

Contemporary Approach in *Da'wah* Mission towards Non-Muslim Community: Malaysia Perspectives

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Abstract

This study discusses contemporary da'wah approach towards non-Muslim community in Malaysia considering the diversity of races and cultural background of the country at large. The development of modernization in civilized society coupled with recent trends such as globalization and technological advancement today poses a great challenge for da'wah activity towards non-Muslims. For Muslims, the basic sources of references pertaining to human life can be solved through the teachings of Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. Both sources serve to answer and resolve all questions and difficulties faced by human beings regardless of race and religion. However, the existing challenges require Muslim preacher or Da'i to have a capability and ability in managing the best da'wah strategy in this rapidly developing era, otherwise the process of da'wah and the delivery of knowledge turns to be increasingly difficult. Therefore, this study discusses the application of the concept and effectiveness of the current appropriate da'wah approach to non-Muslims in Malaysia. Non-Muslims were selected as respondents to obtain more accurate research results in the effectiveness of the da'wah efforts. The study also discusses a da'wah approach which is relevant to the present and future environment. Using qualitative document analysis technique, this study will analyze secondary data related to current trends in da'wah and its exiting issues. All the data will be discussed and presented according to the specific themes. The findings showed that there were many approaches that can be used for da'wah purposes to non-Muslims such as Da'wah Bi al-Hikmah and Da'wah Bi al-Hal. This study will contribute to the da'wah progress in Malaysia. In such a way, the Islamic da'wah process will continue to grow and the da'wah will be able to be an agent of social

change and be able to build a strong civilized society in terms of Aqidah, Akhlak, Ibadah and Mualamat.

Key-words: Da'wah Approach, Effectiveness of Da'wah Approach, Non-Muslims, Da'i.

Field: Philosophy and Civilization.

Sub-Field: Islamic Studies/Da'wah

1. Introduction

Da'wah is a religious responsibility that must be played by every Muslim. Da'wah does not merely call a person to Islam, but includes a call to society to be virtuous and courage for goodness. However, current developments today include a lifestyle full of challenges demanding a more appropriate approach in da'wah. Thus, a question that arises is, why does da'wah still need to be carried out in this modern age when today's society is said to have achieved a rapid civilization? This is because when a civilization develops fast, more challenges, allegations and problems will arise. Mankind in this era of globalization is increasingly greedy in pursuing their ambitions of life. This causes them to almost neglect the spiritual preservation which should be the main guide and reference in every change and development of a civilization. As a result, human beings are now drifting and seem to be lost in this rapid modernization. This is proved by various issues of crime and moral collapse in which are reported almost every day in the newspapers, internet and television.

These kinds of issues thus making da'wah activities a matter of urgency and need to be intensified, especially in Malaysia. Malaysia is a country with a plural society where each ethnic group has their own pattern of thinking and ethical rules, thus making the approaches of da'wah are diverse and flexible. This is because this approach is suitable not only for Muslims but also to non-Muslims. This is also due to the extent that the characteristics of Islam itself are so flexible and practical. For example, the concept of "*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*" which is to enjoin good and prevent evil found in the implementation of da'wah coincides with the principles of every nation and religion practiced around the world. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once states that 'Every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but is a stab at the health of human society.'

The policy or approach implemented should not only aim to provide lessons and teachings but as a tool to realize the unity of the nation. Through appropriate approach, our society can be formed in harmony and peace despite different races and religions, in accordance with the definition of civilization according to Ramawan, et al., (2012) in his book entitled "*Academic Colleges, Polytechnics, IPTA and IPTS: Introduction to Civilization & History of Islamic Thought*", which

stated that civilization means a high stage of development of life and thought, as opposed to wild and violent life as well as refining character.

Consistent with the above definition, it can be said that morality and ethics play important role in driving human behavior. This is the starting point of the role and responsibility of each Da'i. This person not only focusing on the activities of lecturing, teaching and being a prayer leader alone, but to serve as individuals who will invite and guide generations towards civilized manner, to educate them to be useful human beings and citizens. This coincides with Abdul Ghafar and Hailan (2009) in their article who define da'wah as an encouragement or call to the path of Allah so that people accept and appreciate the teachings of Islam. This duty and responsibility are not only obligatory on the Prophets and Messengers, but also the duty and responsibility of all Muslims around the world. Allah s.w.t. said in Surah Al-Nahl which means:

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good advice and argue with them in a way that is better. Surely your Lord knows best those who lost from His Path, and He knows best those who are guided.

(Surah Al-Nahl 16: 125)

According to Ab. Aziz Mohd. Zin (1997), da'wah means asking for help, worshiping, driving, inviting, calling, and persuading. There are three important aspects in da'wah, namely identifying and understanding the problem of the target of da'wah (mad'u). In the context of this study are non-Muslims. Next, the appropriate approach of da'wah (*manhaj* da'wah) and lastly, the individuals who deliver the da'wah (da'i). Abd. Aziz Mohd Zin (2006) stated that the soul and conscience are the cause of all one's behavior. To influence it, one's soul and heart must be studied and known. Therefore, the study of the soul is very important in da'wah.

The above statement is supported by Sulaiman Ibrahim (2018) who stated that the da'wah effort in a plural society such as in Malaysia is very challenging and requires full attention and precise spirit. This is because, the effort to invite or call non-Muslims towards Islam is not merely to provide all kinds of knowledge, concepts or facts that are not yet known, but the purpose is to educate their morals and soul, instill a sense of goodness (virtues) of life, familiarize them with high decency, preparing them for a life entirely holy, sincere and honest. Every individual needs to understand and respect the noble values of Malaysian society and be sensitive to an ethnic group so that the stability and harmony of a plural Malaysian society will continue to remain.

The study was conducted to emphasize the importance of da'wah in Malaysia not only for Muslims, but also non-Muslims. Life in Malaysia consists of various races and religions with various thoughts and ways of life. Therefore, a da'wah approach that covers all aspects of human life is very

important in maintaining the well-being of the plural society in our country. In addition, since each individual by nature has a hold or place to depend on in their lives whether Muslim or not, this study is to some extent able to contribute indirectly to the National Education and Religious Sector such as the Ministry of Education Malaysia, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia and the Ministry of Religion to realize the government's agenda to be united, where each citizen respects each other, understand each other, work together and live in harmony despite different races and religions.

Therefore, a policy or approach implemented must be appropriate especially that may suit with the needs of non-Muslims. This study emphasizes non-Muslims as the main target to know more clearly about the main causes of their negativity towards Islam and its people. Researchers also want to see the weaknesses and shortcomings perspective towards Islam from their sight. This study will have a significant impact on the implementation of da'wah in Malaysia. This is because more effective approaches can be applied in da'wah if we know the mentality of non-Muslims towards Islam. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

- a. To identify the exiting approach of da'wah that has been done to non-Muslims.
- b. Identify the effectiveness of da'wah that has been done to non-Muslims.

2. Literature Review

Da'wah is a major method or approach in Islam. To invite or influence someone to love Islam, the theory of the appropriate approach must be built and applied by the Da'i, namely Muslims in general and muallaf in particular. Zikmal Fuad (2014) in his article about *da'wah Bi al-Hikmah* stated that there are various approaches of da'wah that can be applied by the da'i in conveying the da'wah to his mad'u such as *da'wah bi al-hikmah*, *da'wah bi al-mauizah al-hasanah* and *da'wah bi al-mujadalah al-husna*. The manifestation of al-hikmah in this da'wah covers many things, among them is Hikmah; When to Say good things and When to Be Silent. According to Zikmal, the Prophet s.a.w. often preached in that way when confronted with Abu Lahab who loudly insulted him. The Prophet s.a.w. however did not answer anything so as to evoke sympathy from the opponent. There were times when he answered and debated loudly to subdue the opponent's argument. Such approach is suitable to be applied when dealing with aggressive enemies of Islam and bad suspicions against Islam. This shows that calmness and patience as well as having extensive knowledge are so important.

Abdul Ghafar and Salamon (2009) in their article "*Da'wah to Non-Muslims in Malaysia: Concepts, Approaches and Challenges*" have listed examples of approaches in da'wah that are highly

relevant to apply nowadays. Among them are *Bi al-Hikmah* approach, *al-Mauizah al-Hasanah* approach (good words of advice), *Mujahadah Biilati Hiya Ahsan* approach (discussing in a good way), *Muhadharah* approach (lecture), *Munaqosyah* approach (discussion) and *al-Taaruf*. Abdul Ghafar and Salamon suggested that da'wah efforts to non-Muslims be intensified. This is because, in these challenging times, the increase of Muslims is able to give strength to Islam.

Nur Uswah & Zulkefli (2017) have conducted a study to identify persuasive strategies in da'wah communication to Orang Asli. This study uses a qualitative methodology with content analysis design. The results of the study found that the ability of Da'i to use persuasion in da'wah communication towards the Orang Asli community has a positive effect on awareness, thinking, understanding, appreciation and practice of Islamic teachings voluntarily without feeling of being forced. However, in order to have the skills to persuade without coercion, Da'i need a wise and solid strategy. In addition, patience and a high level of endurance also play a major role in the effort to convey the message effectively.

A study by Jamilah and Engku Ahmad Zaki (2014) which aims to look at da'wah activities or programs implemented by JAKIM for Orang Asli community and to study the challenges faced by JAKIM in da'wah efforts to the group. The study showed that JAKIM used the da'wah approach *Bi al-Hal* in running the program. The results of the study found that JAKIM has many da'wah and religious activities or programs for Orang Asli, but their response and appreciation to the teachings of Islam is still weak and at a low level. Findings like this require research and da'wah efforts to be redoubled. An approach that is in line with the attitudes, culture and manners of non-Muslims must be implemented in addition to the existing approach. This does not mean that the existing da'wah approach is ineffective, but to further strengthen its effectiveness, every da'wah must be consistently conducted to come forward with a variety of talents, skills and knowledge.

A study conducted by Amaludin et al., (2011) which aims to obtain an overview of the perception and understanding of non-Muslims towards the approach of Islam Hadhari implemented in Malaysia at that time. Apart from that, they also want to identify the extent of effectiveness in the method of da'wah to non-Muslims and identify challenges and suggestions of effective approaches in implementing da'wah to non-Muslims. Aiming to provide an overview of the perception and understanding of the non-Muslim community towards the Islam Hadhari approach implemented. The findings of the study found that out of the majority of 800 non-Muslim respondents recruited in this study had a negative perspective on Islam and Islam Hadhari. The negative perceptions that arise stem from a variety of reasons and questions. One of them is that the information they get was not clear. Therefore, efforts to convey true information about Islam must continue.

In addition, the nature of openness and efforts to accept and understand religion from other cultures is also very important, especially in countries with multi-cultural and multi-ethnic people such as in Malaysia. This is very important because this will be to maintain good relations between Muslims who are already Muslims, muallaf and non -Muslims (family members of muallaf in particular).

3. Research Methodology

The approach employed in this study is review and analysis of secondary data using qualitative document analysis design. This study will collect data, record the data concepts and analyzing the data according to the specific themes. All findings of the study will be summarized and presented in the findings and discussion.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the previous studies, there are many *manhaj* or approaches found in Islamic Da'wah that have been applied in Malaysia. Among them are Da'wah Bi al-Hikmah (wisdom), Da'wah Bi al-Hal (example), Da'wah with Persuasion, Da'wah Through Art, Da'wah Through Mass Media, Da'wah Through Entertainment, Da'wah Bi al-Qalam (writing), Da'wah Bi al-Oral (words), al-Mauizah al-Hasanah approach (words of good advice), Mujahadah Biilati Hiya Ahsan approach (discussing in a good way), Muhadharah approach (lecture), Munaqosyah approach (discussion) and al-Taaruf approach. In this study, the researcher will touch on two approaches, namely Da'wah Bi Al-Hikmah and Da'wah Bi Al-Hal. This was due to the current trend in Da'wah in which focus on contemporary issues and its solutions.

Da'wah Bi Al-Hikmah was chosen because *hikmah* is one of the principles of the method of da'wah in the Qur'an as explained in Surat an-Nahl verse 125. The principle of the Da'wah Bi Al-Hikmah requires patience that is operational in giving the right understanding to the preachers to realize the principles in various da'wah activities (Nazirman, N, 2018).

While Da'wah Bi Al-Hal is an effort that is growing and developing the awareness and ability of the congregation in overcoming their problems and more than that, every da'wah activity carried out must be followed up on an ongoing basis. Da'wah Bi Al-Hal is a da'wah effort by doing real actions, of course, its form is diverse, it can be in the form of assistance given to other people, both morally and materially.

Thus, with the advantages found in both methods of da'wah makes it chosen to be discussed in this section. Examples and its contemporary applications will also be stated for ease of practice today.

How Da'wah Bi al-Hikmah (Wisdom) Works?

According to Zikmal Fuad (2014), Da'wah Bi al-Hikmah means to convey da'wah in a wise manner, which is one of the da'wah approaches applied by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) throughout his struggle in spreading Islam to non-Muslims in Medinah The Prophet acts according to his words through demonstrating the highest moral and wholesome personality as a model for all mankind. There was a situation when a boy urinated in the mosque and the Prophet's companion got angry and intended to chase him away. Looking to the situation, the Prophet (pbuh) then asked them to let the boy finished first. The prophet then asked them to wash it away.

The wisdom that every Da'i should have is not only in terms of theoretical knowledge, but also practical wisdom. This is because Da'i need to deal with non-Muslims who are highly intellectual with a high standard of living and position. Therefore, they need to use different approach than just the presentation of theory, a very extreme efforts need to be made by every Da'i for that purpose.

Said Quthb stated that da'wah with the Da'wah Bi Al-Hikmah will be realized if we consider three factors (Nazirman, N, 2018):

1. The condition and situation of the person to be preached.
2. Important information that will be conveyed so that they feel impressed with the information.
3. Such a method is appropriate to the circumstances at the time

Among the best examples that can be observed in the previous *sirah* books is the mistreatment of the Thaif community to the Prophet's proclamation. At the time of the Prophet's migration to Thaif, he received a bad response from the Thaif community so that the Gabriel AS was sent by Allah SWT to accompany the Prophet Muhammad SAW offered to destroy them. From Aisyah R.A narrated the answer of the Prophet when he heard the offer from the Gabriel AS: "I hope God grants from their ribs those who worship to Allah and do not associate partners with Him. (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Another example, the Prophet to be wise to the young man who asked for permission to fornicate. It was narrated from Abi Umamah, "A young man came to the Prophet and said: O Messenger of Allah, allow me to fornicate!! The congregation present spontaneously rebuked him,

"hey, go away, leave this place!" but the Prophet SAW said otherwise, 'Come closer here! Then he approached. The Prophet asked him 'do you like it when your mother has sexual intercourse with someone? By Allah, of course not, he replied. 'Likewise other people are not happy if their mother commits adultery with another person'. Then the Prophet put his hand on the young man's shoulder, praying, O Allah, forgive his sins, purify his heart and protect his private parts. Since then the young man no longer wants to commit adultery (H.R Ahmad).

The attitude of the Prophet's wisdom in this case can be seen from his extraordinary patience in dealing with rebellious da'wah objects. Prophet avenge their evil deeds with sincere prayers for their benefit in the future.

Nowadays, a Da'wah Bi al-Hikmah approach is very much needed because it involves direct examples and not just theory. Society will be more receptive to what is seen than what is not seen. In social media, for example, the da'wah movement to remote areas carried out by the preachers will be seen and evaluated by the community. At the next level, it will be followed by them.

Da'wah Bi al-Hal (Examples)

One of the main and most important qualities of a Da'i is that he or she must be a good example and role model for the Islam he calls for. He must fulfill all the pillars of Islam, follow the Sunnah and way of life of Rasulullah s.a.w, stay away from things that are questionable, stay away from everything that is haram, always remember Allah in all small and big things. His or her family members must be committed to all the teachings of Islam and maintain their manners. Da'wah Bil Al-Hal is also known as *qudwah hasanah*, a good example and *lisanul-hal*.

An easy-to-understand example is from the story narrated by Musa bin Anas, from his father (Anas r.a.) said: "Never" The Messenger of Allah was asked for something but surely he gave it. Indeed, a beggar had come to him, so he gave him a goat between two hills, until he returned to it his people and invites his people: O my people, hurry to Islam, because Muhammad gives like a gift to people who are not at all worried about running out or becoming poor." (HR Muslim).

Literally, this example from *hadith* shows how much a Muslim needs to do good to other human beings. Prophet Muhammad has prioritized the virtues of others more than himself. It is an extraordinary situation and difficult to practice today. However, if we look at the principle, which is to do good solely in order to get a reward in the sight of Allah swt, it is easy to apply as Da'wah Bil Al-Hal.

Hence, Da'wah Bil Al-Hal is not only related to the problem of increasing physical and material welfare but also includes efforts to fulfill and increase non-profit needs and welfare, material, efforts such as improving the quality of the practice of worship, morality, which is better known as the development of human resources. By looking at the breadth of the scope of Da'wah Bil Al-Hal, in its implementation it is necessary to integrate the program, plan the implementation and evaluate the Da'wah Bil Al-Hal with various related agencies, various experts and disciplines (Muhidin, Asep, 2002).

Moreover, in order for individuals and families, a conversation and practice, household and dress, children and family are something that should be taken care of by every Muslim. Da'i cannot succeed in da'wah he or she does not practice it first. Da'i must show a noble example, character and morals. The thing that must have in a Da'i is to be a true Muslim so that he or she can be an example and able to show the appreciation of Islam with words and deeds, not just a mere theory. Noble personalities are formed as a result of habit and constant training. This is also supported by Sterba (2009) in his book entitled Ethics: The Big Question: "Virtue, then falls into two divisions: intellectual excellence and goodness of character. A good intellect is chiefly produced and fostered by education, and consequently requires experience and time, but moral goodness is formed mainly by training in habit" (p341).

5. Conclusion

Bi al-Hikmah and Bi al-Hal da'wah approach are very important approach in da'wah efforts. These approaches are seen to be able to have an impact on the souls, interests, perceptions and thoughts of non-Muslims.

This approach is needed in da'wah when facing *mad'u* from various levels of education, social, cultural background, and others. In the context of da'wah, these approaches are approaches that have one name but contain various patterns to implement it. These approaches are the main approaches that must be implemented in da'wah efforts. This is because this wise approach is able to trigger new inspirations that can further complement the skills of da'wah, especially in Malaysia while the approach with role models can influence a person's soul to get close to us and at the same time facilitate the implementation of da'wah efforts.

The role and responsibility of the community, especially the Muslims must be enhanced in supporting the direction and development of the country. Malaysians, regardless of race and belief, need to be convinced that through the right da'wah approach, da'wah efforts will surely run

smoothly. Malaysia can be formed into a just and trustworthy government that governs regardless of race, color, wealth or religious differences. The spirit of consensus and cooperation in life can create peace, harmony and can achieve the vision and mission of the national government in tracing the current progress of society in Malaysia.

In conclusion, this study is very important and relevant in the context of socio-political life in Malaysia which consists of various races, religions and thought. Therefore, a guideline that covers all aspects of human life is very important in maintaining the well-being of a plural society in our country. In addition, all Da'i need to think of new efforts either in terms of da'wah approach and strength building in themselves to provide an example that is able to attract more non-Muslims towards Islam.

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