kitāb al-Nabīy Salā Allah 'alayh wa Sallam ilā Kistrā wa Qaysar; Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb Da'wah al-Yahūd wa 'l-Nasānā... wa mā Katāb al-Nabīy Salā Allah 'alayh wa Sallam ilā Kistrā wa Qaysar; Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb Du'ā' al-Nabīy Salā Allah 'alayh wa Sallam al-Nās ilā 'l-Islām wa 'l-Nubuwah; Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Nisābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Jihād wa 'l-Siyar, Bāb Kitāb al-Nabīy Salā Allah 'alayh wa Sallam ilā Hirāqal Yād'ūt ilā 'l-Islām; Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Nisābūrī*, ed., Muṣṣafāh 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aḡā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1411/1990), vol. 2, p. 679; Kitāb Dhikr Akhbār Sayyid al-Mursalin wa Khātām al-Nabīyīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Muttaḥib al-Muṣṣafāh Salawat Allah 'alayh wa Sallam, Bāb Min Kitāb Hijrah al-Ulā ilā 'l-Ḥabshah.

early expansion, Francesco Gabrieli (1904–1996), an Italian Arabist Orientalist, records that:

The results [of the conquests] have always been a source of wonder to the historians, and it has taxed all their powers to find an adequate explanation of them.....some inexplicable and mysterious quality still underlies them.²⁰

However, others like Fred Donner (1945–), a Professor of Near Eastern History, consider these expeditions to be the outwork of a specific plan of expansion rather than strictly fortuitous. He argues:

The decision to launch the invasion was certainly not reached without careful deliberation and consultation with prominent members of the ruling elite in Medina, and we may accept the numerous descriptions of these consultations as efforts to flesh out the vague recollections of the actual discussions that must have taken place²¹

Leaving aside the matter of preference of one of the two above mentioned views over the other, it remains a fact that it was not purely a religious advance in the sense of 'missionary movement.' It is an historical fact that the main objective of these expeditions was not conversion of the conquered people to Islam. Some individuals may have joined conquerors for mundane purposes but even in these cases it is difficult to know for certain whether the people converted for purely religious reasons or for economic and political gains.

Many have argued that Muslim expansion, both political and military advancements, was motivated by Islam. Consequently, they misinterpreted *jihād* to mean forcing men and women to abandon their non-Muslim religious traditions.²² This, however, is farthest from the truth. According to the famous English historian, Thomas Walker Arnold (1868–1930), Muslims were seen as political liberators who were welcomed with open arms by the oppressed

20. Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 103.

21. Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 113.

22. See, for example, Roland E. Miller, "Renaissance of the Muslim Spirit," *Christianity Today*, vol. XXIII, no. 26 (November 16, 1979), pp. 16–21.

masses of the Middle East and North Africa.²³ Whatever the motivation of particular individuals may have been, political subjugation, in Islam, was neither for forcing people to convert nor an end in itself, rather it was a means to a greater end. As the outcomes of the political conquests were managed in such a just way that created a milieu, an environment in which the Islamic faith could be planted, tendered and harvested. This needed a concerted effort by the institution of Caliphate particularly its legislative and judicial branches to contribute their part to the progress of Islamisation by providing people socio-economic, religio-legal and political justice. However, in Islamic history, these structures were not used to impose Islam directly upon the people. According to Nehemia Levtzion (1935–2003), “direct intervention of the political authorities in exerting pressures or bestowing favours was somewhat limited and sporadic. It certainly cannot explain the conversion of the majority of the people in the territories under Muslim rules.”²⁴

In fact political conquest and establishment of Muslim institutions were not to force people to convert but served only as preludes to the introduction of true *Da'wah* activity. How then was the majority converted to Islam? There are many theories proposed. Some say it is the work of the *ṣūfīs*, while some others say that the non-Muslims were attracted by the exemplary conduct of the Muslims. Yet also there were some non-Muslims who converted for quite mundane reasons. According to Levtzion, a non-Muslim who desired to expand his trade beyond a certain limit often opted to convert in order to be admitted to the credit system. A trader's credit used to be higher if he exhibited orthodoxy and strictly observed the precepts of Islam.²⁵ What won these converts was not the Muslim's theological conviction rather their conformity to the Islamic lifestyle. This is the practical manifestation of the faith, which is the main principle of *Da'wah*. But in the popular sense the term *Da'wah*

refers to an invitation extended to humanity by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) to accept Islam, an invitation that was previously extended by all of Allah's Prophets and Messengers (peace be on them) in their own times.²⁶ This invitation is not subject to any mundane restrictions or coercion. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), like all previous Prophets and Messengers (peace be on them), was commanded to only convey the message of Islam in unambiguous terms.²⁷

Thus, *Da'wah* is a divine obligation on every Muslim male and female. The obligation-part of *Da'wah* is clear to all and sundry. But many err in the application of the correct approach to reach out to others. They classify *Da'wah* into *bi'l-ḥāl* and *bi'l-maqāl*. We feel that these two are essential parts of the bigger picture called *Da'wah bi'l-ḥikmah*,²⁸ which we will discuss later. Now let us briefly look into the approaches to *Da'wah*.

Approaches to *Da'wah*: A Critical Evaluation

As discussed, *Da'wah*, is the duty of every individual Muslim. It was performed by individuals as individuals or in groups following the recommendations of Qur'ān.²⁹ Thus broadly speaking there are two approaches to *Da'wah*: [a] individual *Da'wah* and [b] group *Da'wah*. Individual *Da'wah* has been the main thrust in the promotion of Islam in the past. There were eminent Islamic personalities who toured the globe repeatedly for *Da'wah* purposes as ambassadors of Islam.³⁰

26. See, 'Abd al-Karīm Zaylān, *Uṣūl al-Da'wah*, pp. 11f.

27. See, the Qur'ān 3: 20; 5: 92, 99, 13: 40; 14: 52; 16: 35; 82; 24: 54; 29: 18; 36: 17; 42: 48; 21: 106.

28. For a good treatment of the issue, see, Sa'id b. 'Alī b. Wah' al-Qaḥṭānī, *al-Hikmah fī 'l-Da'wah ilā Allāh Ta'ālā* (Riyadh: Waṣārah al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah wa'l-Da'wah wa'l-Irshād, 1423 AH).

29. See, the Qur'ān 2: 159–160 and 3: 104; also see, note 4 and 5, above.

30. The effects of *Da'wah* tours of Mawlānā 'Abd al-'Alīm al-Siddiqī (1310–1373/1892–1954) of Meccat, India, and his son-in-law Mawlānā Dr Faḍl al-Rahmān al-Anṣārī (1333–1394/1914–1974) of Karachi, Pakistan are still felt by Muslims in Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Kenya, South Africa, Suriname, Venezuela, and Fiji. This article is hereby dedicated to these two savants of Islam who have contributed immensely to the spread of Islam in the English-speaking ex-British colonies. In contemporary time, *du'ā* like the late Ahmad Decad (1336–1426/1918–2005) of South Africa and his protégé Dr Zakir Abdul Karim Naik (1385– /1965–) of India are known for their *mujādalāh* approach to *Da'wah*.

See, Thomas Walker Arnold, *Preaching of Islam: A History of Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1968), p. 35.

Nehemia Levtzion, “Conversion Under Muslim Domination: A Comparative Study” in David N. Cohen, ed., *Religious Change and Cultural Domination* (Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1981), p. 26. See, *ibid.*, p. 15.

Many of them did this as their main activities, while significant number of them did engage in other side activities, mostly in trade, traditional medicine, teaching and being court-men of rulers of the area they reached, to generate income for their families as well as for their *Da'wah* activities.³¹ This has been the tradition among the individual *du'at* for centuries and is still continuing but rarely. This has declined during the second half of last century owing to the emergence of many state-run Islamic institutions which have increasingly begun to assert their control over the Muslims. Moreover, the colonialists have pursued a keen policy of containing the spread of Islam by punishing the *du'at* through financial control and keeping these Islamic workers economically poor. However, the formation of independent Muslim nation states gave rise to the mushrooming of many *Da'wah* groups in the form of organisations, either registered or unregistered, sponsored directly or indirectly by state agencies or run by private organisations. There are numerous such organisations working at present in various parts of the globe.³² Most of these groups generally work on one or more of the following areas:

- [a] the defence of Islam against Christian and other non-Muslim missionaries, and to make counter or parallel missionary efforts to gain new converts to Islam;
- [b] the education and welfare of the Muslim community;
- [c] the political revival of Muslim community;
- [d] the reformation of religion and religious practices either through modernisation, revivalism or faith renewal.³³

Many devoted Muslims who came for *Da'wah* in the Malaysian Archipelago from Yemen and the mainland coast of South India had businesses to support their *Da'wah* activities. A good number of them settled locally by marrying from local families and some even married from the Royal family. Their dealings on the relation of trade and *Da'wah*, see, Stephen F. Dale, "Trade, Conversion, and the growth of Islamic Community in Kerala" in Rowena Robinson and Sahianathan Clarke, eds., *Religious version in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 65. For example, Rāḥīyah al-'Ālam al-Islām of Makkah has been sponsoring *Da'wah* workers in various parts of the world to perform *Da'wah* and its related basic Islamic duties such as teaching recitation of Qur'ān and basics of Islamic faith and practices, particularly in Muslim minority countries. See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, ed., *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Taḥfīḡī Jamā'at as a national Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. xxviii–xxix.

Of these [a] is the domain of *Da'wah* in relation to the non-Muslims, which may be termed as "external *Da'wah*," while the rest [b] [c] and [d] categories relate to Muslims, and thus can be termed as "internal *Da'wah*." It can be seen from here that *Da'wah* has twofold functions: [i] to invite others to Islam, and [ii] to revive the Muslims in respect of their understanding and practice of Islam. Most often in pursuing their aspirations to revive and renew Muslims most of these groups seem to overlook their primary responsibility of promoting Islam to non-Muslims.

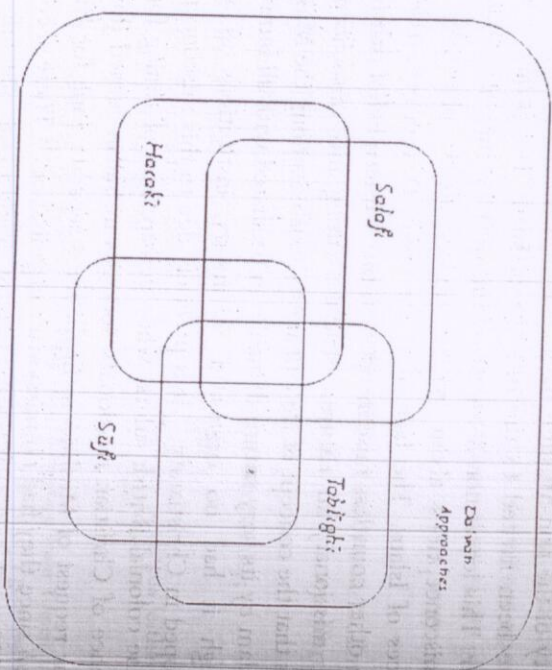
Perhaps this attitude may be a result of considering *Da'wah* a lesser obligation as compared to other Islamic obligations. That seems to be the reason why many institutionalised Islamic movements shy away from active *Da'wah* work and that may be the reason why majority of the non-Muslims have been deprived of the opportunity to have been invited to the message of Islam in a proper logical manner. This leaves non-Muslims victims of the recurrent confusions and misconceptions about various tenets, ideals, principles and practices of Islam. The lack of active group *Da'wah* gave rise to, beside other countless misconceptions, the Western belief that Islam is not missionary in nature. Arnold refuting this misconception argues that the concept of *Da'wah* always existed among the Muslims and Islam by its very nature demands to be shared with all humanity although it had no organised missionary institutions as were developed in Christianity.³⁴ It is precisely due to this misconception that the colonial British rulers, while demarcation of zoning for the influence of Christian missionary societies in Sudan turned down a similar request of Muslims in Egypt for a separate zone for Islamic *Da'wah* since they had no missionary organisation.³⁵ There seems no plausible explanation for this lack of institutional *Da'wah*. The history of Islam characterises *Da'wah* as 'a prophetic work,'³⁶ which

34. See, T. W. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 413.

35. See, *ibid.*, p. 443; See also, Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Rituale der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1952), p. 343.

36. See, Sayyid Abū 'l-ʿĀlā Mawḍūdī, "Maṣṣab Taḥqīq ki Ḥaqīqat aur Tārīkh Taḥlīd miṣṣ Shāh Walī Allāh kā Muḡāṣṣ," *al-Furqān: Shāh Walī Allāh Number*, ed., Manzūr Ahmad Nūr mānī (Barceli: 1940), p. 76.

is an inalienable responsibility upon the Muslim community. As such it had been classified as a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāyah*) and not as an individual obligation (*farḍ ‘ayn*) and, consequently, became a tool in the hands of the rulers and assumed various political undertones. However, *Da‘wah* began to be spoken of in the sense of the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam mainly as a reaction to the European Christian missions. These direct or indirect European proselytization efforts were met with strong reaction from the Muslims who responded to this challenge through one or more of the following four approaches or movements: [a] *tablighī*, [b] *ṣūfī*, [c] *ḥarakī*, and [d] *salafī*. Even though these four approaches do have their peculiarities in the form of dissimilarities between one another, they nevertheless have a common space between them, as reflected in the diagram shown below:



Thus it is hard to find a *salafī* without having traces of being a *ḥarakī*, a *ṣūfī* and a *tablighī* in respect of one's commitment to uphold Islamic practices. This overlapping is unavoidable as there is no exclusive approach to perform *Da‘wah*. But surprisingly their respective advocates still consider their movement as the only valid one. Muhammad Khalid Masud (1358— /1939—), a well-known

contemporary Islamic scholar, undertook a synoptic study on some of the existing *Da‘wah* movements. Though not everyone agrees with some of the positions he has taken in the following table adopted from his study Masud attempted to present a survey of the structures and activities of these *da‘wah* movements:³⁷

Name	MA	PM	MWL	ICS	MB	TJ	Jl	HDI	DAM
Categories	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]
Sponsor	State	State	State	State	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private
Country	Egypt	Malaysia	Arabia	Libya	Egypt	India	India	Iraq	Malaysia
Year	1960	1960	1962	1972	1928	1944	1941	1957	1968
Registered	?	Yes	?	Yes	No	Yes/No	No	No	No
Open	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Political	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Non-Muslim	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Self	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Trans-nation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Publicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Militant	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Welfare	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Women	Yes	Yes	?	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key: [1] MA - Higher Council of Islamic Affairs; [2] PM - Perkin Malaysia; [3] MWL - Muslim League; [4] ICS - Islamic Call Society; [5] MB - Muslim Brotherhood; [6] TJ - Tablighi Jama'at; [7] Jl - Jama'at al-Islami; [8] HDI - Hizb al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and [9] DAM - Darul Aqam Malaysia.

This study clearly reveals that not all of them are serving the purpose of promoting Islam to non-Muslims. Among the state-sponsored *Da‘wah* movements three of the four organisations (numbers [1] to [3]), do carry out *Da‘wah* to non-Muslims and three of the four organisations (numbers [2] to [4]) are political in nature. All these four are non-militant non-*ṣūfī* movements focussing on the welfare and education of both born and convert Muslims. Even though some of them accept the participation of women, they, nevertheless are not open to others, meaning they are open only to their respective members. Perhaps, due to this reason it can be seen that some of them are not officially registered despite their being state-sponsored organisations. Comparing these four institutions against one another one would find that at times they are working to undermine or correct the perceived wrongs committed by the other. For instance [1] was established in 1960 by the Egyptian military ruler, Jamāl

37. See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. xxviii.

'Abd al-Nāsir (r. 1375–1390/1956–1970), as a state controlled *Da'wah* organisation to spread his version of Islam and to promote Arabic language and culture.³⁸ According to Masud, Nāsir was using this institution also as a cover to spread a brand of socialism and to suppress the Islamists. Barely two years later, during the Egypt–Saudi political crisis, to arrest the inroads made by Nāsirism in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia founded [3] to spread the message of Islam, to fight conspiracies against it and to discuss problems relevant to Islam.³⁹ This organisation is a better example of the state *Da'wah*.

Again to contrast, Masud notes, a decade after the establishment of [3], the ex-Libyan military ruler, Col. Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī (r. 1389–1432/1969–2011), created [4] to propagate his ideology of Islam. It defines its five objectives as the spread of the Arabic language; purification of Islamic laws; organisation of studies for preparing devout Muslims; preparation of preachers; and starting reforms in Muslim countries. Among its central goals are the creation of Islamic revolution, reorganisation of religious education and Islamic missionisation.⁴⁰ As a well-structured centralised state-run organisation, it is viewed in the Muslim world as a political organ of the state that calls for *jihād* by *Da'wah* and relief work. In comparison, according to Masud, even though a state-sponsored institution founded by the first premier of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman (r. 1377–1390/1957–1970), in 1960, [2], does a more precisely focused *Da'wah* activity, particularly, of promoting Islamic way of life to non-Muslims. Given the multi-racial and multi-religious demographic composition of Malaysia, Perkin operates with great sensitivity, by confining its activities exclusively to providing services for converts such as instructions in the basics of Islam, providing accommodation and job-placement and training.⁴¹ It can be seen, none of these state-run institutions are substantially involved in promoting the message of Islam to non-Muslims.

According to Masud's analysis, all the non-state *Da'wah* entities, with the exception of [6], at times including it, are though officially non-registered organisations have the global reach. Their non-registration is perhaps due to the general perception of them as being politically motivated religious movements; this is especially the case with [5] and [7], and to some extent with [9] before its subsequent fall from grace in 1994.⁴² Though any one from public agreeing with their mission and activities can take their membership, Masud opines, none of these organisations are open to public meaning that their membership is restricted, with the obvious exception of [6], and in his opinion, being such, nearly all of them are naturally not open to non-Muslim.⁴³ Masud adds, even though, both [5] and [7] are political in nature they do differ in respect of *ṣūfī*-inclinations, where the latter has little or no *ṣūfī* outlook. He adds, this, however, was not the case with its founder Sayyid Abū 'l-A'la Mawdūdī (1321–1399/1903–1979), who himself hailed from a family of spiritual luminaries of the Qādiriyyah–Chishtiyah order.⁴⁴ To Masud, the only plausible reason for JI's such disinterest in sufiism may be found in the program for setting up of JI in 1941. It is stated that the program of JI includes: reconstruction of human thought in the light of Divine guidance; reconstruction of individuals by training them for *Da'wah*; reconstruction of society and its institutions according to the teachings of Islam; and revolution in the political leadership of the Muslim society to establish an Islamic state.⁴⁵ Masud opines, perhaps they wish to focus on *Da'wah* to first establish an Islamic state. Being

42. See, *ibid.*

43. See, *ibid.*

44. See, *ibid.*, p. lx. It needs to be clarified here that many Muslims consider reformists like Mawdūdī and, before him, Ibn Taymiyyah and others to be anti-*ṣūfīs*. In fact an un-prejudicial study of their biography will shed adequate light on their deep spiritual inclinations. George Makdisi records that Ibn Taymiyyah was indeed an ardent follower of Qādiriyyah order and he considered its founders as rightful imāms in their field. See, George Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiyya: A *ṣūfī* of the Qādiriyya Order," in his, *Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam* (Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1991), originally published in that Ibn Taymiyyah is "no less a *ṣūfī* than Ghazzālī. He happens, by the way, to have the formal credentials of Sufism not yet found for Ghazzālī." *Ibid.*, p. 119.

45. See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. lviii.

unsuccessful politically, he adds, may have turned them to be militant to achieve their objectives, especially so when their founders and leaders were unjustly victimised. He adds, this is definitely the case with [8], a *shi'i Da'wah* group mainly active in Iraq. Founded by Bāqir al-Sadr (1353–1400/1935–1980) in 1957 as a political party to revive the lot of the Iraqi *shi'ah*, it came into conflict with the ruling Ba'th party resulting, unfortunately, in the execution of its leader and it, subsequently, went underground and became militant.⁴⁶

Though Masud opines, unlike [7], [5] is militantly organised⁴⁷ the fact is that Muslim Brotherhood always remained committed to non-violent peaceful means of *Da'wah* even in the face of repressive oppression, torture and killings of its leaders under successive tyrannical military regimes.⁴⁸ Masud adds, though founded in 1928 by Ḥasan b. Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahmān al Bannā (1324–1368/106–1949), as a purely religious, educational and charitable association concerned with reversing the erosion of Islamic morals as a direct casualty of colonialism, MB, later, rose to the fore to beat the British-Zionist collaboration, by spearheading a movement that was self-reliant, financially independent and militarily potent called the *Jawwālāh* (ranger scout) which infiltrated the trade unions and the Egyptian armed forces.⁴⁹ To present authors, Masud is clearly mistaken here in his analogy and analysis as fighting foreign occupation is an internationally recognised fundamental human right

and thus taking recourse to it cannot become a justified ground to brand one with militancy.⁵⁰ Similarly, reaching out with one's ideas to all segments of the society, military or civil, falls under universally accepted right of freedom of expression. Masud concludes that, ultimately, its leaders paid with their lives for perusing their regime-change agenda.⁵¹ Clearly then, both [5] and [7] were serious in attempting the reform of the Muslims through assuming political leadership rather than focusing efforts on converting non-Muslims to Islam.

Likewise [6] is also reform-oriented, Masud adds, except that it is not militant in nature as [9] turned out to be in its later days, since they both focus on faith renewal of Muslims who are affected negatively by the challenges brought about by modernity and particularly its underlying secular ideology. Thus they exhort Muslims to return to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be on him). He adds, but annoyingly their political neutralism clearly contradicts the Prophet's active political leadership. Perhaps realising this anomaly in its principles [9] got belatedly interested in reckless political activism resulting in its eventual ban. Both these movements are noted by their conspicuous adherence to certain dress codes, which they conveniently deem as the *Sunnah*.⁵²

Hence, it can be seen that almost all of these *Da'wah* entities have mainly worked on the revival of Islam and the reform of Muslims and their societies rather than specifically working for reaching out to non-Muslims with the message of Islam. This is why they obviously did not work on any concrete strategy to fulfil the Islamic obligation of conclusively conveying the message of Islam (submission to none but the Creator in all affairs and spheres of life) to non-Muslims. This deficiency is very unfortunate but given to

⁵⁰ It is a known fact that the Indian Mutiny as the British colonisers termed the 1857 Revolt, was in fact, the start of the Indian Independence movement which bore fruits nearly a century later.

⁵¹ See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. lix. It is surprising why Masud seems to condone the acts of intolerant dictatorial murderers who took lives of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders because they were not able to counter the mass appeal of the intellectual challenge posed by Muslim Brotherhood leaders for the regime-change agenda.

⁵² See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, p. lix.

⁴⁶ See, *ibid.*, pp. lviii–lviii.

⁴⁷ See, *ibid.*, p. lviii.

⁴⁸ The mainstream *Ikhwan* remained committed to non-violent peaceful means of *Da'wah* even after their founding *Murshid 'Amm* was brutally assassinated in the street and the group as a whole endured repressive oppression, torture and judicial murder of its leaders under successive tyrannical military regimes. However, due to the bitter experience of imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood members, some of them had hardened their resolve against the establishment, and in the face of consistently peaceful approach of Muslim Brotherhood, opted to split from *Ikhwan* turning to militancy concluding that "Egypt was not simply a Muslim society in need of reform, but rather a *kāfir* or infidel society." See Michael Amerhom Yousef, "Al-Jihad...A Islamic Social Movement," Unpublished PhD thesis (Atlanta: Emory University, 1984), pp. 156–7, quoting 'Abd al-'Azim Ramadan, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin wa'l-Tanzim al-Suri* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Rus al-Yusuf, 1982).

⁴⁹ See, Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, pp. lviii–lix.

very weak commitment of most Muslims with Islam, narrowly-based faith revivalism strategy kept the *Da'wah* workers well engaged with Muslims living in both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries though in two different ways: one in reforming the Muslims in majority countries and the other in retaining their Islamic faith in non-Muslim settings. Further, sadly enough, in several non-Muslim countries *Da'wah* organisations have been infiltrated by the national security operatives who have hijacked them and swayed them away from their original objective of serving Islam to serving their non-Muslim masters, often by corrupting, vilifying or denying genuine Islamic workers. After this brief survey we now turn to a study of *Da'wah bi 'l-Hikmah* as a prospective strategy to promote Islam to non-Muslims.

Da'wah bi 'l-Hikmah: A Prospective Strategy

The term *hikmah* has a number of meanings.⁵³ The English equivalent of the term includes wisdom, sagacity and judiciousness. It (wisdom) is defined variously as “the power of true and right discernment,” “good practical judgement”⁵⁴ and as “the ability to make a right decision or judgement by applying intelligent thought to a wide range of experience and knowledge with prudence.”⁵⁵ However, the most befitting definition of “*hikmah*” or “wisdom” for the subject of this paper is “the soundness of judgement in the choice of means and

ends.”⁵⁶ Thus, the term, *Da'wah bi 'l-hikmah* means, soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends in inviting others to Islam. This term is closely related to the term *baṣīrah*, which has the meanings of penetrative insight, discernment, keen understanding, mental vision, perspicacity, etc.⁵⁷ This term seems to be used synonymously to *hikmah* in the following Qur'ānic *ayah*:

وَقُلْ هَدِيَّتُ سَبِيلَ أَتُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ نَجْوَةٍ ۖ أَنَا مِنَ اتَّبِعِي ۖ وَتَسْمَعُونَ اللَّهَ وَمَا أَتَا مِنْ
الْمُرْكُورَةِ ۚ

Say [O Prophet]: This is my way, I call towards Allah with sure knowledge and clear comprehension, I and whosoever follow me; and exalted is Allah; and I am not among the polytheists.⁵⁸

Thus *hikmah* or *baṣīrah* is the main operative principle of *Da'wah*. That is to invite towards Allah with sure knowledge, clear comprehension, sound judgement and appropriate means. This main operative principle functions through (a) Invitation with wisdom, (b) Beautiful preaching, and (c) Argumentation in the most gracious manner, as mentioned in the following *ayah* of the Qur'an:

وَأَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَتَذَرُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَخْسَنَ إِن رِزْقِ
هُوَ أَفْضَلُ مِن سَبِيلِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۚ

Invite (all) to the Way of your Rabb (Creator and sustainer) with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Rabb knows best, who have strayed from His Path and who receives guidance.⁵⁹

Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd b. Kathīr al-Āmīlī al-Ṭabarī

53. It is said the term *hikmah* has about twenty-nine statements of definition, including 'adī (justice, nobility, honesty, uprightness, just compromise, equitableness, impartiality, straightforwardness), 'ilm (knowledge, cognizance, acquaintance, information, cognition, intellect, perception), 'hilm (gentleness, clemency, mildness, forbearance, indulgence, patience, discernment, understanding, rōz ābādī, al-Qamūs al-Muhīd (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1406 AH), p. 1415; Abū 'l-Faḍl Jamāl al-d., vol. 12, p. 143; Muhammad b. Abī Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Shāh* (Beirut: Maktabah Lihān, d.), p. 62; Abū 'l-Sa'ād al-Mubārak b. Muhammad Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Sharḥ al-Hadīth wa 'l-hār*, ed., Tāhir Ahmad al-Zāwī wa 'l-Akharūn (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 119 & 419; also see, Sa'id b. 'Alī al-Qaṣṣānī, *al-Hikmah fī 'l-Da'wah ilā Allāh Ta'ālā*, pp. 18–23.

54. Sidney J. Landau, *Funk & Wagnall's Standard Desk Dictionary* (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1985), xl, 2, p. 787.

55. *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, Encyclopaedic edition (New York: Exicon Publications, 1990), p. 1128.

56. C. T. Onions, ed., *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 3rd revised edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 2436. It some what agrees with the collective definitions of the term in Arabic, which means, "saying and doing the right thing and to place every thing in its appropriate place." This agrees with the definition of *al-'adl* (justice), the definition of which is deduced through the term *al-zulm* (injustice) as "to place the thing not in its appropriate place." See, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf 'Alī b. Muhammad al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīf* (Cairo: Maktabah wa Maṭba'ah Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1938), pp. 125 and 128; Sa'id b. 'Alī, *al-Hikmah fī 'l-Da'wah ilā Allāh Ta'ālā*, p. 23.

57. See, Muhammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manzūr al-Ifrīqī, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 4, pp. 64ff.

58. See, the Qur'an 12: 108.

59. See, the Qur'an 16: 125.

(224–310/838–923) considers *al-Hikmah* mentioned in this *āyah* to be the revelation and the Book of Allah; and *al-Maw'izah al-Hasanah* to be the beautiful lessons which Allah has revealed in His Book as the clear proof for the addressees and the mention of His bounties to remind them; and *wa yādilhum bi'l-lā'ih* *hiy* *Alḥsan* to continue fulfilling responsibility of propagating the message of (submission to none but) Allah ignoring the harm the opposing addressees put forth.⁶⁰

Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī (544–606/1149–1210) commenting on this *āyah*, on the other hand, describes the meanings of these three methods of the main operative principle of *Da'wah*; al-Rāzī says: Be aware that *Da'wah* or invitation must be based on conclusive proof (*hujjah*) and clear evidence (*bayyinah*); and the purpose of presenting such evidence and proof is either inculcation of the creed and the message (towards which the invitation is being made) in the hearts and minds of the addressees or countering the argument of the opponent and making him pointless. He adds: the arguments for first purpose are essentially of two types: the conclusive proof is either definitive beyond even the possibility of being challenged or not of that level but suffices to provide complete contentment. So the arguments and proofs come out to be of three kinds. First is the definitive proofs adequate for being sure basis of the creed, it is termed as wisdom (*ḥikmah*); second is the convincing and persuasive proofs/arguments, it is termed as beautiful preaching (*al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah*); third are those argument which aim at countering the argument of the opponent and making him pointless, that is argumentation (*al-jadal*). For, the argumentation to be in the beautiful and perfect manner, argument is to be built on the premises which are agreed upon by all or at least agreed upon by the addressee.... Al-Rāzī then divides the people also to three kinds. To him, the best and foremost of the people are the wise searchers of the truth; in the middle are the common people who are straightforward and peaceful and they are the majority; and the lowest are those who have argumentative and offensive nature. The

āyah demands that the strong and accomplished ones be invited towards the Truth with wisdom that is through definitive conclusive proofs; whereas the common people be invited through beautiful preaching that is through convincing persuasive proofs; while dialogue with those who are inclined to argumentation needs to be carried out in beautiful and perfect manner.⁶¹

According to Sayyid Mawdūdī, this *āyah* implies that the one calling towards the path of (submission to none but) Allah should have "a sweet tongue, noble character and reasonable and appealing arguments and refrain from indulging in polemics, sophistry and controversy. The one who discusses things with people in the best manner, does not resort to accusations, crooked arguments, taunts, nor make fun of the opponent in order to defeat him and to win applause for his own superiority in arguments. On the contrary, he will try to convince the others in a simple and humble way, and when he feels that the other person has come down to crooked arguments, he will leave him alone lest the other should go further and further astray in his deviation."⁶²

This *āyah* shows that in the categories of arguments and proofs there is an order of gradation, where wisdom occupies the highest level.⁶³ This wisdom in *Da'wah* comprises of three ingredients:

Knowledge of the *Dā'i*

The *dā'i* must be knowledgeable in the *shar'ī* rules in respect of what he preaches to others, so that he will not invite others to a thing which he thinks as *wājib* or *ḥalāl* whereas in the *shar'* it is not *wājib* or *ḥalāl* thereby convincing a person for that which is not necessary.

Knowledge of *Da'wah* know-how

The *dā'i* must be knowledgeable in the *Da'wah* methodology which is clearly specified in a number of Qur'ānic *āyāt*, Prophetic sayings and

61. See, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn al-mulagqab bi Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafṣīr al-Kaḥīr al-Musammā al-Maḡāīb al-Ḥaḡīb*, 32 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḡyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 AH), vol. 20, pp. 286–287, commentary on the Qur'ān 16: 125.

62. See, S. Abul A'la Mawdūdī, *The meaning of Qur'ān*, tr., Ch. Muḥammad Akbar ed., A. A. Kamal, M. A., 1st edn. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, n.d.), vol. VI, pp. 106–107, commentary on 16: 125.

63. See, *ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 106.

60. See, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd b. Kathīr al-'Āmilī al-Taharī, *Jamī' al-Bayān 'an Tā'wīl al-Qur'ān*, ed., Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1420/2000), vol. 17, p. 321.

practice (*Sunnah*), and practices of various *Du'at* from Prophet's companions as well as from the succeeding generations.

Knowing Circumstances of the Addressees (*mad'u*)

The *da'i* must have a proper knowledge of the *mad'u*'s religious, social, personal, intellectual, political and economic circumstances, so that he be able to tailor and phrase the message appropriately to address the particular circumstances, needs and ills of the *mad'u* making a deep positive impact on his heart and mind. In this regard, a *da'i* must possess thorough knowledge of the *mad'u* taking into consideration the following seven factors to ensure proper phrasing of the message as well as formulation of proper strategy for its dissemination to meet-out the requirement of *Da'wah bi'l-hikmah*:

- Understanding conversion
- Comprehending non-Muslims and recognising their diverse natures
- The concept of gradation in *Da'wah*
- Priority in approach and content
- Political and economic realities
- The presence of religio-cultural diversity
- Correction of the image of Islam and Muslims

All these factors are inter-linked and inseparable. The correct *Da'wah* approach for a particular locality or country or community is determined by the inter-play of these factors. Thus, what is suitable for a Muslim majority country is different from what is suitable for a Muslim minority country. Again within Muslim minority context the approach again differs in a country where Muslims are taken as partners in progress from a country where they are irresponsibly suspected of their loyalty.⁶⁴ In such a situation the collective wisdom of the Muslim leadership in that particular locality must decide the most appropriate *Da'wah* approach; they need to follow, without being constrained by considerations of external situations. Let us now look at the above factors in some greater detail:

64. These two Muslim minority contexts can loosely be termed, in the classical terms, as Muslim residents of *dar al-ahd*, and the Muslim residents of *dar al-harb*.

Understanding Conversion

Before understanding the reasons why people convert to Islam one has to know the dynamics of conversion in general. This phenomenon, as William James, a Harvard University psychologist and philosopher, defines, is either a gradual or sudden process whereby "a self hitherto divided, consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities."⁶⁵ He here seems to be in agreement with Edwin Diller Starbuck (1866-1947), who observed that conversion "is in essence a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider intellectual and spiritual life of maturity."⁶⁶ To Larry Allan Poston, the experience shortens "the teenage metamorphosis" for when the subject reaches a certain point in the developmental process conversion becomes a viable solution to what is perceived to be a universal affliction of mankind: the difficulty of arranging into a coherent whole the various influences impinging upon the self from the different spheres of one's environment.⁶⁷ Starbuck argued, "sweeping international, inter-racial and interethnic concerns along with political, social and economic alternatives must be combined with specific cultural factors and individual idiosyncrasies. The number of possible combinations of these factors is bewildering and the individual is essentially alone in his struggle to adapt to a world-and life-view. A religious system can become both a paradigm of classification and a bonding agent according to which these factors can be separated, analysed and then synthesised into what is for each individual a rational and logical system of belief."⁶⁸ Since failure to accomplish this task of integration in some way can result in psychological malformation and mental illness, conversion, to James, has an essential positive function.

65. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The American Library, 1958), p. 157.

66. Edwin D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 370.

67. See, Larry Allan Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in North America and the Dynamics of Conversion in Western Societies*, Unpublished PhD thesis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988), pp. 369-370.

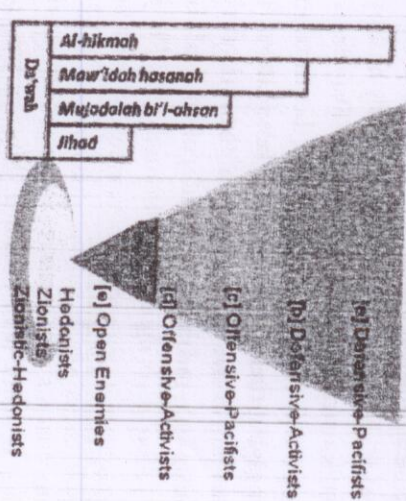
68. Edwin D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 37.

One may not fully agree with the keen observation of James regarding conversion as safeguard against psychological malfunction or a rescue from it, since, to other scholars, there are other reasons for an individual to undertake conversion. To, Lewis R. Rambo, a Psychology and Religion professor, some may choose conversion as, [a] a convenient escape mechanism from what is perceived to be a hostile environment, or [b] a retreat to work out a plan of self-reorganisation and integration without the interference of the realities of mundane life, or [c] an act of reverse psychology in relinquishing a more widely-held perspective for an unknown, obscure and often socially devalued one, or [d] even as a licence to economic and political lordship or leadership.⁶⁹ Conversion in these circumstances becomes a survival strategy. But all these plausible reasons have excluded the genuine cases of conversion based on one's genuine search for the Truth (*al-Haqq*) and conferring of Guidance (*Hiḍayah*) by the Creator given to sincerity of the searcher.⁷⁰ Many conversions in recent years, however, have been the result of chance attractions between Muslim women and non-Muslim men or the vice versa. Given to circumstantial strength of arguments most often the latter opts to convert to initiate or save the marriage. However, at occasions, conversions of this nature end with the termination of such marriages. Nevertheless, there have been cases where thus converted non-Muslims have gradually accepted Islam truly and proven to be better Muslims than even their born Muslim spouses.

Comprehending Non-Muslims and Their Diversity

Many scholars have discussed the methods of conveying the message of Islam to non-Muslims by classifying them on the basis of their religious persuasions. Scholars like Mawḍūdī and al-Bannā came up with specific strategy for approaching and inducing non-Muslims into the fold of Islam. Sayyid Mawḍūdī further gave very refined insights on the importance and need of comprehending the addressee

from various angles including socio-economic, religio-political and intellectual dimensions, and thus, phrasing the message and crafting the procedure accordingly.⁷¹ Imām al-Rāzī meticulously divided the arguments in three kinds as well as the addressees or people in three kinds with respect to their intellectual levels as well as their attitude towards the Truth and he prescribed the type of arguments suitable for each kind.⁷² However, the present authors did not come across a work of any scholar who would have attempted to understand the non-Muslims in respect of their doctrinal affiliation and orientation, or in respect of their attitude towards Islam and Muslims. To the present authors, this categorisation is very crucial to qualify the requisites of *Da'wah bi'l-ḥikmah*. The position of a *dā'ī* is like that of a physician, without analysing the symptoms and allergies of the patients no physician can prescribe the correct medicine. In the same way a Muslim *dā'ī* must have thorough knowledge of his *mad'ū* to craft a proper *Da'wah* strategy and to properly phrase the message. In this regard, to present authors, one may classify non-Muslims in respect of their attitudes towards their own religions and towards Islam into qualitative groups as indicated in the following diagram:



[a] Defensive-Pacifist Non-Muslims

These are non-Muslims who do not have any particular allegiance to their own religions, but are sympathetic towards them as a mark of

69. For an exposition of the conversion phenomenon, covering the meanings, purposes, and stages, see, Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 168–169.

70. See, the Qur'ān 42: 13.

71. See, S. Abul A'la Mawḍūdī, *The meaning of Qur'ān*, vol. VI, p. 106, commentary on 16: 125.

72. See, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafhīm al-Kabīr al-Musammā al-Majātib al-Ghayb*, vol. 20, pp. 286–287.

respect to the religions of their parents. Their attitude towards Islam is one of ignorance and they have no difficulty in relating to Muslims. They form the majority of non-Muslims. Approaching them would be through practical wisdom by presenting good personal example. To present authors, for them *Da'wah* work should be organised together with other social and charitable activities. Perhaps providing good and cheap medical or legal services could be one area. Muslims may join hands with them in the eradication of social evils and in the alleviation of poverty. Sharing Islamic teachings regarding the said issues with appropriate examples from the life conduct or *Sirah* of the Prophet (peace be on him) coupled with the core message of *tawhid* which he propagated may be enough to open their hearts and minds for Islam. There seems no need to debate and preach intricacies of theology to them.

[b] Defensive-Activist Non-Muslims

These groups of non-Muslims are like the above one, except that they are knowledgeable about their religions and feel satisfied with them. They again do not display any particular trait of hatred towards Islam and Muslims. They only work to preserve their own religious identity. This, by the way, is a perfectly healthy quality that Muslims must learn to appreciate in them. They form the second majority group. Approaching them would be through theoretical wisdom by engaging them in discussions on common values and the right understanding of the fundamentals of the reality of existence or the Truth (*al-Haqq*) and how it is interwoven in the articles of Islamic faith.

[c] Offensive-Pacifist Non-Muslims

These are non-Muslims who consider Islam as a deviated religion but are nonetheless friendly with Muslims. Most of the 'people of the Book' belong to this category. Approaching them would be through *maw'izah hasanah*. Emphasis should be on the commonalities between Islam and their religions while being responsibly mindful of the differences. At the same time every effort must be made to point out the unfair interpretations and misinformation about Islam recklessly written by their own scholars.

[d] Offensive-Activist Non-Muslims

These are those non-Muslims who consider Islam as a threat to their religions. They fully acknowledge the truth of Islam but feel challenged by it. In fact most of the orientalists and evangelists belong to this category. Though this may come as a surprise to many ordinary Muslims, most ordinary Jews and even many of their Rabbis fall into this category. The learned amongst these people love to challenge the fundamentals of Islam through pseudo intellectual arguments. Appropriate methodology to approach them would be *al-jadal al-ahsan*. Expansion of knowledge and enlightenment inevitably erodes their turf. Try to understand their plight and, if feasible, accommodate their legitimate concerns and, if helpful, dispel their fears. However, their objections cum arguments need to be countered in the most beautiful and perfect manner, building the countering arguments on the premises which are agreed upon by all or at least agreed upon by them.

[e] Open Enemies

These are non-Muslims whose avowed ceaseless aim is to discredit Islam and Muslims by enthusiastically engaging in Islam-bashing activities, subtle or otherwise.⁷³ Even though they form a minority, they nevertheless often exert a disproportionate influence on and control over the rest of the non-Muslims. To this category we can consign the Zionists⁷⁴ and their equally fanatical lackeys among the other non-Muslims and to a great extent 'dubious Muslims' like the Qādiyānis and the Bahā'is. They are often the root cause for many of the problems afflicting humanity. Through their policy of doctrinal fanaticism and strategic pursuit of hedonistic perversions, cunningly and often artfully, they crusade against all the established norms and

73. This category include mostly Zionists, Hedonists and such other remaining anti-humanistic agents now that the Apartheidists have at last recanted and reformed.

74. There is a need to qualify this old term, as it has extended in its meaning, scope and reach in this post-Camp David and post-Cold War era. Now it is common to find Christian Zionists among the neo-cons of America who are avowedly and resolutely working towards an engineered unjust settlement of the Israel-Palestine crisis in collaboration with some Muslim Zionists who are reconciled to the idea of a two-state theory and rushing to a compromised, pre-empted, unjust and needlessly enervated peace deal with the illegitimate entity of Israel.

ethos which have, otherwise, kept the colourfully divergent human communities benignly living in perfect harmony with one another. Handling them could be done either by earnestly ignoring them or condemning them out rightly. However, their objections cum arguments need to be countered in the most beautiful and perfect manner making them pointless.

The above classification is by no means exhaustive. There are also emerging trends within the alternate scene in modern society that aims totally to liberate man from the perceived shackles of religion. For they somehow feel that religions have been the single factor which has brought ignominy to mankind's progress. As such they seek to build a new world order bereft of any religious guidance and commitment. These are often the people, not necessarily exclusively non-Muslim in character, who through their well-spread network of secretive lodges and even perversely through charitable institutions are promoting all manner of hedonistic culture under various guises including that of promoting apparently universal brotherhood but in fact aimed at totally uprooting the religious foundations of morality even by recommending the deliberate tolerance of immoralities, ostensibly for the continued temporal progress of human society. To achieve their nefarious designs they even prostitute religious values and norms, increasingly, through sophisticated 'hijackings' of religious institutions and leaderships. This networked evil definitely is too great a challenge for any single religion to handle, especially, as the globalisation grows. It is here that Muslims can act hand in hand with equally sincere members of other religious fraternities to weed out this parasitic menace. Tackling these evil bunches should be through well coordinated intellectual campaign (*jihād*) embracing all its aspects and waged on all fronts, co-opting in it, as necessary, every true non-Muslim friend, a sort of religious equivalent of the current purely political "coalition of the willing" so to speak.

The Concept of Gradation in *Da'wah*

Da'wah workers (or *du'at*) must bear in mind the natural limitations of the *mad'ū*. As mentioned earlier in this paper, people differ in respect of their commitment with regard to observance of their

religious duties and obligations, as much as they differ in respect of their age, gender, profession and other socio-economic statuses. Thus, the message of Islam must be presented in such ways as to meet the varied needs of the different categories of people. A clear distinction needs to be made between: *mubtadi'* (beginner) and *muntahī* (accomplished); *qawī* (strong) and *da'if* (weak); 'umūm (general) and *khusus* (specific). The Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said:

We, the Prophetic community, are commanded to address the people according to their level of understanding.⁷⁵

Thus in propagating the message of Islam, the Prophet (peace be on him) kept in view a meticulously thought out gradation, based on prudence and foresight, in what he presented to each people just the same way as he observed it when addressing the various strata of society. He gauged the capacity of his audience prior to conveying the message. He knew that he is carrying a trust (*amānah*) which needs to be delivered to those for whom it was intended. Hence, he was very prudent in his expressions not to mention his judgements. He did not say everything to everyone. He was careful with his words and in his actions, since all that he expressed was nothing but revelation. Thus he was cautious in what he said to whom among his companions. What he said to those companions who went with him through thick and thin was different from what he said to those who accepted his message on the day of the conquest of Makkah, for example. If there seems a contradiction between what he said to A

75. See, al-Imām al-Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī, *al-Maqā'id al-Haṣanah fī Bayān Kaḥīr min al-Āḥādīth al-Mukhtalifah 'alā al-Ālīmīnah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 125; Also quoted by 'Abd al-'Azīz Jam'ah Amin, *al-Da'wah: Qawā'id wa Uṣūl*, 2nd edition (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wah, 1983), p. 181. It is well said, "Not all that one knows is meant to be said, nor all that which was permitted to be said has come its time to be said, and nor all that for which the time has come, has come its people and men to be said to." 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abbas (3 sit-68 AH/618-687) reported of the Prophet (peace be on him) as having said, "Do not narrate to my community any of my ḥadīth except that which their intellect can bear because it can cause them to go astray." In another version of the ḥadīth, the Prophet (peace be on him) is reported as having said "You should not narrate a ḥadīth to people which cannot reach their intellect, as if not properly understood it will cause some of them to go astray." See, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhawī, *al-Maqā'id al-Haṣanah fī Bayān Kaḥīr min al-Āḥādīth al-Mukhtalifah 'alā al-Ālīmīnah*, vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

and that which he told to B., it does not indicate the falsity of the *ḥadīth*. Many, in their attempt to reconcile such perceived contradictions in his statements, have considered one *ḥadīth* as weak (*daʿīf*) and the other, which agrees with their stand as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). This denial of one *ḥadīth*, at the worst, is tantamount to accusing the Prophet (peace be on him) of telling lies, which is blasphemous. In fact the Prophet (peace be on him) by stating such seemingly 'contradictory' statements has indeed executed his responsibility fully and has exercised prudence through economy of words as he was directed. For instance, let us consider the following *ahādīth* narrated by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Bayhaqī (384-458/994-1066) on the prohibition and permission of consuming liquor.⁷⁶ jābir b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 78/697) and several other Companions reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) prohibited the consumption of the lesser quantity of a thing that intoxicates if its more quantity is consumed:

قال زبيل الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ما لئك شربة قليله فخر

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said: Whatever intoxicates if consumed more in quantity the lesser of it is equally *ḥarām*.⁷⁷

Whereas another saying of the Prophet (peace be on him) is narrated by Abū Burdah Ḥanī' b. Nayyār (d. 42/661) stating:

ما شربوا ما يسكر

Drink and do not get intoxicated.⁷⁸

Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (214-303/c. 829-915) considered this *ḥadīth* as an objectionable and incorrect; stating that the *rāwī* (narrator) Abū 'I-Aḥwaṣ Sallām b. Sulaym (d. 179/795) has erred in it. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān further said that Abū 'Abd Allāh

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī (780-855/164-241) also said that the *rāwī* (narrator) 'Abū 'I-Aḥwaṣ has erred in this *ḥadīth*.⁷⁹ However, to present authors, whatever the level of complaint anyone may have on the text or the narrator of the above *ḥadīth*, none has affirmed that the Prophet (peace be on him) did not make such a statement. One has to be careful in what one affirms or denies in respect of the Prophetic *ḥadīth*.⁸⁰ For any such denial would mean a wilful suppression of evidence whatever noble one's intention may be; and which the Prophet (peace be on him) vehemently condemned in these words:

من كذب على الله تعالى أو على رسوله أو على خلقه فقد كذب على الله تعالى

Whosoever intentionally tells a lie against me let him find his abode in the hellfire.⁸¹

The above *ḥadīth*, according to many scholars, is perfectly in agreement with the Qur'ānic evidence regarding the gradual prohibition of liquor. Now, one way of reconciling these contradictory *ahādīth* is by applying them on the different categories of people. In the absence of a perfect Islamic society, a person who happened to be weak in his faith and commitment to Islam and happened to have addiction for such habits could be advised to gradually transform himself to fully abide by prohibition of such acts. This subjective approach, to present authors, seems better to the one where a firm stand on such matters would lead a newly convert or for that matter a sinning Muslim to renounce his faith in Islam simply because he did not have the psychological strength to kick his bad habit immediately. This does not, however, mean to give a blanket-permission for a person to continue living in sin, one has to make every effort to amend his character as he progresses in Islam.

79. See, *ibid*.

80. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (767-820/150-204) said, "Certainly acting according to two (contradictory) *ḥadīths* or (scholarly) opinions is better than invalidating one of them, because that is an indication of the perfection of the state of *īmān*." See, Abū al-Muwāḥib 'Abd al-Waḥhāb b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Sha'rānī, *al-Mizān al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Muṣṣaṭṭaf al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 3.

81. See, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-'Ilm, Bāb ihm man kaṭṭab 'alā 'I-Nabīy Salā Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam; Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Nishābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb Muqaddimah, Bāb Tagḥīz al-Kaḥib 'alā Rasūl Allāh Salā Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam.

Here, another principal aspect of *Da'wah* strategy is worth discussing. The present authors opine that the gradual approach in presentation of and compliance with prohibitions needs to be applied to different categories of people as well as in view of differences in time and place as a *Da'wah* strategy. That is, during the early period of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), in Makkah, not very many *shar'ī* rules were revealed rather the contents of most revelations as well as the efforts of the Prophet (peace be on him) remained focussed on instilling the core Islamic beliefs, fundamental moralities and the Islamic worldview based on the correct understanding of the fundamentals of the reality of existence. It was only after his migration to Madinah that most of the *shar'ī* laws and rules were gradually revealed and implemented. One may ask, is the difference of Makkah and Madinan periods still applicable and can it be adopted as *Da'wah* strategy? In present authors' view it is still applicable as *Da'wah* strategy, especially in hostile environments, where being or becoming a Muslim is only grudgingly tolerated. Even the Prophet (peace be on him) adopted the strategy of gradual presentation of the message and the injunctions while in Madinah. A clear example of the said strategy practiced by the Prophet (peace be on him) while in Madinah can be seen in the instructions given by him to Mu'adh b. Jabal [d. 18/639] when he was sent to Yemen in 9/630.⁸² Thus it is abundantly clear that if this gradation in the presentation of the message is not properly observed, there is not only the possibility that at times outcome of a whole lot of *Da'wah* endeavours coming to naught but there is also the likelihood that at some other times it may damage the very interest of the message.

The *dā'ī*'s success, therefore, depends on his correct diagnosis of the status and nature of the *mad'ū*. Thus his approach and strategy needs to differ and be moulded according to the exact situation and orientations of the people. He must know whether those invited are sinful Muslims, or Muslims mired in superstitions and innovations,

or if they are People of the Book, are they Christians or Jews, or if they are animists, atheists, naturists, idolaters, polytheists or plain pagans? Once he understands the orientations of these various groups of people, he will be able to devise the correct and wise method of deciding which of the options he has to put forward or delay in presenting Islam. He will also be able to decide on the priority of one or more issues over the other(s) and which of the decided issues is important and needs to be started with.

Another principal aspect of *Da'wah* strategy which needs to be taken into consideration is that the *dā'ī* also needs to know how to present key Islamic concepts to the votaries of different religious orientations. Efforts should be made to understand how they have themselves understood the basic elements and constituents of their own faith. This cannot be ascertained except through sharing our faith with others. Instead of finding fault with their religious beliefs, it would be wiser for us to engage them in healthy discussions through mutual visits. It is rather disturbing to find the degree of animosity and the general ill-feelings towards other religions, particularly when Muslims have begun increasingly living in multi-racial and multi-religious societies. There are always elements within a society who are overzealous in promoting their religious views and who often in their zeal mindlessly underrate and condemn other religious beliefs. This behaviour seems very much in contradiction of the Qur'anic teachings, described in the following *ayah*:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدُوًّا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ مُّجْتَمِعٌ ﴿٤﴾
 أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدُوًّا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ مُّجْتَمِعٌ ﴿٤﴾

Revile not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In end they will return to their *Rabb*, and He shall then tell them truth of all they did.⁸³

As mentioned earlier, the role of the *dā'ī* in this respect is like a physician who diagnoses the patient and determines the illness and thereafter prescribes treatments suiting the state of the patient and

83. See, the Qur'ān 6: 108.

82. See for the full text, Muhammad b. Isma'īl al-Bukhārī, *Sahih al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Fitnah, 3/411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

his disease, while bearing in mind the patient's general strength and weakness, his ability to undergo the treatment and if need arises whether he has to undergo operation to remove any organ or parts from his body in order to extirpate the illness towards ensuring the overall well-being of the patient. Likewise, the *dā'ī* diagnoses the society in general and determines the ills afflicting the society and prescribes suitable and appropriate actions and moves to arrest the social problems by clearly introducing relevant issues of Islamic beliefs and values appealing to the heart and mind of the *mad'ū* arousing his feelings to accept the message.

Priority in Approach and Content

In order for *Da'wah* to be effective there is a need to prioritise its approach and contents. Priority may differ according to the gradations in the level and the situations of the *mad'ū*. The following are some of the aspects which have to be considered in setting the order of priority:

Emulation before Propagation (*al-quduwah qabl al-Da'wah*)

The best form of *Da'wah* is through emulation. A *dā'ī* has to be a model for others to follow. The Prophet (peace be on him), prior to his call, was living among the Makkans and won their admiration and affection. He was selected by the Makkans to resolve even inter-tribal feuds,⁸⁴ as given to his exemplary sound character he was established as an upright and ideal human being; This was also unanimously verified by all Makkans right before he publicly announced that he had been commissioned with Prophethood by the Creator Allah and invited them all to the message of Islam (submission to none but the Creator in all affairs).⁸⁵ Before inviting

others to Islam, a *dā'ī* thus needs to win the respect and trust of fellow men, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He must be regarded as a committed humanitarian.

Affection before Introduction (*al-ta'īf qabl al-ta'rif*)

The *dā'ī* must love and show concern for his audience. He could express his love for them through financial assistance of the needy and care for the social needs. When the barrier of disinterest is removed instructing a *mad'ū* will become easier. Long before receiving Prophethood given to his honesty, integrity, truthfulness, trustworthiness and compassion for the poor, oppressed and down-trodden, Muhammad [peace be on him] received the title of *al-Amin*, the trustworthy, as well as *al-Sādiq*, the truthful, from the people of Makkah, friends and foes alike. Due to this extraordinary trust many Makkans used to keep their money and valuables with Muhammad [peace be on him] for safekeeping.⁸⁶

Introduction before Obligation (*al-ta'rif qabl al-taklif*)

It is said that knowledge precedes action. It is, therefore, necessary that the *mad'ū* be given the required basic introduction, orientation and knowledge of the Islamic beliefs and teachings to begin his life as a Muslim. This is very much clear from the practice of the Prophet (peace be on him) in propagation of the message of Islam.⁸⁷

There are some *dā'īs* who believe that since the message of Islam has reached all corners of the world with the blessings of modern technological means, there is no further need to explain Islam to others. This is a clear indication of the ignorance of people, of their natures and the level and reality of their understanding of Islam.

Every *Da'wah* effort must go through the following three stages of development: i) Introduction and orientation; ii) formation and selection; and iii) implementation and action. If a *dā'ī* is not aware of these stages, he will be committing many mistakes, because each of these stages has its own peculiarities in respect of style, approach,

84. See, Muhammad b. Ishāq b. Yasar, *Kitaḥ al-Siyar wa'l-Maghāzī*, ed., Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1398/1978), vol. 1, pp. 108-109; 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, eds., Muṣṭafā al-Saqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and 'Abd al-Hafīz Shalabi (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, 1375/1955), vol. 1, pp. 196-197; Abū 'l-Faḍl Muhammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Sayyid al-Nā al-Yāmurī, *Uyūn al-Aḥar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa'l-Shamā'il wa'l-Siyar*, ed., Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ramaḍān (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1414/1993), vol. 1, p. 66. See also, Tark Jan, *The Life and Times of Muhammad Rasūl Allāh: Universalizing the Abrahamic Tradition* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1998), pp. 102-103.

85. See, 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 1, p. 351; Tark Jan, *The Life and Times of Muhammad Rasūl Allāh*, pp. 121-122.

86. See, Muhammad b. Ishāq, *Kitaḥ al-Siyar wa'l-Maghāzī*, vol. 1, p. 78; Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Jabarī*, vol. 2, pp. 290 and 387.

87. See, for example, note 82 above.

This requires the *da'i* to impart the information in correct measure gradually just as a physician administers medicine in correct doses. For example, overemphasis on spirituality at the expense of required normative religious duties that pertain to the individual and his close social relations must be avoided before the *mad'u* is sufficiently equipped to undertake such profound learning and higher trainings.

Facility and not Difficulty (*al-taysir la al-tas'ir*)

Allah the Creator is merciful. The primary Islamic sources stress that mercy is Allah's hallmark in creation and constitutes His primary relation to the world from its inception through eternity, covering this world and the next. All that transpires, even that which appears adverse, all takes place under the gamut of cosmic mercy:

وَأَرْجَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ أَيْتُونِي ۚ

It is the All-Merciful Who assumed the Throne.⁹²

The above Qur'anic statement means that Allah designs the world, rules and relates to it as being All-Merciful (*al-Rahmān*), vis-à-vis from Him being "Overpowering" (*al-Jabbār*). Mercy, therefore, is rooted in ontology. The *ḥadīth* "My mercy precedes my wrath"⁹³ is the *sunnaḥ* of the Creator in His creation. This ontological order is further emphasised in another version of this *ḥadīth*, which states: "My Mercy has vanquished My wrath."⁹⁴ This ontological mercy is *raison d'être* of Islam, the only way of life (*Dīn*) revealed by the Creator through all of His true Messengers and Prophets (peace be on them all).⁹⁵ Creator's Mercy is thus innate in all Islamic teachings.

92. See, the Qur'an 20: 5.

93. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Bāb "Wa kān 'Ashuh 'alā al-Mā'." 94. See, Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Nishābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Bāb Mā jā' fi Qawl Allāh Ta'ālā "Wahū Allāḥi Yaddu' al-Kholq Thumm Yu'aduh," also see, Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, "Mercy: The stamp of creation," (2004), available online at: <<http://www.nawawi.org/downloads/article1.pdf>>, p. 2.

95. According to Islamic teachings all the Prophets (*anbiyā'*) and Messengers (*rusul*) commissioned by the Creator Allāh invited mankind towards one and the same *dīn* (way of life), Islam, i.e. Submission to /Messengers (peace be on them) and their followers called themselves Muslims. See, for example, the Qur'an 2: 130–133; 3: 19, 52, 85; 5: 44; 10: 71–72, 83–86, 90; 12: 101; 27: 30–31; 42: 13; 51: 35–36. For need, nature and brief history of the Prophethood, see, Sayyid Abū 'l-A'la Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding Islam*, tr. Kurshid Ahmad (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, n.d.), pp. 29–73.

This innate mercy underlying all Islamic teachings takes several forms. The first fact which governs these various forms of innate mercy is that none of the Islamic obligations is beyond human capacity as the following *āyah* of the Qur'an clearly declares:

وَلَا يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ فِعْلًا إِلَّا وَهَنًا لَّهَا مَا كَتَبَ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ۚ

Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity; [then] for every one is what he earned, and on him is what he incurred.⁹⁶

The second fact is that the purpose of the Creator Allah from the Islamic teachings is to ensure ease for humans and to save them from difficulties in the grand scheme of the cosmos (which we might not, however, understand fully at times), as declared by Allah in the following *āyah* of the Qur'an:

وَرِيدَ اللَّهِ يَكُفُّ أَلَمَهُ لَوْلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعَذَابَ

Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties.⁹⁷

The third fact is that the Creator Allah has not given way to difficulty and burdensomeness in Islamic teachings, as described in following *āyah* of the Qur'an:

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكَ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۚ

And He has imposed no difficulties on you in the way of life (*Dīn*) [which He has revealed].⁹⁸

The efforts focusing on propagation of Islam or in other words *Da'wah* efforts, therefore, should adhere to the principle of causing no difficulty by explaining Islamic teachings in their proper context and sequence always keeping in view the crucial innate principles of Islamic teachings.

Encouragement before Caution (*al-tarḥīb qabl al-tarḥīb*) / Glad Tidings before Warning (*al-bushrā qabl al-Indhār*)

These principles mean that few words of encouragement will readily

96. See, the Qur'an 2: 286.

97. See, the Qur'an 2: 185.

98. See, the Qur'an 22: 78.

draw the *mad'ū* closer to submission and obedience to none but Allah the Creator. Even an avowed sinner will change his behaviour and outlook towards life, if he is properly encouraged to stay away from disobedience of Allah. The following passage of the Qur'an is an excellent example of encouragement:

﴿قُلْ يَبْنَودَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَى أُنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْضَرُونَ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَأَلْبِسُوا إِلَىٰ رِبِّكُمْ وَأَنْبَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُنَادِيَ بِكُمْ الْفُتُورَ الْخَسِيسَ مَا أَزِلُكُمْ مِنْ رِبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ الْغَدَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ۝ وَأَلْبِسُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُرِيكُمْ مِنْ رِبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُنَادِيَ بِكُمْ الْغَدَابُ بَغْضًا وَأَنْبَلُوا إِلَىٰ رِبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ أَوْ تَقُولُ حِينَ تَرَىٰ الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي مِنَ السَّخَرِينَ ۝ أَوْ تَقُولُ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

Proclaim (on My behalf): "O, My servants who have transgressed against their own-selves! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins for He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn you passionately to your *Rabb* (in repentance) and submit to His (Will), before the penalty comes on you: after that you shall not be helped. And follow the best of the courses revealed to you from your *Rabb*, before the penalty comes on you—all of a sudden, while you perceive not! Lest someone should say, 'Pity on me, because I fell short in respect of (observing the rights of) Allah and in fact, I was one of those who mocked,' or, (lest) someone ... ld say, 'If Allah were to show me the way, I would have surely been among those who fear Allah,' or (lest) one should say when he (actually) sees the penalty: 'If only I had another chance, I should certainly be among those who do good.'¹⁰⁰

There is a need to give the people hope to amend their ways in conformity with the Will of the Creator and avoid giving way to despair. There is dire need, in this regard, to avoid passing any raw remarks and passing on careless translations of the Islamic texts and terminologies. Often a time we hear scholars translating a crucial

Islamic term '*taqwā*' as "fear of Allah." This rendition is not very precise, because the word '*taqwā*,' the root of which is '*waqa*' has the meaning of protection or shield or beware; and it is more carefully translated as 'consciousness of Allah.' When a person, more so a person from a Christian background, is told to fear Allah, the first thing that comes to his mind is that Allah is some sort of a tyrant that man has to fear Him. And that He is not Loving. This is, of course, against His true nature of being the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate, time and again repeated in the Qur'an:

﴿وَالرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

The Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, the adequate way for *dā'ī* is to highlight the compassion and mercy of the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate Creator to motivate people for repentance and avoid giving way to despair and hopelessness. This is exactly what the Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have taught in his following command reported by Anas b. Mālik (d. 93/714):

﴿نُفِّرُوا وَلَا تُعْصِرُوا، وَتُفْقِرُوا﴾

Facilitate do not make difficult and give glad-tiding and do not drive them away.¹⁰¹

The *dā'ī*, thus, need to facilitate a *mad'ū*'s efforts for learning Islam gradually and practice it without imposing unnecessary conditions by ignoring the crucial innate principles of Islamic teachings.

Helping to Understand not Dictating (*al-tafhim lā al-talqīn*)

The *dā'ī* must make conscious efforts to make his *mad'ū* adequately understand the basic teachings and instructions rather than merely giving out notes and explanations without realising the potential effect of a lack of proper understanding could have on the behaviour of the *mad'ū*. Thus the approach taken to make an unlettered man

100. This is the closing part of Basmallah, the opening sentence of each *Sūrah* of the Qur'an except one; it is also repeated at other places in the Qur'an, see for example, the Qur'an 1: 2.

101. See, Muhammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-'Ilm, Bāb Mā Kān al-Nabīyy Salla Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam Yatakhawwuhum bi 'l-Maw'idhah wa 'l-'Ilm kay lā Yanfiḥū aḥ'aduh 'alayh.

3. See, the Qur'an 39: 53–58.

understand the basic instructions is different from the approach taken for a highly educated person. The examples which *dā'ī* uses to bring understanding to people of different levels must be chosen carefully matching to their intellectual and educational level. It would be insightful in this regard to consider case of explanations given by Prophets Dāwūd and Sulaymān (peace be on both) regarding the damage to the crops caused by the sheep; out of the two explanations the one given by Sulaymān (peace be on him) happened to be more appropriate, since Allah inspired him with right understanding of the said matter, despite giving them both the judgement and knowledge, as described in following passage of the Qur'ān:

وَوَدَّوْدُ وَيْلَيْمَنْ إِذْ يَخْصِمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفِثَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكَانَ فِي جُحُومِهِمْ
 شُوبِيرٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَظَهَرَنَاهَا لِسُلَيْمَانَ وَكَانَ أَتَيْنًا حَكِيمًا وَعَلَّمْنَا دَاوُدَ
 الْحَيْثَانَ يَسْتَحِقُّ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكَانَ فَعِيلٍ ﴿١٠٢﴾

And when David and Solomon, gave judgment in the matter of the field into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night: We did witness their judgment. To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge; it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises, with David: it was We Who did (all these things).¹⁰²

The judgement of Prophet Dāwūd (peace be on him) was also correct as per the apparent nature of the matter, except that the judgement of his son Sulaymān (peace be on him) was more correct, appropriate and praiseworthy as it was based on the intricate understanding of the matter given to him by a divine inspiration.

Cultivation and not Deprivation (*al-tarbiyah lā al-ta'riyah*)

The aim of a Muslim is always to reform his self and direct it towards all that is the good. The *dā'ī* must understand his own weaknesses before even trying to find fault with others. As such he should

refrain from condemning others for their mistakes. The self has the natural propensity towards loving that which is better than its expectation and to hate that which is inferior to its expectation. Therefore, the *dā'ī* must approach people through *ihsān*. Certainly showing love towards a sinner and concealing his weakness without spreading it to others is better than exposing him. However, this should not mean that the crime he committed should be condoned and there is a big difference between condemning a person and condoning a crime. An excellent model behaviour in this regard is presented for all in the incident where a young man came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) seeking his permission to commit *zinā* (fornication, adultery). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) made him understand the viciousness of his demand by asking him whether he would like the said act to happen to his own mother, daughter, sister and other close relatives? After securing a negative answer from the young man in case of each of his above mentioned female relatives, the Prophet (peace be on him) politely told him that the other people also do not like that the *zinā* be committed with their female relatives. Through this polite compassionate questioning his intellect and reasoning was invoked to rethink his position and thus the young man was made to understand the wisdom of prohibition of *zinā* and the necessity to refrain from it.¹⁰³ Thus it is necessary for a *dā'ī* to reform the character of the *mad'ū* through sound reasoning without blindly rushing to condemn him or his act.

Da'wah Approaches Need to be Need-Specific

This discussion necessitates that the *Da'wah* approaches need to be need-Specific, since presenting Islam to an atheist is different from presenting it to a person who believes in God. Presenting the Islamic concept of oneness of Deity (*al-Tawhīd*) to a monotheist is different

103. See, for full text of this *hadīth*, Abū 'I-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Ahmad al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, ed., Hamdī b. 'Abī al-Ḥamid al-Salāfi, 25 vols., 2nd edn. (Cairo: Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah, 1404/1983), vol. 8, p. 190. Kitāb Bāb al-Ḥā', Bāb Ḥariz b. 'Uthmān 'an Sulaym b. 'Āmir. Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī (735–804/1335–1405) rated this *hadīth* to be authentic. See, Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1412 AH), vol. 1, p. 341.

02. See, the Qur'ān 21: 78–79.

from presenting it to a person who believes in one supreme God along with a multitude of semi-gods. To present authors, in approaching an atheist, pagan, animist, and naturalist, the following aspects need to be focussed:

- Natural and intellectual proofs proving the existence of the Creator Allah and Him being alone in Administering and Sustenance (*Rubūbiyyah*) of the Universe with visible and tangible examples; after inculcation of the right concept of *Rubūbiyyah* arguments then be presented for Him being the alone Deity and Sovereign (*Ilāh*);

- The said natural and intellectual proofs/arguments be supplemented with the arguments from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*;

As for approaching a *wahānī* (idolater) with the message of Islam, the following aspects need to be addressed:

- Intellectual proofs confirming that the Creator Allah is alone in Administering and Sustenance (*Rubūbiyyah*) of the Universe, and then arguments for Him being the alone Deity and Sovereign (*Ilāh*) should follow in discourse;
- Weakness of all objects of worship except Allah;
- Absolute perfection belongs to Allah alone;
- The Creator Allah's being the alone Deity and Sovereign (*Ilāh*) was the message of all the Prophets (peace be on them);
- Exaggerated dedication towards savants is the cause of man's most inbecoming victim of polytheism (*shirk*);
- Clarification of the concept of Affirmed and denied intercession;

- Humanity's Caliph-ship of Allah on the earth and subservience of all things of the universe for humans;

Reality of the life and death and the concept of resurrection and hereafter.

In approaching the People of the Book the following aspects could be focussed:

- Intellectual and textual proofs confirming the abrogation of all previous *sharā'i* by the *sharī'ah* revealed upon the last and final Prophet/Messenger Muhammad (peace be on him);
- Clear proofs indicating the occurrence of interpolations and concoctions in the texts of *Tawrā* and *Injīl*;
- Affirmation of the confession by the (testament) writers for the same among their scholars;
- Confirmation and Conformation of the messages of the Prophets Mūsā, 'Isā and Muḥammad (peace be on them all).

In addition to this the Christians have to be addressed with the following:

- The invalidity of the doctrine of trinity and proofs for the aloneness and uniqueness of the Creator Allah;
- Proofs establishing the humanity and Prophethood of 'Isā (peace be on him) and that he worshipped Allah and invited Israelites for the same;
- Proofs on the invalidity of the crucifixion or killing of Prophet 'Isā (peace be on him).

In approaching Muslims, who are far removed from ideals and practices of Islam, except that they are born into a Muslim family, *Da'wah* to them needs to focus on:

- The favours of the Creator Allah and the need of submission to none but the Creator in all aspects of individual and collective spheres of life to attain success (dignity, peace and prosperity) in this life as well as in the hereafter;

- Right conception of the life and death;
- Right conception and relevance of the belief in the life hereafter and events associated to life after death;

Allah is infinite capacity for forgiveness and mercy vis-à-vis only god. His justice and forgiveness are not limited by time and space.

As for Muslims who are overzealous bigots they also need to be reined in and guided towards the true path of Islam, a path of responsible moderation, through wise persuasion. Efforts need to be made to fully understand the exact rationale for their dogged bigotry. Rejecting them outright is neither a solution nor wise; it will only generate more undue sympathy for them. However, they must be encountered with wisdom, if necessary through projecting those who uphold the fundamentals of Islam in a right moderate manner, not the liberals in the name of moderation who out of their unsound knowledge or lack of confidence in the prudence of Islamic teachings are unduly generous in readily compromising away even the very fundamental Islamic principles.

From the foregoing it is clear that, in introducing Islam to others, the understanding of *mad'u*'s religious inclinations and orientations is essential. Even their various other socio-economic statuses have to be considered. Most importantly the *dā'ī* should not resort to ridiculing the beliefs of others or pass any derogatory remarks. He is required just to convey the message of Islam to others in as convincing and pleasing a manner as possible, without loosing his own balance and dignity or stooping so low as to insult the cherished beliefs of others.

Political and Economic Realities

Da'wah efforts also need to take into consideration the politico-economic and religio-legal circumstances of the community. The places where Muslims are politically and economically independent they ought to promote practice and implementation of the collective aspects of Islam and Islamic institutions which are required to keep the community and the state inline with Islamic ideals; where they are under the mercy of a non-Muslim majority having difficulty in practicing and promoting Islam they may tend to avail concessions (*rūkhas*) which Islam teaches for such circumstances. It would not be wise to implement the *Da'wah* methods that are suitable for a Muslim majority country in a Muslim minority country. A study of the situation of Muslims and the potential of *Da'wah* among non-Muslims have to be gauged and scrutinised before selecting the

proper *Da'wah* method. A society where poverty prevails, *Da'wah* efforts (both individually and collectively undertaken) should focus on alleviating the poverty through various welfare programs, income-generating projects and flexi-loan schemes, since it (poverty) contributes to the spread of disease, illiteracy and all other social evils. There is no point in preaching Islamic values to a hungry person. His poverty might force him to, tactically or otherwise, renounce his faith. This is what the Prophet (peace be on him) meant when he said:

مَنْ سَأَلَ النَّفْسَ أَنْ يَكْفُرَ كَفَرَتْ

Poverty may drive one to the threshold of infidelity. 104

The evangelists have made use of this method to win over even some born Muslims to their religious beliefs in Indonesia and parts of Africa. 105 But there are many more who have withstood great trials and tribulations to uphold their faith even under abject poverty; they are the souls who really have tasted the sweetness of Islamic faith and, thus, sanctified it above their own lives and aspirations. The Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said in this regard:

وَلَا تَلْزَمُ مَنْ كَفَرَ فِيهِ وَجَدَ بَيْنَ عِلَّةِ الْإِيمَانِ مِنْ يَكْفُرُ اللَّهُ زُرِّيَّةَ أَحَبِّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ بَنِي عَمْرِو بْنِ لَهَبٍ وَرَبُّنَا يُحِبُّ الْفَقِيرَ
إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، وَرَبُّنَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَفُودَ إِلَى الْكَفْرِ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَفُودَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ

Whoever has the three qualities attains the sweetness (delight) of faith: The one to whom Allah and His Apostle becomes dearer than everything else; Who loves a person for nothing else except for Allah's sake; Who hates to revert to rejection of Islamic beliefs (*kufī*) as he hates to be thrown in the fire. 106

104. See, Abū Bakr Ahmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, ed., Muḥammad al-Ṣā'id Bisyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1410 AH), vol. 5, p. 276, al-Thāliṭh wa 'l-Arba'ūn min Shu'ab al-Īmān wa huwa Bāb Fī 'l-Ḥathth alā Tark al-Chill wa 'l-Ḥasād; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Sagħīr*, vol. 2, p. 89; also see, Abū 'l-Fayḍ Muḥammad (Damasqus: Dār al-Baṣā'ir, 1985), pp. 70-73, Bāb al-Musalsal bi 'l-Ashraf.

105. See, for more details, Ahmad Von Denffer, *Indonesia: A Survey of Christian Churches and Missions among Muslims* (UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1985).

106. See, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Īmān, Bāb Ḥalāwah al-Īmān, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Nisābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Īmān, Bāb Bayān Khisāl man itasaf bihinna Wajad Ḥalāwah al-Īmān; Abū 'Isā Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Kitāb Abwāb al-Īmān 'an Rasūl Allāh Salā Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam, Bāb ba'd Bāb Mā jā' fī Tark al-Salāh.

Again merely giving economic assistance to non-Muslims will not win them to Islam automatically without following it with appropriate efforts to acquaint them with the message of Islam in a systematic manner. This endeavour, further, needs to be supported with adequate social and educational programmes to inculcate the Islamic faith, ideals and practices in the hearts and minds along with necessary basic education and training. Providing economic assistance to non-Muslims practiced by some enthusiast Muslims in the past without having the above proposed consolidated follow up efforts have resulted in astonishing failures as most of the converts reverted to their previous religions with the demise of their zealous albeit reckless patrons.

Likewise in countries with large population of pagans and aborigines, *Da'wah* efforts need to be focused on the basic beliefs and practices of Islam. Countries like Papua New Guinea, Congo and Zaire where large populations of animists and pagans live, the approach to *Da'wah* work needs to emphasise the basic beliefs, morals and practices of Islam rather than its politico legal system. Perhaps *Da'wah* groups like the *Tabligh* Movement or some of the *Tariqahs*, in view of the present authors, would be more successful in such scenarios.

In countries where a Muslim is intentionally¹⁰⁷ doubted on his loyalty to the state on the basis of his being a Muslim and he, by virtue of that suspicion, is denied any decent and respectable employment, let alone responsible and sensitive ones, Muslims under such situations would be better-off if allowed to have their names based on their respective culture and language, just as they do in parts of Indonesia, China and Thailand. This option, however, raises the issue of keeping Muslim identity and undermines the *wahdah al-Ummah al-Islamiyyah* (unity of the Islamic community) which in its turn could bring into conflict secular-nationalism with religious-*ummahism*. In such situations *Da'wah* efforts need to focus on imparting a comprehensive and substantive Islamic learning programmes and not merely insist on having formal Arabic names as a mark of Islamic identity.

Looking at the history and present needs of the *ummah*, a *dā'ī* has to address many issues, including the ones dealing with the spiritual, political, social, economic and intellectual needs of the society. So, real *Da'wah* efforts need to move to solve the genuine needs of people in all the domains of their lives, if possible, by abolishing all avenues of exploitations so that people can conduct their affairs in accordance with the established norms of social justice and through fraternal co-operation. The aim of *Da'wah* efforts needs to be the constructive development of human and material resources of society for bringing overall prosperity through providing appropriate educational and training programmes, so that the society is able to take positive and concrete steps to reconstruct the individuals on a sound moral and spiritual foundation to face the ever-mounting challenges posed by rampant and unfettered hedonism.

Acknowledging Religio-Cultural Diversity

The distinction between Islamic culture and Muslim culture has to be clearly understood, since the issue of culture is a very sensitive one. Many still believe that Islam acknowledges only a certain culture and requires the rejection of all other cultures. Thus they assume that retaining their original identities or names is not allowed in Islam. This is a problem faced especially by many new Muslims. Some new Muslims, on the other hand, feel that in changing their original names to more Arabic-sounding-names will make their own culture subservient to the culture of the predominant Muslims in their particular localities. The proponents of the first view substantiate their stand by quoting the following Qur'anic *āyah*:

وَيُنَادِي الدِّينَ ءَاثَرُ الْخَلْقِ لَا يَخْطُرُ الْخَطَرُ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ
لَكُمْ عَذُوبٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾

O, You who believe! Enter into Islam in its entirety; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan.¹⁰⁷

Wherein they interpret the word *kaffah* (in its entirety) to mean that one should follow Islam without having any 'hangovers' from their

¹⁰⁷ See, the Qur'an 2: 208.

past affiliations; to them, this necessitates a total rejection of their past culture, no matter how good they think that it is. Since they unduly feel that all things not belonging to Islam are impure (*najis*), as such any lingering links with their past culture is considered a contamination.¹⁰⁸ However, once we examine what the classical and modern exegetes have written in explanation of the above *āyah*, we find that they interpret it in a very different perspective. ‘Alī’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Baḡhdādī al-Khāzin (678–741/1279–1340), for example, wrote:

This *āyah* was revealed in respect of certain believers who accepted Islam from among the People of the Book. ‘Abd Allah b. Salām and his companions even after accepting Islam kept on practicing some commandments from the *Shari‘ah* of Mūsā (peace be on him), for example, they respected the *Sabbat* and disliked the camel meat and milk by saying that consuming these things are considered *mubāh* [in the *Shari‘ah* revealed to Muḥammad (peace be on him)] whereas in *Tawrāt* it is considered *wājib* to abstain from them. They also asked the Prophet (peace be on him), as the *Tawrāt* is also a Book of Allah, whether they were allowed to recite *Tawrāt* in their night prayers? Thereupon this *āyah* was revealed commanding them to enter the *silḥ*, that is the [last version of] Islamic *shari‘ah* in its entirety and not to cling on to the *Tawrāt*, since its application has been discontinued.¹⁰⁹

As far as customs and methods practiced by non-Muslims are concerned a seeker/preacher of the Truth needs to be careful not to

108. In fact many of the early non-Arab converts to Islam like Salmān the Persian and Bilāl the Abyssinian, contrary to this view, retained their non-Arabic names, with the approval of the Prophet (peace be on him). The Prophet (peace be on him) himself changed the names of several of his Arab followers, for he did not want opprobrious names used in the young Muslim community. Thus, one *Shihāb* (quick flame) was called *Hāshim*; a man by the name of *Ḥab* (war) became *Silḥ* (peace); and the clan of the Banū *Mughwiyah* (sons of error) became Banū *al-Rusdah* (sons of right guidance). A family whose name was changed by the Prophet became known as Banū *Muḥawwalah* (the sons of the one who was changed). See, Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p. 72. As a name shows one’s identity, the adoption of a new name is usually considered part and parcel of the process of conversion, although not by formal baptism as in Christianity. See, *ibid.*

109. See, ‘Alī’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Baḡhdādī al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Tāwil fī Ma‘ānī ‘l-Tanzīl* (Printed together with the exegeses of al-Bayḏāwī, al-Nasafī and Ibn ‘Abbās under the title: *Majmū‘ al-Tafsīr*) (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Amīyah, 1317 AH), vol. 1, pp. 306–307.

adopt any of those methods if any moral evil is attached to them, and if one feels compelled to use such a method, he must make sure to dissociate it from that evil before adopting it. Amin Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (1322–1418/1904–1997), the famous author of Urdu exegeses of the Qur’ān, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, explains:

the slogan which the Prophet (peace be on him) raised from the top of *Ṣafā* mountain to rouse his nation from its deep slumber and to invite their attention to the call to Islam, in its original form in Arabia of the days of *Jāhiliyyah* was that the person raising the [said] slogan used to strip himself naked and hence [was] called ‘the naked warner’. The Prophet (peace be on him) in spite of adopting the method of the naked warner abstained from nakedness since it would have been shameful and immoral. This [adoption of the method by] amending the procedure [removing the objectionable part] tells us that total abstention from such social and cultural methods with an evil aspect is not necessary. What is needed is to rectify or reform the evil or immoral aspect before adopting them for promoting the interests of the message of the Truth... Nevertheless Islam teaches us that all those methods which can be used for promoting the interests of the truthful movement, must be used after cleansing them of the evil attached to them; it would not be proper to ignore or condemn them outright.¹¹⁰

Likewise, the Prophet (peace be on him) retained many *jāhiliyyah* customs which did not contradict Islamic ideals and principles. This was because there was no explicit revelation permitting/prohibiting such customs and such customs agreed with Islamic notions of good or permissible. A saying of the Prophet (peace be on him), explains:

«الَّذِينَ عَدَدُوا فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَالْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ»

The people are mines in the good and the evil; best of you in the *jāhiliyyah* are the best of you in Islam once they internalise the knowledge [of Islam].¹¹¹

110. Amin Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Call to Islam and How the Holy Prophet Preached*, tr., Sharif Ahmad Khan, 2nd edition (Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers, 1982), pp. 78–79.

111. See, Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, Kitāb Musnad Abi Hurayrah, Bāb Ṭāhī’ Musnad Abi Hurayrah. For a variant text of this *ḥadīth*, see, Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Manāqib, Bāb Qawī Allāh Ta‘ālā: “Ya Ayyuhā ‘l-Nās innā Khalaqnakum min Dhakar wa Unthā wa ...”

It can be deduced from the above *ḥadīth* that the best customs of the *jāhiliyyah* are also considered as best in Islam, since, in present authors' view, the best people are those who reflect the best customs. This is supported by what the Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said at another occasion:

وَأَمَّا النَّاسُ إِلَى اللَّهِ يَنْتَهِجُ فِي الْأَعْلَاءِ وَالْأَسْفَلِ

The most disliked person in the eyes of Allah is one who desires in Islam the customary practices of the *jāhiliyyah*¹¹²

The Prophet (peace be on him) is also reported to have said:

وَمَنْ سَنَّ سُنَّةً خَيْرَ فَالْعَمَلُ عَلَيْهِ كَلَّ أَمْرًا وَنَظَرَ خَيْرَ مَنْظَرٍ مِنْ أَمْرٍ وَسَنَّ سُنَّةً خَيْرَ فَالْعَمَلُ عَلَيْهِ كَلَّ أَمْرًا وَنَظَرَ خَيْرَ مَنْظَرٍ مِنْ أَمْرٍ

Whoever started a good pattern of conduct which is followed [by others], for him will be reward of it and the reward like the rewards of those who would follow him, without detracting in the least from their rewards. And whoever started an evil pattern of conduct which is followed [by others] upon him will be burden of it as well as the burden like the burden of those who would follow him without detracting in the least from their burdens.¹¹³

Thus it can be seen that the Prophet (peace be on him) has exercised caution, as much as he encouraged, in endorsing customs which aim at reviving the practices of their past.

Commenting on the dealings, customs and habits (*ta'āmul*, 'urf and *ādāt*) as being a source of Islamic law, M. A. Abdur Rahim (1284—

¹¹² *ʿal-nāḥiyyat al-ḥadīth* li Ta'āwun.

¹¹³ See, for full text of this *ḥadīth*, Sulaymān b. Ahmad al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 308, Kitāb Bāb al-Nūn, Bāb Nāṭi' b. Mu'ayyid 'an Ibn 'Abbās; For text of another *ḥadīth* describing three most disliked persons including the one mentioned above, see, Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Diyāt, Bāb Man Talab Dam Imri' biḥayr Haqq; Abū Bakr Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. 'Alī al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, Kitāb al-Nafāt, Bāb liḥab al-Qiṣṣa 'alā 'l-Qaṭl dūn hayr.

¹¹⁴ See, Abū 'Isā Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Kitāb Abwāḥ al-'Ilm 'an Rasūl Allāh Ṣallā Allāh 'alayh wa Sallam, Bāb Mā jā' fī man Da'a 'ilā Hudā fa Utrubh 'aw ilā Ḍalālāh; Abū Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yazīd Ibn Mājah al-Qizwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Kitāb al-Imān wa Faḍl al-ahābāh wa 'l-'Ilm, Bāb Man Sannah Sunnah Ḥasanah aw Sayyī'ah.

1371/1867–1952), a judge and politician in British India, commented that Islam recognises them as such. He further added:

The validity of such laws rests on principles somewhat similar to those of *jima'*. In the case of those customs and practices which prevailed in the times of the Prophet [peace be on him] when revelation, the recognized primary source of laws, was still active, and which were not abrogated by any text of the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth*, the silence of the Divine Legislator is regarded as amounting to recognition of their legal validity. And to customs, which have sprung up since the Prophet's death, their validity is justified on the authority of the text, which lays down that whatever the people generally consider to be good for themselves is good in the eyes of God. Thus the conception of law as an emanation from God is said to hold good in the case of customary laws as well. Customs as a source of laws resembles analogical deduction in one important respect, it has no legal force if it be repugnant to the revealed law, or to the law founded on *jima'*..... But customary law is of inferior authority compared to *jima'*, inasmuch as it is based on the practice of the people generally, while *jima'* implies deliberation on the part of men well versed in the principles of law. It is however, of superior authority to a rule based merely on analogy.¹¹⁴

This is what the 'ulamā' in various Muslim communities have done. They retained the local customs of their respective Muslim community after cleansing them of any objectionable aspects of such customs from the Islamic perspective. Of some of these customs they maintained only the form and not the substance while of some other customs they maintained the substance and not the form, depending on their conformity with Islamic objectives.

Thus, adherence to past customs and cultures, which contradict the principles of Islam, is tantamount to part-worship. It is in this context that the Qur'ānic *āyah* declaring the necessity of entering Islam in its entirety can be correctly understood. In fact every true Muslim would continuously be converting to the ideal Islam as he

¹¹⁴ M. A. Abdur Rahim, *The Principles of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Lahore: All Pakistan Legal Decisions, 1968), p. 55. Also refer to pp. 136–137 for further details.

becomes more and more enlightened in Islamic teachings. Thus, *Da'wah* needs to begin with oneself. We need to identify those elements, which we had inherited as cultures and customs, and gradually weed out such aspects, which clearly contradict the form and substance of Islamic culture.¹¹⁵ There is no point in doggedly clinging onto past cultures, for their own sake, when Islam positively supersedes all other cultures by being the unifying framework for integrating all their unique altruistic strengths.

Correction of the Image of Islam and Muslims

It is said that before one corrects others one should correct oneself. The image of Muslims has been steadily surging over the past two centuries, unfortunately, more as a community of ignorant, weak, incompetent, backward and good-for-nothing peoples. As a consequence Islam has been portrayed, accordingly, as less civilised and anti-progress. Everywhere Muslims have become the targets of ridicule and contempt. The Muslim reaction to such biased criticism has been just apologetic rejectionism with a bent towards understandable extremism. This, however, has not helped correcting the image of Muslims, nor that of Islam. What needs to be done is to put up efforts to project Muslims as a benign force of sympathy, justice and moderation that strives for the common good of all. Muslims have to change their outlook towards their worldly responsibilities and begin to engage with others meaningfully and responsibly. They must mark and work to take their stake in the way the world is run and register their aspirations, concerns and reservations on all aspects of mundane life. Then only can they truly fulfil the original role of *khalifah* on earth. Disengaging from such global responsibilities on account of their relative weaknesses has

literally let the world go to the dogs which, in turn, have progressed from merely barking to active biting. The time has come for the Muslims to claim back their role as *shuhadā' alā 'l-nās* (witnesses to the entire humanity). This can only be achieved by active and responsible participation in shaping the world. Islam needs to be projected in its original mould of being a tolerant, moderate but principled faith movement which stands for justice for all and by being a bastion of hope for the weak and oppressed and a helpful baton against the wicked in spite of their strength.

Conclusion

This study amply shows that *Da'wah* or the propagation of the message of Islam or in other words inviting mankind, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to submission to none but the Creator Allah in all affairs and all spheres of individual and collective life is an individual responsibility of each Muslim as well as the collective responsibility of the Muslim *Ummah*. The study further analyses various approaches to *Da'wah*. It also investigates the orientation and focus of various state sponsored and private *Da'wah* organisations and movements. The paper then extensively discusses the components of *Da'wah bi 'l-Hikmah* and suggests it as the viable strategy for promoting Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims.

115. One is faced with difficulty when defining the term Islamic Culture in the presence of multitudes of Muslim Cultures, which are coloured and shaped by their respective inherited customs and practices which have not been specifically rejected by Islam. Also defining Islamic Culture as the Prophetic Culture may narrowly situate it in the context of Arabian Culture, since he was, temporally, an Arab. This would be counter-productive as Islam is for all times, climes and for all peoples. For a good discussion on Islamic culture, unity of *Ummah* and diversity of cultures, see, Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Unity and Diversity in the Muslim Ummah: Some Reflections on *Hajj al-Wada'*", *Insigha*, vol. 01, no. 1 (Summer 2008), pp. 05-25.

Da'wah bi 'l-Hikmah as a strategy suggests that the practicable approach to *Da'wah* differs according to the exact situation of Muslims and non-Muslims in a particular locality. Thus, it would be wise to let the existing *Da'wah* movements, be they docile or hyperactive to function according to their local realities and not to doubt the sincerity of any of these movements towards the overall Islamic cause. The real success in conveying Islam to the non-Muslims hinges not only on our own attitude towards them and, more importantly, on how we value Islamic teachings in our own daily life but also devising and adopting prudent *Da'wah* strategies and procedures in full view of the socio-political circumstances and religio-cultural orientations and sensitivities of each locality. Treating non-Muslims as potential Muslims may solve a number of dilemmas interlinked with preconceived reservations about them.

To be successful in *Da'wah* efforts Muslims need to come out of the myth of one good for all strategy mindset. *Da'wah* workers and movements need to carefully analyse and evaluate each segment of the society and each locality from various angles such as, social, cultural, political, financial, legal, religious, educational angles to adapt a workable *Da'wah* strategy and methodology for each locality and each community. They, further, have to get it clear once and for all that not all non-Muslims are necessarily anti-Islamic. And conversely, not all born Muslims are automatically pro-Islamic. The time has, therefore, come to strike smart strategic partnerships with the amiable non-Muslim friends by jointly patrolling the corridors of ideological encounters, so that together we can stamp out the troubles afflicting humanity at large on account of its diverse faiths.

