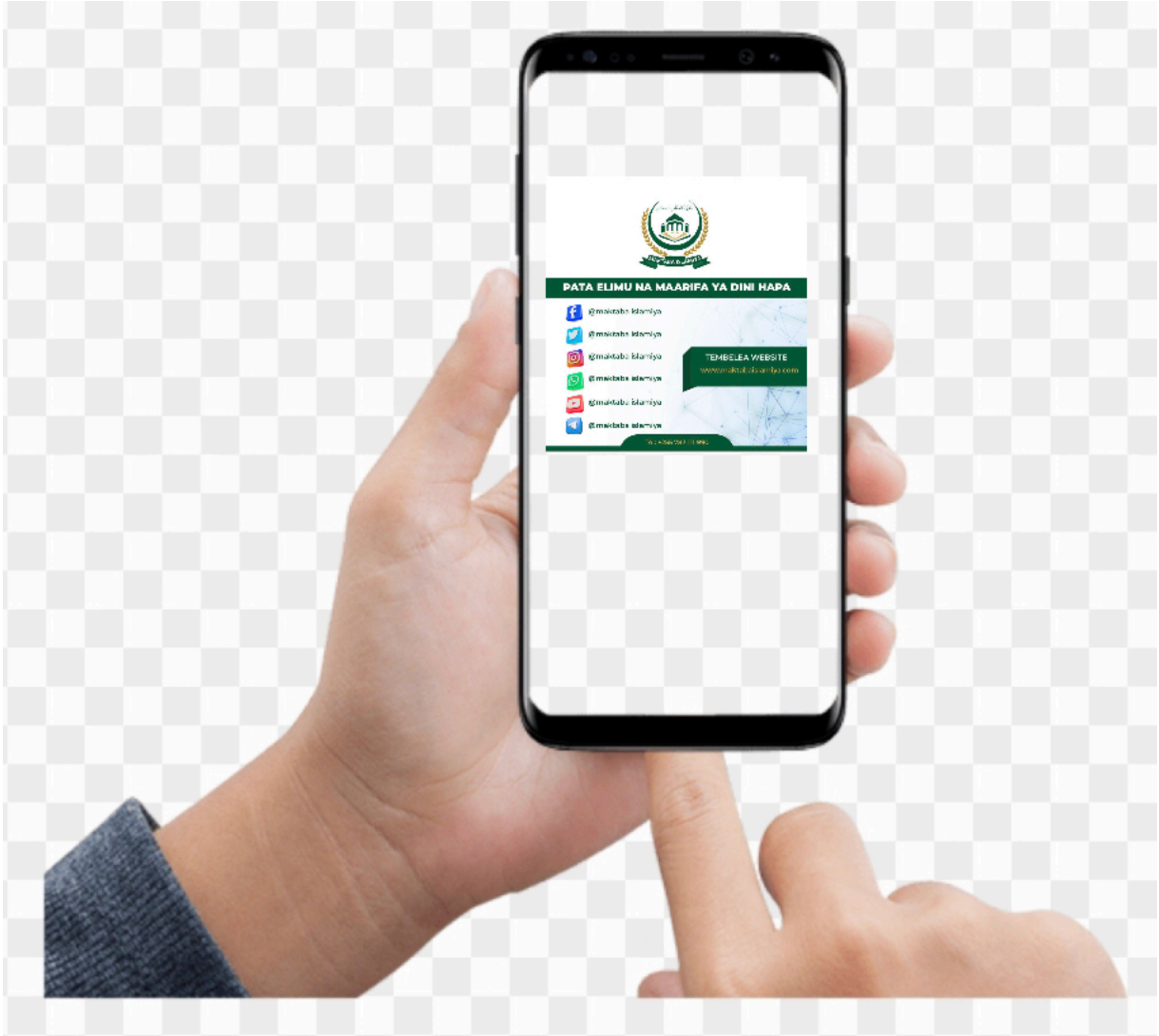


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منهج السلف الصالح



Social Media and Dawah

Dawah, in Islamic perspective, is the process of calling, conveying, inviting people towards the Message of Islam, towards Allah, towards the Truth, towards the right path

prescribed by the Almighty for all mankind. It is to invite and encourage people to voluntarily submit to the Will of Allah, by worshipping Him alone and following His Commandments.

Social Media:

It has provided immense possibilities for Dawah and it now becomes the duty of all Muslims to put this tool to its best. Social Media, it can easily be said, is the best medium a Daeé would wish for.

Social Media Platforms

Most of Dawah work being done on Social Media is through the popular platforms used by the masses like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. All these Social Media platforms, although quite different from each other, act as virtual meeting grounds for people. They may be pure socialising ones like Facebook, WhatsApp & LinkedIn; microblogging sites like Twitter; photo sharing platforms like Snapchat, Pinterest and Instagram; video sharing ones like YouTube or knowledge sharing ones like Quora. A Daeé, depending upon his interest, can use any or all of these for propagating the message of Islam in various ways.

Dawah messages can be shared on Facebook in many ways: Texts, Graphics and Videos. Facebook Live is also a superb way to increase social media engagement. Facebook pages and groups facility can also be effectively used for Dawah.

Twitter is a micro-blogging site launched in 2006, and after Facebook, is undoubtedly one of the most popular social media platforms available today, with 100 million daily active users and 500 million tweets sent daily. Twitter engagement

Campaign and Twitter Trending are great options available on Twitter that help a Daeé reach out to a large number of people for Dawah.

YouTube is one of the most popular video sharing platforms that is being widely used for Dawah. Every minute of every day, more than 35 hours of videos are being uploaded to YouTube and around 6 billion hours of videos are watched every month. Attractive and eye-catching Dawah videos uploaded on YouTube can find huge audience and unlimited reach. Of the billions of videos available on YouTube, there are a huge number of videos uploaded for Dawah purpose by Dae'es from around the world and these have been very effective in spreading the message of Islam.

Some of the advantages are;

1. Ability to reach a wide audience coverage

Muslims use social media effectively to reveal the understanding of Islam, the Quran and the Prophet (pbuh) through blogs, websites and social networking. Millions of people around the world can access information by a simple button click. People from all walks of life are brought in together. Companies and Islamic projects use this opportunity to create a level playing field between Muslims and non-Muslims. Many scholars deal with Q&A sessions to further understand the religion, clarify doubtful matters and improve communication.

For example; Assim Al-hakim provides Q&A sessions on Facebook on a daily basis. 'Haitham al Haddad' has

innovated a website called “Islam21C” which establishes the relationship between the West and Islam. There are countless of videos on YouTube ranging from comparative religion of Ahmad Deedat, to Quranic recitation and Islamic lectures accessed by millions around the world. ‘Muslim Matter shave, Productive Muslim and Al Kawthar’ are Da’awah projects that have become successful in promoting our faith. Many eminent Islamic writers created blogs which enable users to post comments hence spreading the understanding of the deen. The wide sharing of information through the net led to spreading of Da’awah to a broader audience, creating Islam awareness, tackling misinterpretations and giving people who are willing to revert to the religion more insight.

2. The ease of spreading Da’awah

The Sahaba used to climb on horses as a means of transportation to convey Da’awah In personal gatherings. These are the traditional means which were so limited. They are not as practical and easy going as the electronic media which can convey the message of Islam within a very short period of time. For example; when there was bomb in Boston, several scholars used the opportunity of this social media to give fatwas so as to clear any misconception on Islam. Social media is the only media that can deliver this message to wide audience of both Muslims and non-Muslims within the shortest possible time and with so much ease.

‘Using new media as a medium of religious preaching has been widely practiced by various religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (Bunt 2003)’

3. Hajj and Ramadan

There is a lot of Da’awah taking place during these times. Da’awah is usually at its peak during Ramadan. Muslims are ready to practice the Quran and Sunnah in the form of tweets or status updates. This new trend of social networking has changed the way Islam is propagated. During hajj period pilgrims post pictures, clips and tweets. This promotes the faithfulness and co-religiousness of the Muslim ummah. Dr. Zakir Naik has a website ‘irf.net’, Dr. Israr Ahmed created ‘tanzeem.org’ and Nouman Ali Khan launched a ‘bayyinah.com’ for the sole purpose of Dawah.

4. Protection of Islam from critics

Social media spreads the word of Allah and address critics effectively. It mobilizes Muslims all over the world on a platform in case there is bound to be an attack on the Quran or the Prophet (pbuh). Examples: In 2010 the pastor in America gathered people to burn the Quran. Another example is ‘Innocence of Muslims’ an anti-Islam video. Such things had triggered the gathering Muslims Protestants all over world on social media. Counties like Jordan, Pakistan and Egypt made a request to YouTube to delete those videos.

‘The Grand Mufti of India stated in Dawah Seminar at Bhopal that: Turn modern gadgets into Dawah tools “To engage oneself in the work of “Da’wah” the modern gadgets and tools or any other resources available should be used in the best possible manner to spread their message far and wide. The use of any gadget or tool is not forbidden in Islam but it is the use to which it is put makes it ‘Haram’ or ‘Halal’. (Karamchand 2015)’

5. Increase in learning opportunities

Awareness of Islam has been shifted from a rigid and conservative one to the one that can be easily understood and narrated to others. Some westerners had never met a Muslim in person but had the opportunity to meet several on Facebook and even join some of the Islamic groups. This has provided us with a giant step to deliver the divine message. Keeping opinions to ourselves need to stop. We need to get on social media to speak to the majority. Muslims should create a spotlight on whatever we deal with, build better relationships with the rest of the world, speculate in our societies and then we will have more reverts. Building up a superior place for others in Islam is required to ensure the bad impression about Islam vanishes.

“Famous Muslim Scholar Dr Zakir Naik who is head of IRF and running most watched Islamic Dawah TV Channel Peace TV has said that Social media is a very effective tool so Muslims should use this Media for the Dawah of Islam to non-Muslims. (Naik 2015)”

The disadvantages are as follow;

1. Half-baked knowledge

Some scholars don't have the full Islamic knowledge leading to presenting Islam differently which gives the non-Muslims wrong image about the religion. Some internet scholars can be a danger to the Da'awah process. The scholars have good intentions with courageous and enthusiastic attitudes which must be appreciated but there's a possibility that authentic knowledge may not be known by them.

2. Misplaced priorities

It has become so addictive that people use this medium to post pictures of ka'abah or fake miracle babies to get 'likes' from their followers instead of doing the real Da'awah. Some even post their personal pictures eating at a restaurant. It can lead to excessive time wasting.

3. Adopting shift from the traditional to modern times

There are so many inventions that never existed during the prophet's (pbuh) time which poses a challenge to the Muslim world. Because everyone wants to be more like the prophet (pbuh). The rapid development of technology particularly the social networks makes patterning our lives according to his own more difficult.

4. Pornography

Even if you have a Da'awah page, it is almost impossible to scroll down a social network site without seeing some aspects of nudity. This is unavoidable. There are websites dedicated to disobey Allah.

'12 percent of all sites are porn-oriented, 35 percent of all downloads are pornographic, kids first see porn online, on average, at age 11 and 20 percent of men watch it at work.'(Hashim 2016).

When the eye sees evil, it affects the soul. Eyes that wander about without lowering gaze makes the soul of man uneasy. This further makes one prone to shaytan due to lack of focus. 'Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what they do. (Q 24: 30, 31)'.

5. Increase in fabricated hadith

It has become the centre of gossip and spreading false information. Examples; Bill gates is the sponsor of Al-Qaeda, Pastor Adeboye said do not wear red today, today in Mecca around 10am, the moon is coming close to the sun so let us all do nawafil or the messenger of Allah said tomorrow is Ramadan and whoever spreads the message to his friends is promised paradise. This becomes easy target of creation of displeasure to Allah by promoting slander and engaging in gossip.

6. 'Blog's content credibility':

People are supposed to be sure that information passed are authentic based on reference to known books passed

through mutawatir. But nowadays ability to verify the validity and authenticity of religious information through the blogs have become increasingly difficult.

‘The usage of blogs as a medium of delivering Islamic knowledge has neglected the process of mutawatir in verifying contents validity and bloggers credibility (Zulkiple 2010).’

It is very vital to preserve a credible content to avoid bringing harm to the religious community. Some people might use those references on the blogs as a valid religious reference which will cause damage if not authentic. Another problem is there might be an influx of religious quotations which can bring about confusion when trying to identify to correct information. Sometimes the blog sheikhs are mistaken to be credible just because they respond to questions efficiently. Delivering content is not as important as reliability of the blog sheikhs.

‘Some important aspects of communication from the religious perspective are honesty, sincerity, intention of the communicator, message validity, authentication of source and investigation to verify justice (Adalah) and the reliability of the communicator (Khaldun 1969).’

Our blog sheikhs are yet to fully comply with these factors relating to credibility.

7. Misconceptions about Islam

Social media has created breeding grounds for misconceptions of portraying Islam as a religion of terror. There was a campaign titled 'radical Islamist' target at Muslim clerics.

'Abu Darda reported that the prophet SAW said "nothing will be heavier on the scale of the believers on the day of resurrection than good manners; Allah hates one who utters foul or coarse language At-Tirmidhi'.

Islam is a religion that welcomes all forms of technological advancements as long as it does not contradict sharia. It is our duty as Muslims to learn the etiquettes concerning these inventions in order to remain in the true path of Allah. Personally, I think using social media for da'awah is highly recommended because I wouldn't have known all the scholars I know now including Dr.Bilal Philips.

We just have to regulate the usage and target it to Da'awah purposely for the sake of Allah and according to the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore careful analysis of the authenticity of material is required as well as credibility and reliability of the Muslim speaker.

Every time we open our phones we see opportunities to advise. We see people posting misinformation, forwarding chain-letter types of messages to group chats, proclaiming religious opinions that may be incorrect, or simply acting in a way online that is inappropriate.

In some cases, we have a more direct responsibility to advise than others. When done correctly, naseehah can be

a beautiful action that leads to someone rectifying a mistake.

Too often, in the age of social media, delivering advice has become a type of performance art to display “righteous outrage” at some transgression. “Advice” is delivered in public forums not for the betterment of the individual, but for virtue-signaling or pandering.

DAAWAH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The growth of technology is one of the most debatable topics. Some scholars refer to it as a disaster while others refer to it as a blessing. No doubt that we live in the age of technology where it has become an important tool for Dawah, but it can sometimes become an issue if not managed effectively.

In the world today, people cannot live without technology such as televisions, mobile phones, computers and others. These have slowly taken an essential part in people’s day-to-day lives and a life without them would be unimaginable for some of us.

The presence of the so-called ‘second generation of the Internet’, has enabled the emergence of social media for interactive and real-time communication among societies. Muslim societies have yet to get benefits from the online social media technology. Many Muslim scholars and speakers have already adopted the social media to deliver Dawah activities effectively which has allowed them to reach within a short period of time, ends of the world just by sitting at the comfort of their homes.

Therefore, social media should be adopted by Muslims to improve the scalability of their dawah towards societies. Moreover, Dawah strategies

and paradigms also need to be redesigned in response to new advances of technology.

At the same time, scholars teach us that whatever we are exposed to, affects the state of our hearts. What we see, what we hear, what conversations we engage in, what we let in – all of this influences our spirituality and ultimately, our relationship with Allah (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). In this new age of social media and technology, we are constantly taking in information and constantly exposing our hearts to outside influences.

At the same time, we see many adopting these platforms for the wrong reasons such as self-promotion and which further involves promoting their own agendas other than the cause of Islam. There are issues like interaction with the opposite genders unnecessarily in closed groups and also dramatic increase in celebrity admiration, which have become a fitnah along with the arrival of such social media platforms.

Along with everything comes its uses and abuses. Therefore, it is essential that one realizes the issues involved and the responsible behavior one should ensure before getting involved in the dawah work through these platforms.

Islam does not restrict us from using such platform on the conditions that the very limitations set by the Shar'iah are maintained and taken care of. One MUST remember the following hadith:

عن مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، قَالَ: اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ وَأَتْبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا، وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ

On the authority of Muadh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Have taqwa (fear) of Allah wherever you may be, and follow up a bad deed with a good deed which will wipe it out, and behave well towards the people."
(AtTirmidhi)

We are to remain upon the very moral fabrics its meant to be on, done and to ensure that nothing is to corrupt them. Social media can dilute

the mind. Social media can drain our mental energy, and has a big influence in our destiny.

Before one intends to get involved with these platforms for Dawah purposes, one should ensure that their intentions are to better reach out the audience and not to promote oneself.

In a hadith we learn Rasul Allah ﷺ said,

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ، - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّةِ وَإِنَّمَا لِامْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

*On the authority of Omar bin Al-Khattab, who said : I heard the
Messenger of Allah ﷺ say : “**Actions are but by intention and every
man shall have but that which he intended.** ”*
(Related by Bukhari and Muslim)

Though it is clear that the use of modern technology and social media platform have become necessary, it is also necessary for Dawah organizations to ensure that it is done productively as a means to promote the message of Islam and not to solely depend on them or its uses; when there is no doubt that the person to person interaction cannot be replaced and will always remain to be the most effective form to spread the message of Qur'an and Sunnah.