

ISLAMIC DA'WAH : ITS MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

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Calling people to Allah is the most important job of a Muslim. He has been given this task because of his special position as a responsible human being. The world is suffering from intellectual confusion and spiritual emptiness. This is not a new phenomenon. Human beings have always been groping in the darkness of ignorance and arrogance. Human history bears witness to the activities of those who have vested interests and their misleading role. An objective study of human situation and critical analysis of human ills and miseries will show that the reason behind human sufferings is ignorance of the guidance provided by their creator to humankind. *Da'wah* towards Allah, therefore is the answer to all human problems. *Da'wah* is not only an individual fulfilment but also a collective blessing for any society.

Prior to a detailed discussion of its various aspects it seems appropriate to explain the meaning of the term and its various usages in the Islamic texts.

Meaning of *Da'wah*

The arabic word *da'wah* and its derivatives are used to denote a variety of meanings. Lexicographers have provided all the details in their books. (1) Some of its meanings are given below to know the scope of the term.

- (1) To call (النداء) It is said that some one has called some body: يقال دعى فلان فلانا or the *mu'adhdhin* called the people to prayer. دعى المؤذن الناس الى الصلاة.

(1). Lisan, 14/260 ; Taj, 10/126 ; Mufradat, 170 ; al-Sihah, 206 ; Lane, I/iii/884.

(2) To encourage upon (الحث على القصد) for example (ادعوه الى الصلاة) encourage him to perform prayers.

(3) To have a claim it can be right or wrong. It is said, " يدعى الى غير ابيه " he claims the relationship of a son to one who is not his father. *Da'wah* (دعوى) is a legal claim where a plaintiff (مدعى) makes an assertion, rightly or wrongly against another person who responds (مدعى عليه).(2)

(4) *Da'wah* is an appeal, a request.

(5) *Da'wah* is an invitation. It can be for luncheon or dinner. It is said "we were included in the invitation of such a one to food" (كنا في دعوة فلان) The Qur'an has used the term *da'wah* and its derivatives at various places. Some of the verses are given below:

له دعوة الحق (3)

(To Him (alone) is due all true invocations.

والله يدعو الى دار السلام ويهدي من يشاء الى صراط مستقيم (4)

And Allah invites to the abode of peace, and guides whom he pleases to the right path.

قال رب السجن احب الي مما يدعونني اليه (5)

He said: my Lord, the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me.

واذ امس الانسان ضر دعاريه منيبا اليه (6)

(2). Lane, I /iii/884.

(3). Al-Qur'an, 13/14

(4). Ibid, 10/25

(5). Ibid, 12/33

(6). Ibid, 39/8

And when distress afflicts a man he calls upon his Lord, turning to him.

وقال فرعون ذروني اقتل موسى وليدع ربه (7)

And pharaoh said "leave me to slay Moses: and let him call upon his Lord.

يقوم مالي دعوكم الى النجاة وتدعونني الى النار - تدعونني لاكفر بالله واشرك به ما

ليس لي به علم وانا ادعوكم الى العزيز الغفار (8)

And O my people, how (strange) it is for me to call you to salvation while you call me to the fire. You call me to blaspheme against Allah and to join with him partners of whom I have no knowledge and I call you to the exalted in power and who forgives again and again.

We have quoted a few verses though Qur'an has used it at other places too.(9)

One can see that the common idea in all the usages is the call and invitation which is reflected in different shades of meaning. *Da'wah* therefore is to call or invite people to a particular objective by means of communications or action. Technically it is used to denote:

1. Inviting people to an ideology or a cause.
2. Working or planning for the success of a cause.

Call to Allah is a prophetic job and an important aspect of the history of salvation. Qur'an, therefore has used various terms to explain the nature of prophetic work. These terms, in fact, explain differet aspects of *da'wah* work. These terms are:

(7). Al-Qur'an, 40/26

(8). Ibid, 40/41-42

(9). It is mentioned in more than fifty, places e.g : 2/186 ; 30/25 ; 14/44 ; 10/89

- *Tabligh* (تبليغ)
- *Tabshir* (تبشير)
- *Indhar* (اندار)
- *Hidayah* (هدايه)

Tabligh

In the words of Lane, a famous lexicographer, *tabligh* signifies the causing to reach, attain, arrive or come, bringing, conveying or delivering. It is said (بلغت الرسالة) I brought, conveyed or delivered the message. Also (بلغنى عن فلان) means he told me from some one or on the part of some one a piece of information or some event that had happened (10). So *tabligh* is conveying the message of Allah to the people. Qur'an has used its derivatives in connection with the work of the messengers of Allah. Referring to the duty of Prophets Qur'an says:

وما علينا الا البلاغ المبين (11)

And our duty is only to proclaim the clear message.

ما على الرسول الا البلاغ المبين (12)

The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear message.

This term is used at least eight times in the Qur'an to indicate that it was enough for the messengers to convey the message. As far as the acceptance or rejection of the message was concerned the responsibility lie on the shoulders of those to whom the message had been conveyed. Qur'an has made this point clear at several places:

(10). Lane, 1/251, The Islamic Text Society, Cambridge.

(11). Al-Qur'an, 36/174

(12). Ibid, 24/54

فان توليتم فانما على رسولنا البلاغ المبين (13)

But if you turn away, the duty of our messenger is only to deliver the message clearly.

وما على الرسول الا البلاغ والله يعلم ما تبدون وما تكتمون (14)

The duty of the messenger is only to deliver (the message). And Allah knows what you do openly and what you hide.

فان اعرضوا فما ارسلناك عليهم حفيظا- ان عليك الا البلاغ (15)

But if they turn away, we have not sent thee as a watcher over them your duty is only to deliver (the message).

وان ما نرينك بعض الذي نعدهم لونتو فينك فانما عليك البلاغ وعلينا الحساب (16)

Whether we let thee see part of that which we promise them, or cause thee to die, thine is but the delivery of the message, and it is our part to call (them) to account.

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) is commanded by Allah to convey the message as a duty to be performed.

يا ايها الرسول بلغ ما انزل اليك فان لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته والله يعصمك من

الناس ان الله لا يهدي القوم الكافرين (17)

O Messenger! deliver that which has been revealed to you from your Lord: and if you do not, you have not delivered message. And Allah will protect you from the people. Surely Allah guides not the disbelieving people.

The prophet (P.B.U.H) is reported to have used this term to communicate his message to others. 'Abdullah b. 'Amr is reported to have said that the Messenger of Allah said:

(13). Ibid, 64/12

(14). Ibid, 5/99

(15). Al-Qur'an, 42/48

(16). Ibid, 13/40

(17). Ibid, 5/67

بلغوا عني ولو آية (18)

Convey (others) from me even if it is one verse.

This *hadith* has been narrated by 'Abdullah b. 'Amr and Imam Tirmidhi has declared it as good and sound. (19)

Ibn 'Abbas narrates, that the prophet said:

وليببلغ الشاهد الغائب (20)

The one who is present should convey it to the absent.

A person doing *da'wah* work is called a *da'i* (داعى) or *muballigh* (مبلغ). Bukhari (21) and Ibn Hibban (22) have reported a *hadith* which refers to the term *muballigh* (مبلغ).

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) is reported to have used the word (بلغت) in his speech. The prophet (P.B.U.H) said, (قال النبي: هل بلغت) (23) "Have I conveyed (the message).

In his last pilgrimage he delivered his famous sermon in which he gave final guideline to his followers. At the end of his sermon he raised his head and said:

اللهم! هل بلغت! اللهم! هل بلغت! (24)

O, Allah have not I conveyed your message to them.

Ibn 'Abbas while narrating this tradition said:

(18). Tirmidhi, K. Al-'Ilm, ball ma Ja'a..., 5/40; Darimi, Muqaddimah, bab al-Balagh, 1/136.

(19). Ibid.

(20). Bukhari, K. al-'Ilm, bab Yuballigh..., 1/34

(21). Bukhari, K. al-Fitan, bab qawl al-Nabi..., 4/68,69

(22). Ibn Hibban, K. al-'Ilm, 1/144-146

(23). Bukhari, K. al-'Ilm, bab mana ada..., 1/32

(24). Bukhari, K. al-Hajj, bab al-Khutba Ayyam Mina, 2/191; Ibn Majah, K. Manasik, bab al-Khutbah, 2/1015; Abu Dawud, K. al-Imarah, bab li hadaya al-Ummal, 3/355

فوالذى نفسى بيده انها لو صيته الى امته فليبلغ الشاهد الغائب (25)

By Him in whose hand my soul is 'the following was his will to his followers :- it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey this information to those who are absent.

Tabshir (تبشير)

Tabshir means an annunciation which produces a change in complexion (بشره) 'The Arabs use *bashara* (بشره) for complexion. All derivatives of the word have some sort of link with the complexion, so *bushra* (بشرى) is a joyful annunciation, glad tidings and good news. *Mubashshir* (مبشر) or *bashir* (بشير) is one who announces to people or a person, an event, either good or evil; but meaning the former oftener than the later (26) Since the Prophets bring good news from Allah to the people they are called *mubashshir* or *bashir*. The Qur'an has used these terms at various places, for example:

كلن الناس امة واحدة فبعث الله النبيين مبشرين ومنذرين وانزل معهم الكتاب بالحق ليحكم بين الناس فيما اختلفوا فيه (27)

Humankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differ.

رسلا مبشرين ومنذرين لئلا يكون للناس على الله حجة بعد الرسل وكان الله عزيزا
حكيم (28)

The messengers who gave good news as well as warnings, that humankind after (the coming of) the Messengers, should have no plea against Allah, and Allah is ever Mighty Wise.

يا ايها النبي انا ارسلتك شاهدا ومبشرا ونذيرا وداعيا الى الله باذنه وسراجا منيرا (29)

(25). Bukhari, K. al-Hajj, bab al-Khutbah, 2/191

(26). Lane, 1/208.

(27). Al-Qur'an, 2/213

(28). Ibid, 4/165

(29). Ibid, 33/45-46

O Prophet: truly we have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news and warner. And as an inviter to Allah by his permission and as a light giving lamp.

وما ارسلناك الا كافة للناس بشيرا و نذيرا ولكن اكثر الناس لا يعلمون (30)

And we have not sent thee but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all humankind but most people know not.

وبالحق انزلناه وبالحق نزل وما ارسلناك الا مبشرا و نذيرا (31)

And with truth we have revealed it and with truth did it come. And we have not sent thee but as giver of good news and as a warner.

انا ارسلناك بالحق بشيرا و نذيرا (32)

Verily we have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a warner.

It is clear from above mentioned verses that giving good news is one of the functions of the Prophets. A good news from Allah is communicated to the people.

Indhar (انذار)

Indhar means informing or advising of a thing: and a warning or cautioning against a thing, and putting one in fear of a thing or putting one in announcing a thing.(33)

Qur'an has used its derivatives in the sense of putting somebody in fear of something. For instance Qur'an says:

وانذرهم يوم الازفة اذ القلوب لدى الحناجر كاظمين- ماللظلمين من حميم ولا

شفيع يطاع (34)

(30). Ibid, 34/28

(31). Ibid, 17/105; 25/56

(32). Ibid, 35/24

(33). Lane, 2/2782

(34). Al-Qur'an, 40/18

And Warn them of the day that draws near, when hearts, giveing inwardly, rise up to the throats. The iniquitous will have no friend, nor any intercessor who should be obeyed.

وانذريه الذين يخافون ان يحشروا الى ربهم ليس لهم من دونه ولى ولا شفيع لعلمهم
(35) يتقون

And warn with it those, who fear that they will be gathered to their Lord - there is no protector for them, nor any intercessor besides Him - so that they may fear Allah (guard themselves a gainst evil).

اكان للناس عجا ان او حيننا الى رجل منهم ان انذر الناس (36)

It is a matter of wonderment to humans that we have sent our revelation to a man from among themselves that he sould warn mankind.

وانذر الناس يوم ياتيهم العذاب (37)

So warn humankind of the day when chastisement will reach them.

وانذر عشيرتك الاقربين (38)

And admonish your nearest kinsmen.

يايها المدثر قم فانذر (39)

O you warpped up (in a mantle) arise and deliver your warning.

The words *nadhira* (نذير) and *mundhira* (منذر) have been used by the Qur'an for the Prophets indicating that they warn people against the consequences of their sins and against the

(35). Ibid, 6/51

(36). Ibid, 10/2

(37). Ibid, 14/44

(38). Ibid, 26/214

(39). Ibid, 74/1-2

warth of God. Following are some of the verses where these terms have occurred.

انا ارسلناك بالحق بشيرا و نذيرا وان من امة الا خلا فيها نذير (40)

Surely we have sent thee with the truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.

ولو شئنا لبعثنا في كل قرية نذيرا (41)

Had it been our will, we could have sent a warner to every town.

وما نرسل المرسلين الا مبشرين و منذرين فمن آمن واصلح فلا خوف عليهم ولا

هم يحزنون (42)

We send the Messengers only to give good news and to warn so those who believe and mend (their lives) upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

ويقول الذين كفروا لولا انزل عليه آية من ربه انما انت منذر ولكل قوم هاد (43)

And the unbelievers say: why is not a sign sent down to him from his lord ? But you are turely a warner, and to every people a warner.

Since *indhar* contains the elements of advice, warning and cautioning, therefore the Prophets advise people to be obedient and have a good conduct and warn them against disobedience and evil doing. It may be noted that various derivatives of *indhar* have ocured at seventy three places in the Qur'an.

(40). Al-Qur'an, 35/24

(41). Ibid, 25/51

(42). Ibid, 6/48

(43). Ibid, 13/7

Hidaya (هداية .)

Hidaya, originally means direction or guidance but normally is used for right direction or guidance. (44) The root (هدى) has many derivations signifying the sense of direction and guidance. Qur'an has used verbs and nouns of this root to explain divine guidance to the people. For example Al-Huda (الهدى) is used for the Qur'an in particular and for divine guidance in general. Similarly the term Had (هاد) or al-Hadi (الهادي) is used for the Prophet and also for Allah. Al-Hadi is one of His many names. It is also used for a guide in general. Some of the verses of the Qur'an can be quoted to explain the usage of the term.

ونزلنا عليك الكتاب تبيانا لكل شى وهدى ورحمة وبشرى للمسلمين (45)

And we have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy and glad tidings to Muslims.

اولئك الذين اشتروا الضلالة بالهدى والعذاب بالمغفرة (46)

They are the ones who buy error in place of guidance and torment in place of forgiveness.

ومن يضلل الله فما له من هاد (47)

Any whom Allah leaves to stray there is none to guide.

من يضلل الله فلا هادى له وينرهم فى طغيانهم يعمهون (48)

Whom so ever Allah leaves in error, there is no guide for him. And he leaves them alone in their in trespasses, blindly wardering on.

(44). Lane, 2/3042

(45). Al-Qur'an, 16/89

(46). Ibid, 2/175

(47). Ibid, 40/33

(48). Ibid, 7/186

وان الله لهاد الذين آمنوا الى صراط مستقيم (49)

And surely Allah is the guide of those who believe into the straight path.

انما انت منذر ولكل قوم هاد (50)

But you are truly a warner and to every people a guide.

The term *Bashir*, *Nadhir*, *Mubashshir*, *Mundhir* and *Hadi* are especially used for the Prophets in the Qur'an. As far the terms *da'i* (داعى) or *muballigh* (مبلغ) can be used for any person working in the field of *da'wah*. *Da'wah* is a comprehensive term which includes invitation to think, to debate and to argue. It also means to warn, to give good tidings and to convey. *Da'wa* is calling people to Allah and therefore is the most important job to do. Only a cynic can be indifferent or malevolent or fool can reject it.

Kinds of *Da'wah*

Da'wah in itself has no colour. It is the purpose or objective which determines the nature of *da'wah*. A call could be for personal objectives like influencing people for personal gains, getting financial benefits and political importance. It could be for collective objectives like national or tribal interests or family welfare etc. *Da'wah* could be for the cause of Allah or for the cause of Satan and Taghut.

1. *Da'wah* to Satanic way

Any call which is against Allah's way is a satanic call. It has many facets and various manifestations. According to Qur'an there is a cause for which satan is working. The essence of the this cause is rebellion against Allah and His commandments. Story of Adam tells us that Satan

(49). Ibid, 22/54

(50). Ibid, 13/7.

threw a challenge to Allah's authority when Adam was Chosen as a vicegerent on earth and was given superiority over Allah's creation. It was jealousy and arrogance which shaped satanic attitude towards Allah. The Qur'an has stated this fact in the following words:

قال فيما اغويتنى لاقعدن لهم صراطك المستقيم ثم لاتينهم من بين ايديهم ومن خلفهم وعن ايمانهم وعن شمائلهم ولا تجد اكثرهم شاكرين (51)

He said, "Because you have thrown me out of the way I will certainly lie in wait for them on the straight path, then I shall certainly assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left: Nor will you find in most of them gratitude (for Thy mercies)

قال ارايتك هذا الذى كرمت على لئن اخرتن الى يوم القيامة لاحتكنن فريته الا قليلا (52)

He said, " Seest thou ? This is the one whom you have honoured above me: if you respite me to the day of Resurrection I will surely bring his descendants under my sway all but a few.

قال رب بما اغويتنى لازينن لهم فى الارض ولاغوينهم اجمعين الا عبادك منهم

المخلصين (53)

(*Iblis*) said, O my Lord because You have put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth and I will put them all in the wrong. Except your servants among them sincere and purified.

قال فيعز تك لاغوينهم اجمعين الا عبادك منهم المخلصين (54)

(*Iblis*) said then by your power, I will put them all in the wrong. Except your servants amongst them sincere and purified.

(51). Al-Qur'an, 7/16-17

(52). Ibid, 17/62

(53). Ibid, 15/39

(54). Ibid, 38/82

Satan and his followers are working hard to lead the descendants of Adam astray. Their call is powerful, attractive and beneficial by worldly standards. Arrogance, ignorance, prejudice, racism, denial of Allah, associating others with Him and immoral behaviours are some of the aspects of satanic cause. Since Allah has granted Satan a respite therefore, he and his agents from amongst the humans and jinn are active in misleading human beings and encouraging them to rebel against the will of their creator. Time limit given to Satan is part of divine scheme of this world therefore Satanic activities strengthen the faith of believers. Referring to Satanic request the Qur'an has recorded divine response at few places. Suffice is to quote one response on Satan's request for respite. Allah said:

قال اذهب فمن تبعك منهم فان جهنم جزاء کم جزاء موفورا۔ واستغفر من استطعت
منهم بصوتک واجلب عليهم بخيلک ورجلک وشاركهم فى الاموال والاولاد واعدتهم
وما يعدهم الشيطان الا غرورا۔ ان عبادى لیس لک عليهم سلطان وكفى بربک
وکیلا۔ (55)

Allah said, begone: whoever of them follow you surely is your recompense, a full recompense. And lead to destruction those whom you can among them with your (seductive) voice: make assault on them with your cavalry and your infantry; mutually share with them wealth and children; and make promises to them. But Satan promises them nothing but deceit. As for my servants, no authority shall you have over them. Enough is your Lord for a disposer of affairs.

2. *Da'wah* to Allah's Way

The other kind of *da'wah* is to Allah's way. Arabic term *da'wah ila-Allah* is calling people to the obedience of Allah and following his commandments. *Da'wah* to Allah is the real cause for which every human should work. This has been the main job of every Prophet and a pious person in his life. The Qur'an while commenting on the history of salvation has clearly stated that it was the duty of every Prophet to call people to the obedience and

servanthood of Allah. It surveys the life and mission of Noa, Hud Salih, Lot, Sho'ayb and quote them addressing their people in the following words:

يقوم اعبدوا الله ما لكم من اله غيره (56)

O my people: Worship Allah you have no god but Him.

Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (P.B.U.H) have the similar call. According to Qur'an Allah has been the ultimate aim of *da'wah*. The Qur'an has stated this through the Prophet (P.B.U.H).

ففرؤا الى الله اتى لكم منه نذير مبين- ولا تجعلوا مع الله آخرا اتى لكم منه نذير

مبين (57)

So flee to Allah, surely I am a plain warner to you from Him and make not another an object of worship with Allah I am from Him a warner to you clear and open.

Since all the Prophets called their people to the obedience and worship of Allah therefore, this call has been the most important activity of human history. Most of the extraordinary and miraculous events of human history are somehow related with the question of *da'wah ila-Allah*. History of salvation is the history of *da'wah*. It started with Adam and achieved its completion with the last Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) After the coming of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) *da'wah ila-Allah* is summed up in the message of Islam, and therefore Islam is the only real way of *da'wah* to Allah. The Qur'an while giving direction to *da'wah* workers for the cause of Allah says:

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام وما اختلف الذين اوتوا الكتاب الا من بعد ما جاءهم العلم بغيا

بينهم ومن يكفر بايات الله فان الله سريع الحساب (58)

Surely the (True) religion with Allah is Islam. And nor did the people of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of

(56). Ibid, 7/59, 65, 73, 85

(57). Al-Qur'an, 51/50-51

(58). Ibid, 3/19

each other after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is, indeed swift in calling to account.

ومن يبتغ غير الاسلام ديناً فلن يقبل منه وهو في الآخرة من الخاسرين (59)

And any one desires a religion other than Islam never will it be accepted of him: and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.

Islam, as referred to, is the true submission to the will of Allah and turning away from all false gods. This way is described as the way adopted by Ibrahim, the friend of Allah. The Prophet of Islam is commanded to announce that he has been guided to the right path which is a true religion to follow.

قل انى هدنى ربه الى صراط مستقيم ديناً قيماً ملة ابراهيم حنيفاً وما كان من المشركين (60)

Say verily My Lord has guided me to a straight path an evertrue religion the way of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to any beside Him.

Since Islam is total submission to the will of Allah through obedience and by following the last revealed message to the Prophet of Islam, therefore it is described by the Qur'an as the best way to adopt.

ومن احسن ديناً ممن اسلم وجهه لله وهو محسن واتبع ملة ابراهيم حنيفاً واتخذ الله ابراهيم خليلاً (61)

And who could be of better faith than he who surrenders his whole being into Allah a doer of good and follow the way of Abraham who turned from all that is false. And Allah took Abraham as a friend.

(59). Ibid, 3/85

(60). Al-Qur'an, 6/161

(61). Ibid, 42/125

Nature and Scope of Islamic *Da'wah*

As it is clear from the above mentioned verses that *da'wah* to Allah is *da'wah* to Islam which is the true *Din* and straight path therefore the nature and scope of *da'wah* to Allah can be understood only through the teachings of Islam. It means, in other words, that call to the faith of Islam is the only true *da'wah* to Allah. We have discussed earlier that call to Allah was the mission of every Prophet, therefore the essence of Prophetic activity is *da'wah*.

The Prophet of Islam was commanded to explain the nature and scope of Islamic *da'wah*:

فلذلك فادع واستقم كما امرت ولا تتبع اهواءهم وقل امنت بما اتزل الله من كتاب
وامرت لاعدل بينكم الله ربنا وربكم لنا اعمالنا ولكم اعمالكم لا حجة بيننا وبينكم
الله يجمع بيننا واليه المصير (62)

Now then, for this (reason) go on inviting and stand steadfast as you are commanded and follow not their vain desires and say: I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and Your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will gather us together and to Him is eventual coming.

ومن احسن قولاً ممن دعا الى الله وعمل صالحاً وقال انى من المسلمين ولا يستوى
الحسنة ولا السيئة ادفع بالتي هي احسن فاذا الذي بينك وبينه عدلوه كأنه ولى
حميم وما يلقها الا الذين صبروا وما يلقها الا انه حظ عظيم. واما ينز غنك من
الشطين نزع فاستعد بالله انه هو السميع العليم (63)

Who is better in speech than one who calls people to Allah, works righteousness and says: I am of those who bow in Islam: Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel evil with what is better: then will be between whom and you was hatred become

(62). Ibid, 42/15

(63). Al-Qur'an, 41/33-36

as it were your friend and intimate. And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self restraint none but persons of greatest good fortune. And if an incitement to discord is made to you by the devil seek refuge in Allah. Surely He is the one who hears and knows all things.

Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the last prophet who received the final message of Allah to humankind, therefore the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet are the sources of *da'wah* work. A *da'i* has to look towards these sources as a guiding light. Islamic *da'wah* is not only based on Qur'an and *Sunnah* but also is an invitation to follow them. Calling people to Allah therefore means calling them to Islam or Qur'an and *Sunnah*. It is in fact to describe one reality by different names.

Finally, *da'wah ila-Allah* is not meant to fulfil limited objectives. It does not deal with the problem of an individual human being or concentrate on some aspects of socio-political system. It is not a local affair or a tribal and national activity. It is rather comprehensive covering all aspects of human life and universal surpassing all boundaries created by human beings because of their narrow national interests. *Da'wah Ilahiyya* is pure, balanced and comprehensive. It is not only against every kind of extremism but also against any effort which limits its approach. Imam Hasan al Bann a while describing Islam has beautifully summed up the nature and scope of Islamic *da'wah*.

الاسلام نظام شامل يتناول مظاهر الحياة جميعاً فهو دولة ووطن، لو حكومة وامة، وهو خلق وقوة لورحمة وعدالة، وهو ثقافة وقانون، لو علم وقضاء، وهو مادة وثروة، لو كسب وغنى، وهو جهاد ودعوة لو جيش وفكره كما هو عقيدة صادقة وعبادة (64)

Islam is a complete and comprehensive system which covers all spheres of life. It is state and country or government and community. It is morality and power or mercy and justice. It is culture and law or knowledge and judgement. It is matter and

wealth or labour and riches. It is *jihad* and *da'wah* or army and idea as it is true belief and worship.

To quote Isma'il Farooqi :

Da'wah is critical process of intellection, it is of its nature never to be dogmatic, never to stand by its contents as if by its own authority or that of its mouthpiece or that of its tradition. For it to be critical means that it should keep itself always open to new evidence to new alternatives: that it continually cast and recast itself in new form, in cognizance of the new discoveries of human science, of the new needs of human situation.(65)

Islamic *da'wah* is an initiative to think, to debate and argue, only a cynic can be indifferent, or melovelent or fool can reject it.(66)

The Importance of *Da'wah*

As we have discussed earlier that Allah is the goal and objective of true *da'wah*. It is also evident that all *da'wah* activities are related to human beings. They are the object of every call. Therefore one has to know human aspirations and activities. Qur'anic concept of human nature provides clue to the need of *da'wah* ila-Allah. According to the Qur'an all human beings have natural ingredients of good and evil. As explained by the Qur'an Allah has bestowed upon human beings the ability to do good or evil.

ونفس وما سواها فالههها فجورها وتقوا قد افلح من زكها وقد خاب من دسها (67)

By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right: truly he succeeds that purifies it and he fails that corrupts it. Humān beings on the

(65). Islamic Da'wa, Its Nature and Demands, 4.

(66). Ibid, 2

(67). Al-Quran, 91/7-10

basis of this ability are exempted from strict adherence to natural law which controls the whole creation. They are gifted with freedom of choice between good and evil.

انا هديناه السبيل اما شاكر او اما كفوراً (68)

We showed him the way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will).

وقل الحق من ربكم من شاء فليؤمن ومن شاء فليكفر (69)

Say: truth is from your Lord: let him who believe, and let him who reject (it).

The story of the creation of Adam reveals that human beings are gifted with special qualities which help them in exercising their freedom of choice. Firstly, human being is gifted with senses though common in all living beings but he is able to utilize them in the best way.

انا خلقنا الانسان من نطفة امشاج نبتليه فجعلناه سميعا بصيرا (70)

Verily we created human being from a drop of mingled sperm in order to try him: so we gave him (the gifts) of hearing and sight.

Second and most important is the fact that Allah has bestowed upon him rational faculty. He on the basis of reason and intellect not only can analyse the information provided by the senses and make decisions but also can use his imaginative ability to think and draw conclusion through intellectual exercise. A rational and speaking animal to use the terminology of classical logicians, is a jewel in the crown of whole creation of Allah. Qur'an has always drawn the attention of humans to think, to reflect and to understand. *Ta'qqul*, *tadabbur* and *tafakkur* are a few terms which Qur'an has applied for reasoning and reflection. The phrase "*la'allakum ta'qilun*" (perhaps you may understand), has occurred in the Qur'an at least at twenty four places.

(68). Ibid, 76/3

(69). Ibid, 18/29

(70). Al-Quran, 76/2

The verb "ya'qilun (يعقلون) is used in twenty verses. To use reason for the understanding of Allah's will and work in this universe is the sign of true knowledge.

وتلك الامثال نضربها للناس وما يعقلها الا العالمون (71)

And such are the parables we set forth for mankind, but only those understand who have knowledge.

Similarly the term "tafakkur" (تفكر) has been used in its various derivations at eighteen places in the Qur'an which denotes consideration and reflection. There are sign in the "self" of human and then in the uiverse which can only be seen and understood through reflection. Referring to the uiversal signs Qur'an says:

الذين يذكرون الله قيا ما وقعودا و على جنوبهم و يتفكرون فى خلق السموت
والارض ربنا ما خلقت هذا باطلا سبحانك فقنا عذب النار (72)

Those who celebrate the praises of Allah standing, sitting and lying down on their sides and comtemplate the (wonders) of creation in the heavens and the earth (with thought) "Our Lord you have not created (all) this for nothing. Glory be to You give us salvation from the penalty of the fire."

Another term that Qur'an uses for this purpose is *tadabbur* which means a careful consideration and deep understanding. The term is especially related to revelation from Allah in general and the Qur'an in particular. Referring to the negative attitude of the unbelievers the Qur'an comments:

العلم يدبروا القول ام جاءهم مالم يات آباءهم الاولين (73)

Do they not ponder over the word of (of Allah) or has any thing (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old.

With special reference to the Qur'an it says:

(71). Al-Quran, 29/43

(72). Ibid, 3/191

(73). Al-Quran, 23/68

أفلا يتدبرون القرآن ولو كان من عند غير الله لوجدوا فيه اختلافا كثيرا (74)

Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care). Had it been from other than Allah they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.

أفلا يتدبرون القرآن أم على قلوب أقفالها (75)

Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an or their hearts locked up by them.

كتاب أنزلناه إليك مبارك ليدبروا آياته وليتذكر أولو الألباب (76)

(Here is) a book which we have sent down unto you full of blessings, that they may meditate on its signs and that people of understanding may receive admonition.

Human ability to think, contemplate and reflect enabled him to make decisions and choices. These choices can be made on individual or collective basis and are manifested in individual and collective experiences. Collective experience in particular has been a source of information and guidance. Human society, throughout history, has utilized these sources of information for its benefit.

Quranic critique of these sources of knowledge is an important contribution to epistemology. Qur'an accepts the validity of these sources, however it points out the limitations of their scope. Metaphysical realm is beyond the reach of these sources and the information regarding physical world can also be coloured or biased due to the interpretive exercise or a coloured vision of the situation. Moreover the limitation of time and space add to its inaccuracy. Qur'an has used a comprehensive term *al-zann* (الظن) to explain the nature and scope of these sources. Qur'an says:

وما لهم به من علم إن يتبعون إلا الظن وإن الظن لا يغني عن الحق شيئا (77)

(74). Ibid, 4/82

(75). Ibid, 47/24

(76). Ibid, 38/29

(77). Al-Quran, 53/28

But they have no knowledge therein; They follow nothing but conjecture and conjecture avail nothing against truth.

Commenting on polytheist's acceptance of gods beside Allah Qur'an says:

ان هي الاسماء سميتوها انتم و آباءكم ما انزل الله بهامن سلطان ان يتبعون الا الظن و ما تهوى الانفس (78)

These are nothing but names which you have devised you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority what ever, they follow nothing but conjecture and what their own soul desire:-

بل اتبع الذين ظلموا اهواءهم بغير علم فمن يهدي من اضل الله وما لهم من ناصرين (79)

Nay, the wrong doers (surely) follow their own lusts, being devoid of knowledge. But who will guide those whom Allah leaves astray? To them there will be no helpers.

One of the main argument of the polytheists in favour of their belief system was the practice of the older generation. They argued that they were doing so because their forefathers had practiced it. Qur'an has refuted their argument by showing its futility.

واذا قيل لهم تعالوا الى ما انزل الله والى الرسول قالوا احسبنا ما وجدنا عليه آباءنا اولو كان آباءهم لا يعلمون شيئا ولا يهتدون (80)

When it is said to them, "come to what Allah has revealed: come to the Messenger" They say: "Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following:" What! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance.

واذا فعلوا فاحشة قالوا وجدنا عليها آباءنا والله امرنا بها قل ان الله لا يامر بالفحشاء اتقولون على الله ما لا تعلمون (81)

When they do aught that is shameful, they say, "we found our fathers doing so", and "Allah commanded us thus:" say:

(78). Al-Quran, 53/23

(79). Ibid, 30/29

(80). Ibid, 5/104

(81). Al-Quran 7/28

Nay, Allah never commands what is shameful" Do you say of Allah what you know not.

Qur'an has mentioned this argument of theirs at least at six other places.(82) After showing limitations and unreliability of these sources Qur'an invites humankind to the real source of knowledge; source which is reliable and free from all limitations. That source of knowledge is Allah who reveals it to his chosen persons and who then convey it to the people of their time. The prophets on the basis of this special knowledge reform and recreate new societies. Qur'an calls this knowledge *al-'ilm* (العلم) *al-hikmah* (الحكمة) *hukm* (حكم) and *al-huda* (الهدى). For instance Prophet Abraham received this knowledge and challenged the establishment of his time. He started his mission by inviting his father to that ultimate truth which he was made aware of.

يأبى اتى قد جاءنى من العلم ما لم ياتك فاتبعنى اهدك صراطا سويا (83)

"O my father: to me has come knowledge which has not reached you: So follow me: I will guide you to a way that is even and straight.

Similar term has been used in connection with many prophets.

ولو طأتيناه حكما وعلما (84)

And to Lot too, we gave judgement and knowledge.

ولما بلغ أشده آتيناه حكما وعلما وكذلك نجزي المحسنين (85)

When Joseph attained his full manhood, we gave him power and knowledge: thus do we reward those who do right.

In the case of prophet Moses same term has been repeated in the Qur'an:

(82). Ibid, 10/78; 21/53; 26/73; 31/21; 43/22, 23.

(83). Ibid, 19/43

(84). Ibid, 21/74

(85). Ibid, 12/22

ولما بلغ أشده واستوى آتيناه حكما وعلما وكذلك نجزي المحسنين (86)

When he reached full age, and was firmly established (in life). We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge: for thus do we reward those who do good.

Referring to David and Soloman Qur'an, again used this term.

وكلا آتيناها حكما وعلما (87)

To each (of them) we gave judgement and knowledge.

Prophet Mohammad (SAW) is reminded of the importance of *al-'ilm* when he was directed to ignore the desires of those who have gone astray.

ولئن اتبعت أهواءهم بعد الذي جاءك من العلم مالك من الله من ولي ولا نصير (88)

Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you then would you find neither protector nor helper against Allah.

This theme is restated at two other places (89). *Al-huda* (الهدى) signifies divine guidance which remained with human kind as a gift of Allah through history.

It was institutionalised through the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. When Adam was commanded to live on earth he was promised with the availability of this gift.

قلنا اهبطوا منها جميعا فاما ياتينكم مني هدى فمن تبع هدى فلا خوف عليهم ولا

هم يحزنون (90)

We said, "Get you down all from here; and if as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, who so ever follow my guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

(86). Ibid, 28/14

(87). Ibid, 21/79

(88). Ibid, 2/120

(89). Ibid, 2/145; 13/37

(90). Al-Quran 2/38

Addressing to the Prophet Allah stated that he was the possessor of the guidance and therefore should ignore Jewish and Christians' opposition.

ولن ترضى عنك اليهود ولا النصارى حتى تتبع ملتهم قل ان هدى الله هو الهدى (91)

Never will the Jews and Christians will be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion. Say: "The guidance of Allah that is the only guidance".

Divine guidance is the only true source of knowledge which is ignored only by those who have gone astray because they followed their desires. Qur'an exclaims:

ومن اضل ممن اتبع هوله بغير هدى من الله ان الله لا يهدى القوم الظالمين (92)

And who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts devoid of guidance from Allah? For Allah guides not people given to wrong doing.

The Prophets and Messengers throughout ages invited human kind to this guidance for the welfare of this life and salvation hereafter.

Qur'an invites humankind to divine guidance and true knowledge imparted by Him to the Prophet and exposes the foolishness of those who reject divine guidance and knowledge and follow their lust desires. It points out the futility of their argumentation against divine wisdom. It says:

فان لم يستجيبوا لك فاعلم انما يتبعون اهواءهم و من اضل ممن اتبع هوله بغير هدى من الله ان الله لا يهدى القوم الظالمين (93)

But if they hearken not to you, know that they only follow their own lusts: and who is more astray than one who follows his

(91). Ibid, 2/120

(92). Ibid, 28/50

(93). Al-Quran, 28/50

own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah? For Allah guides not people given to wrong doings.

بل اتبع الذين ظلموا اهواءهم بغير علم فمن يهدى من اضل الله وما لهم من نصيرين⁽⁹⁴⁾

Nay, the wrong-doers merely follow their own lusts. Being devoid of knowledge. But who will guide those whom Allah leaves astray? To them there will be no helpers.

Commenting on the arrogance and ignorance of those who do not pay heed to divine knowledge, Qur'an explains their manifest error:

ومن الناس من يجادل في الله بغير علم ولا هدى ولا كتاب منير ثانی عطفه ليضيل
عن سبيل الله له في الدنيا خزي ونذيقه يوم القيامة عذاب الحريق (95)

Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment. (disdainfully) bending his side, in order to lead (people) astray from the path of Allah. For him there is disgrace in the life and on the day of judgement we shall make him taste the panalty of burning (Fire).

Divine knowledge and wisdom is the real basis to lead a good life in this world and to get reward in hereafter. All the Messenger and Prophets came to teach this wisdom and convey this message. Though humankind in general showed its indifference to the message yet Allah through His infinite mercy continued pleading through his Prophet the usefulness of his message. The Prophets throughout ages kept themselves busy in inviting people towards Allah and asking them to mend their ways. Looking at the history of salvation it seems evident that this is the most important work to do.

Da'wah a responsibility

Da'wah ila-Allah was the responsibility of the Prophets. Allah (S.W.T.) has taken upon Himself to provide guidance and

(94). Ibid, 30/29

(95). Ibid, 22/8-9

real knowledge to human so that the people could have no excuse for disobedience and going astray:

رسلا مبشرين و منذرين لئلا يكون للناس على الله حجة بعد الرسل وكان الله عزيزا
حكيما (96)

Messengers who gave good news as well warning that humankind after the coming of the Messengers should have no plea against Allah: For Allah is exalted in power wise.

Da'wah activity flourished throughout human history and the Prophets played a pivotal role in conveying the message. At the time when humankind was ready to receive a universal, eternal and comprehensive message, Allah raised the final Prophet and Messenger in the person of Muhammad (P.B.U.H) He started his *Da'wah* at Makkah in an Arabian environment; nevertheless the nature and scope of his mission was universal. He not only addressed his own people, the Arabs, as was the practice of earlier Prophets but also invited the people of the Book and extended his call to the whole humankind in general. All the Prophets did *da'wah* work as a duty of Allah (SWT) and therefore, is the most important and sacred work in this world. The Qur'an has described the importance of *da'wah* work in the following words:

ومن احسن قولاً ممن دعا الى الله وعمل صالحا وقال انى من المسلمين (97)

Who is better in speech than one who calls (people) to Allah, work righteousness and say, "I am of those who bow in Islam".

The Prophet of Islam is given the title of *Dai'ila-Allah* which indicated the significance of *da'wah*. Qur'an says:

يا ايها النبي انا ارسلناك شاهدا و مبشرا و نذيرا و داعيا الى الله باذنه و سراجا منيرا (98)

O Prophet truly we have sent you a witness a bearer of glad tidings and a warner and as one who invites to Allah by his leave and as a lamp spreading light.

(96). Al-Quran, 4/165

(97). Al-Quran 41/33

(98). Ibid, 33/45-46

Since the institution of Prophethood completed with the coming of the last Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) therefore the duties of Prophethood would be carried out by the Ummah of the last Prophet. The Qur'an has referred to this fact at many places. Before quoting appropriate verses it is useful to note that the Qur'an uses the term of '*amr bil ma' ruf* and *nahy 'an al-Munkar* signifying *Da'wah ila-Allah*. The Qur'an while describing the qualities of the Prophet and those of the believers of Umma especially mentions their work of '*amr bil ma'ruf* and *nahy 'an al-munkar*. Verses mentioned below have a particular significance in this regard. Following verses indicate prophetic work of *amr bil-ma'ruf* and *nahy 'an al-munkar*.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَا
مَرَّهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحْرِمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ (99)

Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet when they find mentioned in their own (scripture) in the law and the Gospel. For he commands them what is good and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure).

The believers have a duty of '*amr bi al-ma'ruf* and *nahy 'an al-munkar* to perform according to their ability. Qur'an says:

التَّائِبُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ الْأَمْرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (100)

Those that turn (to Allah) in repentance: that serve him and praise him; that wander in devotion to the cause of Allah: that bow down and prostrate themselves in prayer; that enjoin good and forbid evil and observe the limits set by Allah (these do rejoice) so proclaim the glad tidings to the believers.

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَانَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ (101)

(99). Al-Quran, 7/157

(100). Ibid, 9/112

(101). Ibid, 22/41

They are those who if we establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity enjoin the right and forbid wrong: with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم اولياء بعض يامرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر
ويقيمون الصلوة ويؤتون الزكاة ويطيعون الله ورسوله اولئك سير حمهم الله ان الله
عزيز حكيم (102)

The believers, men and women, are protectors of one another; they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil; they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity enjoin the right and forbid wrong: with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

The Ummah as a whole is made responsible for enjoining good and forbidding evil. This is a prophetic duty which Ummah has to perform after the death of the Prophet.

كنتم خيرا مة اخرجت للناس تامرون بالمعروف و تنهون عن المنكر و تو منون
بالله (103)

You are the best peoples, evolved for humankind enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong.

Tirmidhi has reported from the Prophet that while explaining this verse he said:

انتم تو فون سببعن امة انتم خيرها و اكرمها على الله عزوجل (104)

You are completing seventy Ummahs you are the best and glorious with Allah (SWT).

The reason behind it seems to be the performance of prophetic duty of *da'wah*. Being aware of the importance of *da'wah* work the Prophet commanded his Ummah to enjoin good and forbid evil and warn them against the consequences of ignoring this work. Some of the Prophetic traditions are given below to signify its importance;

(102). Ibid, 9/71

(103). Al-Quran 3/110

(104). Tirmidhi; K.al-Tafsir, Surah Al-'Imran, 5/226; Ibn Majah, K.Zuhd, bab Sifat Muhammad, 2/1433

عن ابي سعيد الخدري عن رسول الله ﷺ قال من رأى منكم منكراً فليغيره بيده
فان لم يستطع فبلسانه فان لم يستطع فبقلبه وذلك اضعف الايمان (105)

Abu Sa'id al-khudri narrated from the Prophet as saying: He who amongst you should see something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith.

عن حذيفة: ان النبي ﷺ قال: والذي نفسي بيده لتامرنا بالمعروف ولتنهون
عن المنكر اوليو سكن الله ان يعث عليكم عقابا منه ثم تدعون ولا يستجاب لكم (106)

Hudhayfa reported from the Prophet as saying: By Allah in whose hands is my life you must enjoin what is good and prohibit what is evil otherwise Allah will inflict upon you a punishment then you will call him in prayer and your prayers will not be accepted.

It is also reported from him that the prophet said:

والذي نفسي بيده لتامرنا بالمعروف ولتنهون عن المنكر اوليسلطن الله عليكم
شرا لكم فيدعو خياركم فلا يستجاب لهم (107)

By him in whose hand is my life you must enjoin what is good and prohibit what is evil otherwise Allah will set upon you as overlords those amongst you who are evil and then your good people will pray but their prayers will not be accepted.

عن جرير بن عبدالله: قال: سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: ما من رجل يكون
في قوم يعمل فيهم بالمعاصي يقدرون على ان يغيروا عليه ولا يغيرون الا اصابهم الله منه

(105). Muslim, K. al-Iman, bab al-nahy 'an al-munkar ... 1/50; Abu Dawud, K. al-Malahim, bab 'Amr bi'al-Ma'ruf..., 4/511; Tirmidhi, K. al-Fitan, bab ma ja'a fi 'Amr ..., 4/469-470

(106). Abu Dawud, K. Al-Malahim, Bab Al-'Amr Wa'l-Nahy, 4/510-511

(107). Ibn Maja, K. al-Fitan, bab Qawlulhu Ta'ala ..., 2/1331.

بعقاب من قبل ان يموتوا (108)

Jarir b. 'Abdullah reported that I heard Apostle of Allah as saying: If any man is among a people in whose midst he does acts of disobedience , and , though they ar able to make him change (his acts) they do not change, Allah will smite them with punishment before they die.

عن انس قال : قيل يا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : متى نترك الامر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر فقال : اذا ظهر فيكم ما ظهر في الامم قبلكم - قلنا : يا رسول الله ! وما ظهر في الامم قبلنا؟ قال : الملك في صغاركم والفاحشة في كباركم والعلم في رذالتكم (109)

It is reported from Anas that the Messenger of Allah was asked as to when we would stop enjoining of good and forbidding of evil. He said that when it would appear amongst you what had manifested among the people before you. We said that what appeared amongst the people before us. He said that when the political power would turn into the hands of your lowly and despised people, abomination manifested amongst your elders, and the knowledge would go to your mean and despicable ones.

Inviting people to Allah is the most glorious act in this world. Prophet (p.b.u.h) has explained the significance of *da'wah* work in the following words:

فوالله لان يهدي الله بك رجلا واحدا خير لك من ان يكون لك حمر النعم (110)

By Allah, even a single man is led on the right path (of Islam) by Allah through you, then that will be better than the nice red camels.

Da'wah work is important because it is the sign of community's life and strength. *Da'wah* has two dimension: internal and external.

Internally it is a source of strength and cohesion. It is evident from the record of history that no community can survive without objective assessment and critical evaluation of

(108). Trimidhi, *K. Al-Fitan, bab ma ga'a fi al-'Amr ...*, 4/468 Abu Dawud, *K. al-Malahim, bab al-'Amr*, 4/508

(109). Ibn Maja, *K. al-Fitan, bab Qawlulhu Ta'ala ...*, 2/1331.

(110). Bukhari, *K. al-Maghazi, ghazwa Khayber*, 5/77

its deeds and actions and modes of thinking. *Da'wah* is the secret of national solidarity. Once a community abandons the principals of assessment and practice of critical evaluation different kinds of heresies, corruption and malpractices creep in and cowardice overpowers the community's heart and mind. Abandoning *da'wa* work not only destroys the confidence of the community but also causes erosion to the social cohesion and solidarity of the community. *Da'wah* therefore can be termed as a fundamental element for the social fabric of the society.

Externally, *da'wah* is a strong vehicle for the export of ideas and thoughts. It not only helps in expanding the influence of the community but also keeps the community intact. Communication of an ideology signifies the strength of a community. A passive community is always a target of aggressive nations. Those communities who abandon *da'wah* are integrated or assimilated with powerful cultures. *Da'wah* therefore, is the best external policy of a community. Taking initiative saves a community from external aggressions.

To understand *da'wah* strategy of Islam one has to look at the historical context of the religious situation. At the time, when Islam was introduced on the world stage, two types of religions were leading the world: missionary and non missionary. Hinduisim, judaism and Zoroastrianism were the non missionary religions. The follower of these religions maintaining their solidarity had closed their doors for out side world. Through internal machanism these religious countries kept themself intact and resisted all foreign influences. Since the followers of these religions do not go for preaching therefore, they don not allow any body to preach to them. Although this policy did not help these countries to stop conversion of their members to other religions yet they succeeded in preserving the social indentity of the community.

Budhism, Christiantiy and Islam are considered to be the missionary religions. Although according to some scholars Bhdhism was a reformist movement in Hinduism yet the aggressive policy of preaching adopted by its followers made it

the most influential world religion. As far Christianity it was initially a corrective attempt to judaic rigidity. However, Paul's efforts made it a religion for the whole humankind. An objective reader can see the contradicting statements in the Gospel regarding preaching to others. Some of the most often quoted verses are as follows:-

Mathew states the faith of the cononite woman: She said that her daughter was suffering from demon possession. Jesus replied. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel". "Lord help me" She said. He replied. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to thier dogs." She said, "yes Lord, but even the dogs eat crumbs that fall from the master's table".(111)

According to Mathew, Jesus sent out his disciples with following instructions." Do not go among the gentiles or enter any town of samiritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go preach this message. "The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead clean those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received freely you give".(112)

Mathew reports from Jesus a statement which one can not expect from such a noble person in normal circumstances. He is reported to have siad." Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under thier feet and then turn and tear you to pieces." (113)

This statement of Jesus seems strange in the universal context of christian mission. However, looking at the circumstances in which Jesus was conveying his message the statement seems appropriate. In fact Jesus was emphasizing the circle of importance. This statement can be understood in a situation of a person who has his own backyard full of dirt but has gone out cleaning other's back yard. The folly of that person is evident. Since Jesus was concerned with Jewish conditions

(111). Mathew, 15/21-28

(112). Mathew, 10/5-10

(113). Mathew, 7/6-7

and was committed to help them, therefore, his own house had a priority. It was Paul who made the reformist message of Jesus as for all nations.

As far Islam it has taken into consideration the process of internal evaluation and external initiatives. *Da'wah* strategy adopted by Islam brings solidarity within the community and a strength by an extended initiative to the external world. As Qur'an calls the Prophet of Islam a *Da'i* it makes Ummah responsible for *da'wah* work.

In the same way the Qur'an declares that the Ummah would be witness unto people and the Prophet would be witness over his people. Witnessing is a universal phenomenon of Islam which is confirmed by internal evidence and practical experience of the Ummah. No body can accuse Islam for adopting a contradictory policy. *Da'wah* is an obligation and it is a life line of the Muslim community the Qur'an has confirmed this policy by saying.

وكذلك جعلناكم امة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء على الناس ويكون الرسول عليكم شهيدا (114)

Thus have we made you an Ummah justly balanced that you might be witness over the nations and the messenger a witness over yourselves.