

Da'wah Among Non-Muslims in the West

By Khurram Murad

Contents

Introduction

1. Situation
2. Vision of Da'wah
3. Concepts & Framework
4. Methodology
5. Conclusion

Introduction

All praise belongs to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Him do we praise; and upon His true, ideal servant and His noble, trustworthy Messenger, Muhammad, do we invoke blessings and peace.

Khurram Murad
The Islamic Foundation

1. Situation, Problems and Scope

Three Questions

Let us start by stating an obvious but disturbing truth. We are doing almost no Da'wah among non-Muslims in the West, indeed, to be truthful, anywhere in the world. Why? That must be the first important question we should try to answer. At the macro-level, as an Ummah of one billion Muslims or as Muslim countries and nations, the objective of Da'wah has no place among our goals and priorities. Almost none of our national resources are spent on this immensely important task. Similarly, at the intermediate level of Muslim communities living within non-Muslim countries, we live totally indifferent to this primary duty to our neighbours. Neither do we make an Islamic impact on them, though we are more than a million strong in some Western countries (more than 130 million in India). At the micro-level of small Islamic groups and persons, with few exceptions, again, Da'wah among non-Muslims commands little of our attention, time or resources.

Secondly, whatever little we are doing is not very effective. Again, why? That should be the second important question before us.

The third question should be: Are our present concepts, approaches and methods appropriate and correct for Da'wah among non-Muslims, or do they need to be modified or altered? If so, in what ways?

Basic Framework

Before I attempt to answer these questions, let me state three principles which form the basis of my entire discussion.

Firstly, Da'wah among non-Muslims cannot, and should not, be treated as an isolated phenomenon. We will not undertake it properly unless we recognize its proper place at the centre of the Islamic life that we as Muslims must live. We will not devote our energies to it as we ought to unless it forms an integral part of our total endeavour and struggle (Jihad) that we must undertake in recognition of our mission of witnessing to the Truth and justice (Shahadah and qist) .

To make things more clear: Da'wah among non-Muslims must not be merely an appendage attached to our Islamic existence. It cannot be pursued as a contingent activity. It should not be incidental to any special circumstances, or a fortuitous activity. For example, it should not be taken up as a response or reaction to missionary activities by other faiths. If approached in this fashion, it will suffer the fate that it is suffering now.

Secondly, we will not, therefore, succeed in identifying and discussing the conceptual and methodological problems of Da'wah among non-Muslims, and their solutions, correctly and fruitfully, unless we put it in its proper place in Islam, and unless we consider the whole question from the perspective of the total Muslim situation. Thirdly, the Qur'an and the life of Da'wah lived by the Prophet Muhammad, and all other Messengers, peace be on them, should provide the best guidance to us for formulating our concepts, approaches and methods.

Total Muslim Situation

There are certain realities of the total Muslim situation which are, and will remain, a crucial factor in any Da'wah activity. By understanding them, by placing things in their context, we can make some progress in understanding the nature of our problems, as well as their solution. Five of them we can identify immediately

as more important. Most of the major problems that we encounter in Da'wah to non-Muslims are caused by them.

The first is the state of the Muslim mind and attitude, individual and collective, towards Islam, towards their mission of Shahadah, towards Da'wah to all mankind in fulfilment of that mission. What it is and what it ought to be? Little doubt that it is one of unawareness, indifference, or neglect. Is it not, then, that we often fail to address ourselves properly to the task of Da'wah among non-Muslims simply because this state of mind and attitude is faulty, foggy or diffused? And, without attempting to set it right, simultaneously, our problems with respect to Dawah will remain.

The second is the state of actual contemporary Muslim witness, by words and deeds, to Islam. How much does this witness correspond with the reality of Islam? The gaping discrepancy between Islam as it ought to be and Islam as it is witnessed in Muslim life is there for all to see. We need not go into details here. At every level, whether that of the Ummah, or of Muslim groups, social institutions and structures, or of the individual person and everywhere, whether in Muslim countries or in non-Muslim countries the witness given by Muslims has little to do with Islam. Indeed it goes mostly against Islam. With this contradiction between Islam and the Muslim example, and with this state of near hypocrisy, how can an average non-Muslim feel any attraction towards Islam, let alone choose to follow it? How can it happen, merely by listening to sermons and reading books (except for a few good souls, of course)?

The third is the burden of history both Muslim and non-Muslim. Abstracting Islamic Da'wah from it is an uphill task. Burdens of misgiving and misunderstanding, of misperception and misrepresentation, of mistrust and hostility, of images, both false and true, which seem to have become permanently lodged in hearts and minds. Some of them may be genuine, some ill-founded, some

deliberately believed and planted. Some may be a result of our failures and follies, some of what was done to us by those whom we want to come to Islam. Others may be a product of obduracy, born of general human arrogance, greed, self-interest, and envy. Some may date back to the days of expansion of early Islam, some may be as recent as the Western colonialism of our time.

Da'wah must strive ceaselessly against these walls of ignorance, prejudice and hostility, and either admit defeat or find a way to overcome them. Whatever the outcome, these obstacles cannot be avoided or wished away. They all will need to be kept in view, they all will need to be taken care of in some way or other.

The fourth is the serious tension between two very important goals that we must pursue simultaneously, both a product of history. On the one hand, there is the requirement of building and reinforcing the Muslim sense of identity, self-assurance and confidence. This will need to be done in the face of deep scars left by at least three centuries of aggression, subjugation and exploitation of the Muslim Ummah by the West and its continuing hostility. On the other, there is the goal of bringing the same West to Islam, which would necessarily mean that it would become part of the Muslim Ummah. This will require lessening hostilities and tensions, not aggravating them. Thus we need to do two different, even opposite things, simultaneously.

The fifth is the contemporary situation: Muslims and non-Muslims, especially the West, locked in conflict over various political, economic and ideological interests, and Western hegemony over the world, both political and ideological. The consequences have a significant impact on Dawah among non-Muslims. How do the continuing interactions and battles hinder or help the cause? Do they not reinforce, modify, or distort our own images of ourselves, and of others, and our approaches and methods? Do they not serve

as blockages on our communication path to our addressees' hearts and minds? How best can we take care of these difficulties, without forgoing our ideological, political and economic causes or compromising our interests?

Limitations

It may be useful at this stage to state a few limitations under which we shall have to proceed to our task.

Firstly, problems for Da'wah among non-Muslims, whether as a part or a consequence of the larger problems outlined above, or as specifically relevant to the issue, obviously exist at various levels. We have already mentioned three levels, which we will list again:

(1) at the level of overall Ummah and Muslim societies and states, or what we may call the 'macro level'; (2) at the level of very large groups, institutions and structures, or what we may call the 'intermediate level'; e.g. a Muslim community, a mosque, a neighbourhood, a school, a business; (3) at the level of the individual person, and small organization, or what we may call the 'micro level'. (I would include the existing Islamic groups and organizations under this category. By 'Islamic' groups, I mean organized groups which are committed to the mission of Islam.) The issues and problems at each level are different, and must be so recognized in order to deal with them sensibly.

There is no harm in admitting frankly that most of the problems, especially those at the macro and intermediate levels, are, and will for long remain, beyond our reach and competence to do something about them. For example, we may not change the broad behaviour of the Ummah as a whole into an Islamic one; we may not be in a position to point out even one place where Islam could be 'observed' with its full blessings; we may not have the strength to stop a Muslim country from doing something which is against Islam,

whether it be Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran or Saudi Arabia; we may not be able to force the visiting shaykhs to behave in a proper Islamic manner; we may not turn Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries into living examples of Islam. All these we may find to be simply beyond our power.

Even at the micro-level, to be realistic, that point in time seems far away when a significant number of Muslim individuals will become Shahid (witness) and Da'iyah, or the Islamic groups will accord the work of Da'wah among non-Muslims the top priority. It is only on the micro-level, and to a very limited extent on the intermediate level, that we can reasonably hope to achieve something.

Does this mean we should shelve or put off the work of Da'wah among non-Muslims until we have achieved some or all of the above? Not at all. Da'wah can still find its way, provided we take it up in the right manner. What is important is that we should take cognizance of these macro, insoluble problems, we should note their implications, we should remain aware of them, we should keep in view the limitations imposed by them. Doing so is necessary because it would help us formulate and follow suitable approaches and methodologies, which will make due allowance for, even if not solve, all such problems.

In the brief span of this essay, therefore, I shall confine myself to the 'person' and 'Islamic group' something which I believe can be, and will be, amenable to change. Also I shall concentrate primarily on the right type of mind and attitude which is required for Dawah, as well as on some broad principles for redefining our concepts and methodologies. That must be the first step. It is not possible to go beyond that at this stage, and lay down a more detailed, specific blueprint.

Secondly, in my view, most problems exist or become inflated because we take up the issue of Dawah in isolation from the Muslim situation. If placed in proper perspective, they will be reduced to a proper size or will dissolve. Some problems are not really problems; they become problems only because we look at them from the wrong perspective. Lack of suitable resources I consider to be the least important of all the problems. Lack of part-time or whole-time workers or professional Da'iyas, of suitable literature, of suitable psychological techniques may turn out to be not so important as we often consider them to be. Hence I shall be dealing only with conceptual and methodological matters.

Thirdly, problems also vary from situation to situation and from country to country. Non-Muslims are not a uniform, homogenous entity. They are not similar in all places. Nor has their history of interaction with Islam taken a similar course at all times and in all lands. A Christian in the West, in Nigeria, in Egypt, a Hindu in India, a black in South Africa, a Chinese in Malaysia, a Japanese each is very different from the other, each may pose a very different challenge, each may require a different approach. Indeed each individual must be looked at as different and special.

In this brief space, again, I cannot deal with each specific situation, nor am I competent to do so. The most I can hope to do, and propose to do, is (1) to consider such aspects as may have universal application, and (2) wherever I have to turn my attention to specifics, to confine myself to the West. Nevertheless, even certain specific references to the Western situation may have a wider application.

2. Vision of Da'wah

Da'wah Consciousness

The most fundamental question is that of our vision of Da'wah. Many problems emanate from that. Many things become problems because of that. Dawah in Islam, unlike Christian mission, is not a profession. It is not a subsidiary occupation that one may or may not engage in. No battery of paid workers and Da'iyas, no amount of literature and modern equipment, no number of sermons can solve our problem, unless we adopt the right view of Da'wah.

Da'wah, prior to everything, is a state of mind, a world view, an attitude to life, indeed a kind of life. The critical prerequisite to Da'wah is a consciousness, personal and collective, imbued with a true vision of Da'wah in Islam. Once we have understood what Islam is and what it demands of us, what place Da'wah should occupy in our Islamic life, we will have taken the first essential step towards understanding and solving our problem. This may sound too simplistic but, then, real solutions to complex problems are often simple.

What is Islam? It may seem rather naive to ask such a question here. But it is important, for a proper answer will set the whole perspective right. Islam means living in total surrender to Allah, in private and in public, inwardly and outwardly. This has two clear, important implications. One, as most of human life comprises of relationships with other people, living in surrender to Allah cannot be actualized fully unless other people join us in our endeavour, unless the whole society lives in surrender. Hence, at least inviting others to join in our venture, that is Da'wah, is an essential part of being Muslim. Two, Islam is not a once-in-a-lifetime decision; it is a process, it is a life-long pursuit. Hence we must continuously invite ourselves and everyone else to join in this pursuit.

Thus Da'wah is integral to Islam. To be a Muslim means to continually strive to become Muslim, that means to do Da'wah. In my humble view, there is no other way of becoming Muslim.

Da'wah is essential to the fulfilment of the very purpose of this Ummah, the purpose of its existence: the mission of Shahadah. Thus We have charged you to be a community of the middle way, so that you may bear witness [to the Truth] before all mankind and the Messenger may bear witness [to it] before you (al-Baqarah 2: 143).

This mission of Shahadah is the same, in nature and import, as that entrusted to all the Messengers of Allah. Da'wah is an essential part of that mission:

O Messenger. We have sent you as witness, bearer of glad tidings, warner, caller to God, with His leave, and a radiant lamp (al-Ahzab 33: 45-6).

Da'wah has to be addressed to the 'self' as well as to the 'other', to the individual as well as to the society, to the black as well as to the white, to the Muslim as well as to the non-Muslim. It cannot be restricted to any race, colour, community, or religion.

This mission and duty we cannot shirk or evade or postpone on any plea whatsoever under any circumstances. We cannot wait to become 'purified' and 'perfect'. For, firstly, at no point in time can one consider oneself to have become purified and perfect. If one does so, indeed that very act will be the most impure act, an act of arrogance and pride; and at that very moment decline and decay will begin. Secondly, doing Da'wah, as I have said, is itself essential to becoming a good Muslim. Thirdly, considering oneself 'good' and

superior to others is antithetical to the nature, spirit and methodology of Da'wah.

Da'wah is the most important, most significant, most obvious Sunnah of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him.

O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to you from your Lord. If you do not, you will not have delivered His message. God will protect you from men (al-Ma'idah 5: 6).

Every Muslim is therefore a Da'iya. Da'wah cannot be given up or be a part-time occupation; it must become the life he lives.

Before we start thinking about approaches and methods, skills and techniques, we must create this consciousness. This dimension we seem to have lost. Our collective consciousness is devoid of it; so is our personal consciousness. That is why we have a billion Muslims on this planet and yet make no impact on non-Muslims. That is why we have non-Muslim minorities living among huge Muslim majorities, untouched by Islam. That is why we have significant Muslim minorities claimed to number two million in Britain who fail to make the slightest impression upon their neighbours and societies. That is why we have mosque after mosque built on landscapes which had no mosques before, and yet they make no impression on their vicinities. Is it possible that there should be fire in the heart and yet its warmth and glow not reach those who are in its vicinity?

At least some persons, if not all, should make this vision of Da'wah their state of mind. An individual imbued with a message and mission may look like an insignificant, ineffective entity. But was not there only one Da'iya in Makka? You may say: Ah, but he was a prophet. Yes, but he is the example, the norm, the uswah hasanah. And a very tiny seed can grow into a tall, large, leafy tree.

As a seed that puts forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and it grows stout and rises straight upon its stalk (al-Fath. 48: 29).

A good word is as a good tree, its roots are firm and its branches are in heaven; so it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord (Ibrahim 14: 24-5).

The collective consciousness of the Ummah at large we may not be able to change in the foreseeable future. The attitude of Muslims living within non-Muslim societies we may not modify. But at least those who have made their commitment to Islam as their life mission should take stock of themselves. Can their purpose creating a new man and a new society be achieved unless a significant proportion of non-Muslims join them in this mission? But what priority do they accord to this task in their thoughts and programmes?

What proportion of their time, their attention, their resources, their activities is devoted to this task? Have they not become content with merely preserving their own cultural identity as a minority? In view of this, why should any non-Muslim ever consider becoming part of a minority culture? What attraction does that culture hold for him? Have new Muslims found an appropriate place in Islamic organizations or on Islamic platforms during the last 25 years? Is there anything in the programmes of these organizations language or content which would be attractive to them?

Simple questions? Yes, but the answers will reveal the degree of our apathy and indifference. At least the Islamic groups should rethink their priorities and correct their course.

Other Muslim groups, even if they do not profess allegiance to Islam as a life mission, may then be approached and persuaded to remould their thinking and attitude. There are good grounds to do

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so. Such approach and persuasion in itself is an important part of Da'wah.

Da'wah by Example

Da'wah cannot proceed successfully irrespective of whether Muslim conduct and behaviour provides a true example of Islam or not. Nor can it replace the need for such Shahadah. The image of Muslims, as created or reinforced by our conduct as nations, as communities, cannot be separated from the image of Islam. As I have said, this Shahadah of the Ummah, as a whole, is against Islam, it creates a false image of Islam. Muslim conduct is indeed a hindrance in the way of Da'wah.

At the collective level this aspect is presently, as I have said earlier, beyond our reach. But we can try to do something at two levels.

Firstly, each individual should examine the state of his own personal Shahadah: how much does his behaviour represent Islam in the neighbourhood, at his work place, in the community? We tend to forget that personal example is still the most powerful resource needed on the path of Dawah.

Secondly, by word and deed, we should be upholders and champions of justice, human welfare, and man's dignity and freedom. This I will explain in more detail a little later.

3. Basic Concepts and Framework

Once we have recognized the central place that Da'wah must occupy in Islam, and what it means to the very acts of 'being' and 'becoming' Muslims, we should try to determine the concepts and methodologies that should define and guide our work of Dawah.

I would like to point to three basic concepts which, in my view, provide the essential framework for the important attitudes and approaches that we should follow.

Firstly, one fundamentally important truth about Islam, as brought by the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, is that it is not a new religion; it is the eternal message of God. The basic message of Islam that was given to the first Prophet, who was also the first man, was the same as that given to the Last Prophet. The Qur'an affirms again and again, and very emphatically, that he brought the same truth as was brought by all the earlier Messengers; he came to confirm what they had been given rather than repudiate it, to clear it of accretions and distortions rather than throw it away. Coming to Islam is like going back to one's own roots in nature, and in history.

This truth is well-known to us; we often assert and proclaim it, but seldom do we recognize or follow the profound implications that it has for Da'wah among Non-Muslims.

Secondly, the Muslim Ummah has not been constituted to become just another nation among nations, to compete with others to advance its interests. No, it has been 'raised for all mankind'. It is the 'best community' only if it serves their interests their foremost interest being that they should find guidance to the right path (3: 110). The ultimate objective of all worship and strivings is that Muslims should be 'witnesses unto mankind', witnesses to the Truth

God has given them, witnesses to justice (qist) thus performing the same mission as Allah's Messenger, blessings and peace be on him, performed (al-Hajj 22: 77-8; al-Nisa' 4: 131-9; al-Ma'idah 5: 7-10).

This, again, we know well and assert often, but seldom do we pause to reflect what important policy conclusions we should derive from this for our Da'wah.

Thirdly, the objective of Da'wah is not to win an argument, to score a victory, to silence an opponent; it is to win and activate a heart, a mind, indeed a life, for the cause of Allah. Equally important is to recognize that it is not within our power, even in the power of any of Allah's Messengers, to bring anyone to the right path. Da'wah therefore requires great patience, just as the Messengers were patient (al-Ahqaf 46: 35).

There are numerous instructions to the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, in the Qur'an, to this effect, but we are quite prone to forget them in our zeal to defeat the 'enemy' and establish our 'superiority', or to win as many people to our side as possible.

4. General Principles of Methodology

The above three fundamental concepts should be enough to help us formulate most of the general principles of methodology that we seem to need in our present situation. Let us look at some of them, at the same time examining our prevalent concepts and attitudes, discarding what is not in conformity with or contrary to the guidelines given by the Qur'an and the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and replacing them by what is more appropriate and correct.

1. We do not invite people to a 'new' religion, we invite them to the oldest religion, indeed to their 'own' religion, the religion of living in total surrender to their Creator, in accordance with the guidance brought by all His Messengers. Indeed, if I am not misunderstood, we may be bold enough to say that we do not invite anyone to change his 'religion', to transfer his allegiance to a rival religion. For, by our own admission, Islam is not a new or rival religion among the many competing for human allegiance; it is the natural and primordial religion. All nature lives in submission to its Creator; all Messengers Adam to Muhammad brought the same religion. This does not mean any change in the basic position of Islam. It does not mean that all religions, as they are, are equally true. One will still be invited to follow the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, because he is the last Messenger, and to accept the Qur'an as the last revelation from God. But, I think, proceeding from the position I have outlined above, implies a radical change in approach, tone, and style of Da'wah, and the order in which the teachings of Islam are presented.

2. The starting point and the basic core of our Da'wah should be, as the Qur'an makes very clear: total surrender to the One God, the Creator of all; accountability in life after death; obeying His

Messengers; and building a new world, on this basis, where justice will prevail. This, we may boldly affirm, without going into the question of empirical verification, is the core of every religion. To this we invite all.

And We never sent a Messenger, before you, except that We revealed to him that: There is no God but I, so serve Me alone (al-Anbiya' 21: 25).

The only [true] Way in the sight of God is total surrender to Him (Al 'Imran 3: 19).

3. We, therefore, do not start by repudiating what is wrong with others, but by inviting them to reflect on what is common between them and us. We ask non-Muslims to come to something they accept or which follows from what they accept: worshipping One God alone. The same approach was adopted with the idolators and Mushrikun (who created the heavens and the earth? . . .) and the same with the ahlu 'l-kitab.

Say: People of the Book! Come now to the creed which is common between us and you, that we shall serve and worship none but Allah, and we shall not associate anything with Him [as god], and some of us shall not make others Lords apart from Allah (Al 'Imran 3: 64).

Again this does not imply any change in our position. Believing in Allah as the only God must be in accordance with what He has instructed through all of His Messengers, which must include the Prophet Muhammad, as the last of them. But, again, following this order of priority will mean a radical change in approach, attitude, and polemic.

4. Telling people that we are not asking them to change to a rival religion, inviting them to the One God and His Messengers as their own religion, whose last revelation was to the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, should not be a mere semantic exercise. One important conclusion would be that we shall not be compelling anyone to accept all of 'historical Islam' as evidenced by Muslims over the last fourteen centuries, even if it deviated from Allah's guidance. And some of it did deviate.

5. We need not own and justify everything done or said by Muslims in the past, or in our own times. We do not necessarily have to. We may not be able to change the forms of un-Islamic behaviour on the part of Muslims at large or of those within non-Muslim societies, but we can certainly refrain from acting on the precept of: 'my nation, right or wrong'. Indeed going a step further, we should not hesitate to acknowledge or repudiate anything in our past or contemporary conduct which is not in keeping with our norms in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Is this not the spirit of Istighfar? In this regard, we should mould our conduct according to the following Quranic verses. Say: Come, I will recite what the Lord has forbidden you . . . And fill up the measure and the balance with justice. We burden not any person save to its capacity. And when you speak, be just, even if it be [against] a near kinsman (al-An'am 6: 151-2).

O believers, be you establishers of justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kinsmen, whether the man be rich or poor (al-Nisa' 4: 135).

6. The responsibility to guide all mankind to the path of God rests upon us as Muslims, as trustees of the Divine guidance sent down, and made clear, for all mankind, and as the followers of the Last Prophet, blessings and peace be on him. Today, if people are going astray, are we not, to a large degree, responsible for that? Today, if

people are Kafirs, how much are they responsible for their Kufr and how much does the responsibility lie on those who are neglecting and failing in their duty to witness to the truth?

Yes, there are Muslims, and there are Kafirs. And there should be no intention or effort to ignore or obliterate the dividing lines between them, or to change their definition. But is it appropriate, just, and Islamic to start our Da'wah from this premise? All Muslims of today are not really Muslims who are true examples of Islam; even their broad conduct is not Islamic. Kafirs of today are not really Kafirs who have heard the truth and who have rejected it after having known it, who have deliberately embarked upon a policy of hostility towards Islam.

There is no justification for us, then, in my view, to start our Da'wah work by looking at the world as divided into two hostile camps: Kafir and Muslim, where every Kafir is an enemy of Muslims, and therefore of Islam. Because of a long history of conflict, because of contemporary hostilities, because of our upbringing, because of our attitudes, we are prone to do so.

We should ponder how Allah's Messengers handled their world. Their address was always: 'O my people' or 'O mankind'. In the beginning, they never addressed them as 'Kafirs' unless the Kufr was demonstrated to be entrenched and deliberate. Similarly the Qur'an treated the People of the Book as a category separate from idolators, and addressed them as such, despite laying bare all their Kufr and Shirk. Also, see how the Qur'an differentiates between those who are hostile to Islam and those who simply do not believe:

It may be God will yet establish between you and those of them with whom you are at enmity, love . . . God forbids you not, as regards those who have not fought you in [the matter on Din, nor expelled you from your homes, that you should be kindly to them,

and act justly towards them; surely God loves the just. God only forbids you as to those who have fought you in [the matter of] Din, and expelled you from your homes, and have supported in your expulsion, that you should take them for friends (al-Mumtahanah 60: 74).

7. The history of encounter between Islam and the West, as long as fourteen centuries, is a history of conflict at all levels faith, morality, thought, politics, economics, etc. For the last three hundred years, the West has exploited and oppressed the Muslims. Muslims, therefore, have genuine reasons to condemn the West for its hostility and enmity towards Muslims and Islam in history, as in the contemporary world. (Though the Western perceptions of Muslim domination, too say in Sicily or Eastern Europe are not very pleasant.) We also have to expose the dangers of secular Western thought and ideas.

But does that permit us to engage in emotive diatribe, abusive polemic, against the West, the white man or the Hindu? I think not. For somebody is not evil because he is Western, or white, or Hindu; he is evil because he is in rebellion against his Creator and His Messengers. Yet this abuse permeates our attitudes and language.

Not that we should not provide an objective, powerful critique of Kufr, of Western thought and society. That is our duty (though this duty receives little of our attention). Not that we should not expose the Western powers' misdeeds in history or their present crimes. But with the compassion of a surgeon's scalpel, not with the brutality of a butcher's knife.

We have some teachings in the Qur'an which we should reflect upon to provide policy guidelines in this respect. For example: it forbids us to abuse even the idols; it condemns no one by name, except one person; it does not condemn people, it condemns their deeds.

8. Unless we have done our duty of Da'wah and unless the message of Islam has been rejected by him, every non-Muslim should be seen as a potential Muslim, not as an enemy. Except, of course, those who are engaged in open aggression and hostility against Islam and Muslims. This attitude is the obvious and logical consequence of our position that man has been created in the best of moulds (al-Tin 95: 4), that total submission to One God is the original and true nature of mankind (al-Rum 30: 30), that every Messenger brought the same religion.

This one concept will have a radical effect on our devotion to Da'wah, and on our approach and methodology. This will spur us to carry our message to every man and woman without any reservation, preconceived notion, or prior prejudice. This will endow us with large-heartedness, empathy, and understanding all so vital for Da'wah. This will demolish many barriers which inhibit us from taking up the task of Da'wah.

9. Language and themes are extremely important for Da'wah. The message remains the same, but it should be conveyed through a medium that is understood by its addressees. All the Messengers of God employed a language and took up the themes that were suited to their people. For example, the language of 'Islamic state' may not be a suitable language for a Western society; instead, a Just World Order based on surrender to the One God and obedience to His Messengers, is likely to evoke a more favourable response. Drinking may not strike a sympathetic chord, drugs may.

10. We should be kind and compassionate, just and fair, to everyone, irrespective of one's faith, race, colour, or social status, and in all situations. God has commanded us to be just and kind. We are ambassadors of the Last Prophet, who has been described by the Qur'an as 'the merciful, the compassionate' and 'mercy for all

the worlds' (rahmatul li'l-'alamin). Deep involvement in human welfare and service to mankind is basic to Islam and of central importance to Da'wah. The Qur'an places these values and conduct on a par with faith in God and His worship (68:27-37;74:42-6; 107:1-7). Why should a Muslim be indifferent to the uncared for, the lonely, the old, the hungry, who live in their societies?

11. We should make our basic Da'wah the message of Tawhid, Risalah, and Akhirah relevant to the concerns and experiences of average Westerners as well as of their societies. For example, why should Islamic Da'wah remain unconcerned with the questions of nuclear weapons, unemployment, old age, etc. Indeed, Islam should be concerned with all matters of public policy and morality. Prophet Noah's message dealt with caste and class differences, that of Prophet Hud with imperialism, wastage of public resources and domination by tyrant rulers, that of Prophet Lot with permissiveness, that of Prophet Shu'ayb with injustice and economic maladies, that of Prophet Moses with the tyranny and oppression perpetrated by Pharaoh. In the same way our message must deal with the problems of our day.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that the task is enormous and complex, but important and essential. There are no immediate solutions to large-scale problems. But, in a field like Da'wah, everything must start with the individual and the small group. Here, we have simple solutions to implement:

Firstly, as many of us as can should become, personally, a Da'iya, enthused with and committed to the mission of witness, who lives his whole life as an ambassador of Allah and His Messenger, who follows the same approaches as Allah's Messengers did.

Secondly, we should create Islamic groups dedicated to Da'wah, as the top priority objective.

Thirdly, those who embrace Islam should not be content with merely having changed their religion and found the truth. They must move beyond. Truth wants to be known. They should be messengers to their own people; only they can be truly effective. And We never sent a Messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make [the message] clear for them (Ibrahim 14: 4).