

AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 6

Special Issue No. 4

December 2022

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eISSN:26008432

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Tel: +603 6196 5558
Website: <http://journals.iium.edu.my/al-itqan/index.php/alitqan/index>
Email: al-itqan@iium.edu.my

Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

Table of Contents

Zakir Naik's Techniques in Comparative Theological Discourse: Some Reflections	5-23
<i>Mohammad Aminul Islam</i> <i>Thameem Ushama</i>	
Hamka's <i>Da'wah</i> Reform: Islamisation of Self, Education, and Institution	25-46
<i>Haslina Ibrahim</i>	
A Recollection of a Positive Qur'ānic Character: Maryam Bint 'Imrān	47-68
<i>Che Amnah Bahari</i>	
The Practice of Giving in Islam and Buddhism: Its Impact on man's spiritual well-being	69-87
<i>Masitoh Ahmad</i>	
Kenneth Cragg's Assertion on the Notion of Incarnation in the Qur'ān: A Critical Appraisal	89-105
<i>Akilu Aliyu Muhammad</i> <i>Noor Amali Mohd Daud</i>	
Exploring Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence of Prophet Muḥammad SAW	107-125
<i>Fatimah Abdullah</i>	
Feasibility of the Goal of Sociology under Its Current Methodology	127-148
<i>Hayatullah Laluddin</i> <i>Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak</i>	
الأسباب المؤدية إلى وجود مشاعر سلبية تجاه الإله عند المراهقين المسلمين ومظاهرها والحلول المقترحة له	
Driving Factors for Having the Feeling of Resentment towards God among Muslim Adolescents: Its Phenomena and Solutions	149-174
<i>Abdelrahman Mohamed Nada</i> <i>Masitoh Ahmad</i>	

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Zakir Naik's Techniques in Comparative Theological Discourse: Some Reflections

Mohammad Aminul Islam*

Thameem Ushama**

Abstract

Zakir Naik is one of the scholars in Comparative Religion. Providing quotations with exact references from his instant memory, Naik makes his audience astonished and spellbound. In adopting a descriptive methodology, this research has attempted to explore the secrets behind Zakir Naik's effort in *da'wah* and his techniques for preparing *da'wah* materials, memorizing and delivering them to his audience. An interview has been taken to examine them accordingly. Some of the contents of this research have been collected from the interview, and the rest of the materials were studied from unpublished research done by Zakir Naik, especially *da'wah* materials related to International Da'wah Training Program in 2016. Finally, the study has attempted to offer a set of guidelines that would help create successors of Zakir Naik that may contribute to constructing a tolerant religious pluralist society.

Keywords: Instant memory, memorizing style, techniques, *da'wah*.

Introduction

Zakir Naik is one of the influential personalities in Comparative Religion. Providing quotations with exact references from his instant memory, Naik makes his audience astonished and motivated to learn more. Some people are enthusiastic and curious whether Zakir Naik uses a specific technique to memorize the references and quotations accurately. The authors had an interview with Zakir Naik to explore his technique in comparative theological discourse. During the interview, there were three queries authors asked him accordingly. Besides the interview, authors received some unpublished materials written by Zakir

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Naik related to the implications of Naik's technique in comparative theological discourse.

The first question asked by authors is to tell about Zakir Naik's family tree and brief family background. The second was about what made him reach where he is now in comparative theology, and the third was about the techniques he used to memorise the references and quotations accurately. This paper discusses Naik's technique in comparative theological discourse and sets guidelines for his peace building successors in a diverse society. To Zakir Naik, believing Allah's help is crucial to a successful *dā'ir*. Striving for the sake of Allah (SWT), making *du'ā* get success and using techniques come after that. Before that, the paper presents a short biography of Zakir Naik and his close family members.

A Brief Biography

The Almighty God chooses whom He wants to choose from His servants to spread and regulate His *Dīn* (Religion). Choosing man upon man, place upon place, month upon months, and day upon days is His universal nature. God has chosen Ahmed Deedat, who passed only standard six to spread the message of *salām* (peace) and Islam. Here is another example of Allah's choice: He chose someone whose educational background is not from any Islamic institution. Zakir Naik is a medical doctor from a doctor's family. Zakir Naik was born on October 18, 1965, in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. He grew up in Mumbai. He is the fifth son of his father. His father, Abdul Karim Naik, was a banker by profession.¹

Zakir Naik studied at the college level at Kishinchand Chellaram College, which is one of the famous Colleges in Maharashtra, Mumbai. It was the first awarded college to which the National Assessment and Accreditation Council in Mumbai gave an A grade. It is also known as KC College. In 1991, Zakir Naik finished his MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) from Topiwala National Medical College and BYL Nair Charitable Hospital.² As a medical doctor, Zakir Naik practised for four years before his emergence in da'wah. He learned from Deedat and was inspired by him, like many others worldwide.

Zakir Naik was conferred with the Honorary Degree Doctor of Humane Letters (*Honoris Causa*), by the Governing Council of the University of The Gambia (UTG), at the hands of the Vice Chancellor of the UTG, Prof. Muhammad M. O. Kah, in recognition of his outstanding

¹ Editorial Board, ed., "*Dr Zakir Naik: A Brief Profile*" (May 2015), p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

contribution and dissemination of knowledge in promoting research and delivery of community services internationally, on October 15, 2014.¹

To respond to the authors' question, what is the most unforgettable story that comes to mind first? Naik's mother had the ambition to see her son as the best heart specialist in the world. The best heart specialist at that time was Christiaan Barnard, and she desired Naik to follow him. Zakir Naik said, "*My mother was a fan of Christiaan Barnard, and she desired I follow him. When I asked my mother, would you want me to become like Dr Barnard or like Shaykh Ahmed Deedat, she said, I want you to become both. But now, I asked her, Mummy, do you want me to become Chris Bernard or Shaykh Deedat? And she said I can sacrifice a thousand Chris Barnards for one Shaykh Deedat. Then I became from a doctor of the body to the doctor of the soul, Alḥamdulillah.*"²

Zakir Naik married Farhat Naik, and they have one son, Fariq Naik, and two daughters, Zikra Naik and Rushda Naik. Even though Naik did not get a chance to study in any Islamic institute, he made all of the children hafiz of the holy Qur'an (who memorized the whole Qur'an) and graduated from Islamic universities. On top of that, all five of them are *du'āh* (callers and preachers) to the way of Allah.

Elements Making Naik Successful

Many dynamic aspects of Naik's da'wah techniques have directly contributed to the effectiveness of his comparative theological career. First, Naik's photographic memory that Allah the Almighty has awarded him. Besides, Naik has continued to practice some actions since his early life of da'wah activities to achieve such an optimum level of photographic memory. Some salient ones are *Faḍl min Allah* (this is the blessing from Allah). Secondly, *du'ā* (supplication) that he recites at the beginning of every lecture—*Rabbī ishrah lī ṣadrī wa yassir lī amrī waḥlul 'uqdatan min lisānī yaḥqahū qawlī*, which means "*O My Lord, expand my Chest (with assurance). And ease my task for me. And untie the knot and impediment from my tongue. So, they may understand my speech.*"³ Thirdly, memorization of techniques is significantly essential to sharpen one's memory. Moreover, among his memorization techniques is revising the topic's content until it becomes part of his permanent memory.⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Zakir Naik, Interview by the authors, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 17 January 2018.

³ Qur'an, *Sūrat Ṭāhā* 20: 25-28

⁴ Zakir Naik, Interview by the authors, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 17 January 2018.

The Help of Allah

According to Fariq Naik, the son of Zakir Naik,¹ in forty-five days of the *da'wah* training program organized by the Islamic Research Foundation (IRF), almost every day, Zakir Naik emphasized how to attain the help of Allah. He used to recite a verse from the Qur'ān, *"If Allah helps you, no one can overcome you. But if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely on."*² Similarly, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān, *"Or who is it that could be an army for you to aid you other than the Most Merciful? The disbelievers are not but in delusion."*³

Asking for help from Allah seems easy, but Allah says it is not accessible except for those who are humbly submissive. Allah mentions it in the Qur'ān, *"And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]."*⁴ Verily, Allah is with the people of patience, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, *"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient people."*⁵ Hence, Zakir Naik always performs two *rak'ah* or four *rak'ah* optional prayers before any lecture or debate and asks for help from Allah.

If Allah wills to make something happen, then there is nothing in this universe beyond what He can do. On the contrary, no more minor event can happen if Allah does not want it to happen. None can help except by what Allah has foreordained for someone. That is why a preacher should always ask Allah's help. Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, *'One day I was riding behind the Prophet when he said, "O lad, be mindful to Allah, and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you shall find Him with you. When you ask (for anything), ask it from Allah, and if you seek help, seek help from Allah."*⁶ The completion of the hadith is, *"And remember that if all the people join together to benefit you, they will not be able to benefit you except that which Allah had foreordained (for you); and if all of them join together to harm you, they will not be able to afflict you*

¹ Besides being Zakir Naik's son, Fariq Naik is one of the students of Zakir Naik in the Islamic Da'wah Training Program 2016 (IDTP). He is an Islamic preacher and a public figure too. He graduated from Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

² Qur'ān, *Sūrat Āli 'Imrān* 3:160.

³ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Mulk* 67:20.

⁴ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Baqarah* 2:45.

⁵ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Baqarah* 2:153.

⁶ *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, The Comprehensive Book*, Book 16, Ḥadīth 1515.

with anything other than that which Allah had pre-destined against you. The pens had been lifted, and the ink had dried up.”¹ This is the basic teaching and gist of the first Surah of the Qur’ān “*You alone we worship, and You alone we seek for help.*”² To make our feet firm on the field, it is a must, as Allah promised us, “*O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.*”³

Many Qur’ān exegetes said, “*The gist of the whole Qur’ān is Surat al-Fātiḥah, and the gist of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah is its fifth verse, “You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.”*”⁴ Therefore, a *dā’i* must have strong faith in Allah’s help. How Allah’s help would come is explained in the following points.

Striving for the Cause of Allah

Zakir Naik repeatedly mentioned in International *Da’wah* Training Program⁵ and some other lectures that Allah’s help comes through the strive and the struggle as Allah promised in the Qur’ān, “*And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways. Moreover, indeed, Allah is with the pious people.*”⁶ Almost in all battles, as Islamic history shows, the number of Muslim army and weapons were less than the enemies except in the Battle of Hunayn. However, because of their sincere striving only for the cause of Allah and struggling with patience and perseverance, the Muslim army always got victory over disbelievers. This is an example of Allah’s general help found on the battlefield. Particular help of Allah came in the field of *da’wah*, as was the case with Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him) when he asked for Allah’s help after striving till the end of his capacity.⁷

A *dā’i* should strive and struggle till the end of his capacity as the Prophet Nūh (peace be upon him) did; until the end of capacity,⁸ Allah’s great help came to him. Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) did until the end of capacity and his tribe, including his father, threw him into the fire, and then the great help of Allah came to him.⁹ Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon

¹ *Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī*, Ḥadīth 2516.

² Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* 1:5.

³ Qur’ān, *Sūrat Muḥammad* 47:7.

⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Qā’idatun Jāmi’atun fī Tawḥīdillah Wa Ikhlāṣ al-Wajhī Wa al-‘Amālī lahu ‘Ibādatan Wa Ist’ānatan*, (1997), vol. 1, p. 58.

⁵ A *da’wah* training program organized by Zakir Naik under Islamic Research Center.

⁶ Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-‘Ankabut* 29: 69.

⁷ Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’* 42: 60-68.

⁸ Qur’ān, *Sūrat Nūḥ* 71:1-28.

⁹ Qur’ān, *Sūrat al-Anbiyā’* 21: 66-70.

upon him) worked hard until the end of his capacity, and the Pharaoh King chased him to the Red Sea, and then Allah's great help came.¹ Many examples show that great help came after putting humans strive and struggle till the endpoint.² Therefore, a *dā'i* must strive, struggle, and bear patience until the end of the capacity to get the great help of Allah.

Making *Du'ā*

This study has asked Zakir Naik, "What is the secret of your photographic memory?" He replied with a few points. One: *Hādhā min fadl Rabbī* (Allah's blessing). Two: as he was a stammerer and stutterer since childhood, like Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), he recites the *du'ā* at the beginning of each lecture that prophet Moses (peace be upon him) used to recite. [Moses] said, "My Lord, expand for me my chest [with assurance]. And ease for me my task. And untie the knot from my tongue so they may understand my speech. ... [Allah] said, "You have been granted your request, O Moses."³ This is how many others did pray to Allah while putting their efforts to an end.⁴

Let us see how Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) tried until the end of his capacity, and finally, he was accusing his weaknesses and shortcomings as it is mentioned in the hadith 'On the authority of Abdullah bin Jaafar, he said: When Abu Tālib died, the Prophet, (peace be upon him), went out to Taif on his feet, so he called them to Islam, but they did not answer him. "Oh God, to You I complain of my weakness, my lack of resourcefulness, and my lowliness to people, the most merciful of the merciful, the most merciful of the merciful, 'To who have you entrusted me? to a stranger, who frowns at me? Or to an enemy who controls my affairs? If you are not angry with me, I do not care, but that your forgiveness is wider for me, I seek refuge in the light of Your face, for which darkness of the heavens and the earth has been brightened, and the affairs of this world and the hereafter are fixed, from your wrath descending upon me, or your anger is befalling upon me. All praises belong to You until You are satisfied, and there is no power and strength except You.'⁵

¹ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'* 42: 60-63.

² Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Baqarah* 2: 250, *Sūrat Āli 'Imrān* 3:123-125, 147, *Sūrat al-Şaff* 61:14.

³ Qur'ān, *Sūrat Ṭāhā* 20: 25-36.

⁴ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Qaşaş*, 28:24, *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm* 66:11, *Sūrat Yūsuf* 12: 33-34.

⁵ *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 2/175, Ḥadīth 3613.

Naik's Techniques

The technique here refers to the technique of memorizing quotations and references. The technique can be different for different individuals. A particular technique would be effective for a particular preacher, which may not be effective for others. Some preachers develop their techniques of memorizing the references and quotations daily while memorizing and delivering them. Some of them memorize the references and the quotations written on separate sheets besides the lecture sheets, as done by Zakir Naik, whereas others do that in other ways. However, for a beginner of *da'wah*, it is recommended to follow the technique of a successful preacher.

Naik emphasized another aspect of the technique: asking the people of knowledge and the experts, as he always trained his students on that, especially in the IDTP program. He always refers to a verse of the Qur'ān, "...Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know."¹ By asking people of knowledge and gaining knowledge from their experience, a preacher can be a perfectionist, unlike a beginner who has to go a long way to gain the same experience that his predecessors have had. For Example, Ahmed Deedat started his mission based on *Izhār al-Haqq*, and he contributed a lot to the field of comparative religions, mainly by comparing Islam and Christianity, as he is known as the Muslim scholar of the Christian Bible.

Besides comparing Islam and Christianity as Deedat did, Naik added a comparative study between Islam and other religions and brought his legacy up to a level that made him one of the leading legends in comparative theology. In reaching these higher strata, Naik gives credit to his master Ahmad Deedat. Naik acknowledged many times that if Deedat's works and contributions had not been here, Zakir Naik would not have existed in comparative religious study. Thus, the technique of the predecessor multiplies the success of the successors. In addition to that, Zakir Naik used figurative, admiring, persuasive, inclusive and conclusive, unassuming, and tolerant approaches to his critique and criticism.²

Formulation of the Topic

Here are the structures and ways of preparing the topic's content developed and conducted by Zakir Naik in his IDTP training. Mastering scriptural,

¹ Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'* 21: 7 & *Sūrat al-Naḥl* 16: 43.

² Kun Ma'a Allah, *Scientific and historical references*, (*Bu'da Jadāl Al-Kabīr Al-Aswad Shāhid Zakir Naik Mādḥā Yaqūlu 'an 'Ilm Al-Fuḍā'*), YouTube (YouTube, 2019), accessed 12th February 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z9vQ_GyiIw.

rational, logical, historical, factual, statistical, and metaphorical, along with scientific facts, Naik does his thorough research on the topic given to him to convince the people and to win their hearts and minds. More importantly, the Divine Hand constantly accompanies his dawah activities besides his hugely longer working timespan.

Beginning of the Lecture

Zakir Naik begins his speech by praising Allah and sending greetings and blessings to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions. For example, *“Al-ḥamdu lillāh, wassalātu wassalāmu alā Rasūlillāh, wa ʿalā ālihi wa ashābihi ajmaʿīn, ammā baʿd.* Then, he seeks protection from Satan the accursed by saying, *“Aʿūdhu billāhi min al-Shaytān al-Rajīm,”* followed by *“Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm”* (In the name Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). After that, Naik recites verses, *“My Lord, expand for me my memory [with assurance]. And ease for me my task. And untie the knot from my tongue. That they may understand my speech.”*¹

Mentioning the name of the Chairman, Chief Guest, or any other speakers on the stage if present, and addressing the audience by saying, *“Respected elders and my dear brothers and sisters, I greet and welcome all of you with the Islamic greetings “Assalāmu Alaikum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh.”* (May Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon all of you).

Explaining the Title

Zakir Naik explains the title of the talk and clarifies if there is any word in the title that requires clarification, like the word *‘daʿwah’* in the topic *“daʿwah or destruction”* or the word *‘Islam’* in the topic *“Similarities between Islam and Christianity.”* Then, he highlights the importance of the intended topic, followed by its relevance to the present situations, current issues, or special occasions. After that, he presents the historical background of the topic. Subsequently, he tries to remove misconceptions over the subject if there exist any. For instance, *daʿwah* is understood as *daʿwah* in the context of the Indian sub-continent as getting together on special occasions and eating chicken or beef biriyani. So, he clarifies the difference in the beginning and continues.

Body of the Lecture

Zakir Naik suggested allocating the duration of the whole body of the lecture, comprising the length of the beginning, introduction, and

¹ Qurʿān, *Sūrat Ṭāhā* 20: 25-28

conclusion, at least into parts. The main body of the topic should be divided into various sub-headings, and the sub-headings can be mentioned at the outset if required. He also recommended explaining the points of the lecture in such a way that makes everyone understand. However, if the topic is philosophical or Intellectual, it would be better to address it to a particular audience of specialists in the field. He further advised that fewer points with different explanations and examples are preferable to many points which are difficult to digest. It is strictly advised to stick to the topic and not to beat around the bush by bringing vague and irrelevant issues into the discussion. The main body should be interesting enough to hold the audience's attention and concentration. The main body of the lecture should be inclusive of providing a full view of the talk.

Conclusion of the lecture

According to Zakir Naik, the conclusion should be planned well. The speaker should remember that an excellent conclusion is significant for a long-lasting impression of the talk in the audience's mind. The speaker should avoid words like 'finally' or 'in conclusion' more than once. The conclusion should be a very concise gist of the topic and a concise objective. In other words, it is a summary of the talk, unlike repeating an extended part of the main body of the talk while summarizing. The crown point of the conclusion is the appeal for actions based on the shared content. The conclusion also can be given by mentioning a striking example of a relevant incident, a thought-provoking quotation, or an emphatic Qur'ānic verse. The last sentence preferably should be a quotation either from the Qur'ānic verse "*Wa ākhir da'wāna 'an al-ḥamd li Allāh Rabb al-'Alamīn*"¹ or any other relevant verse of the Qur'ān or from any authentic *ḥadīth* in its original Arabic form.

Structure and Contents of the Debate: Naik's Approach

A debate consists of a talk, rebuttal, and question and answer session. The debate program should be started with the recitation of the Qur'ān, followed by the English translation of the recited verses. The chairperson of the debate program should talk for a few minutes regarding the importance and background of the debate. The chairperson or the associates of the speakers should introduce both speakers in the debate just after the short talk of the chairperson or just before the speakers begin their respective talks. The talk of the debate should be slightly different from the general talk and lecture.

¹ Qur'ān, *Sūrat Yūnus* 10:10.

This is because the debate talk differs from the talk and the lecture at the general conference. In a debate, one or more persons will encounter opponent speakers on the same topic, while in a general talk, one or more people will address different topics under the same theme or aspects of the same topic in the conference. Following the structure and contents of the Islamic talk, Naik added some more points and advised others to do so.

Naik's Approach

At the beginning of the talk of the debate, he addresses the chairperson with respectful, honourable words as well as the opponent speaker with respectful words like, "My dear friend". As far as the body of the debate talk is concerned, he is always seen trying to do full justice to the topic by mentioning the similarities and differences between the two faiths instead of mentioning only the differences between them. If the topic is framed as a question, he tries to provide a convincing answer and mentions as many points as possible to prove his viewpoint. On the other hand, he presents as many points as possible to disprove the opponent's viewpoint.

In conveying the essence of an argument to the audience, Naik makes the different aspects of a concerned point such vivid that it leaves the opponents no room but to submit to his viewpoints. In another sentence, if there are two contradictory premises, he tries to prove his viewpoint convincingly and simultaneously while disproving his opponent's viewpoint through a scientific and logical explanation. For instance, there was a debate entitled *The Qur'an or the Bible: Which is God's Word?* In a debate like this, his talk convincingly proves that Qur'ān is the word of Allah, and the Bible is not the word of Allah. He summarizes and mentions all points he has mentioned in his talk to disprove the opponents' viewpoints by mentioning the opponents' points with numerical numbers of 1, 2, 3, and subheadings. After the talk in the debate, Naik poses some questions and requests the opponent to reply with reason, logic, and quotation with reference from the scriptures to disprove his viewpoint.

Naik added some more important points to make the debate exciting and authentic. He says that besides giving quotations with references from the Qur'ān, he also gives quotations with references from the scriptures and authentic sources of the opponent. He also recommends clarifying the common misconception about the topic of the debate. The speaker should reply to his opponents' and critics' arguments, allegations and theories that try to disprove his viewpoint. There should be a logical explanation to disprove the theories that support the opponents' viewpoints. He says, "*If you miss an important point or time that does not permit you to cover it in*

your talk, mention that point in the rebuttal or include it appropriately in the relevant answer during the question-and-answer session.”¹

Tasks during Opponent’s Talk

Naik’s way of dealing with the opponent’s talk is to listen carefully to his opponent’s talk. He takes notes of all the crucial points mentioned by the opponent to prove his viewpoint irrespectively, whether logical or illogical. At the same time, he takes notes of all the points his opponents mentioned to disprove his viewpoint. He also takes notes of all quotations with references mentioned by the opponent in his talk from the sacred scriptures that are incorrect, mistranslated, misinterpreted, misquoted, or quoted out of context, doubtful and ambiguous. Besides that, he takes note of his opponent’s favourite repetitive dialogue and tries to prove its baselessness; even if the opponent comments about himself to show off or any sarcastic remark about himself, he takes note of that and responds to it. If he is the second speaker, he does not change much from his prepared talk. Only the points that match with the prepared talk he covers up.

Presentation as a First Rebutter

Rebuttal means the speech act of refuting by offering a contrary contention or argument. So, it is to respond by refuting the allegations and clarifying misconceptions or doubts made by the opponent. According to Zakir Naik, who presents the rebuttal first, his rebuttal should refute all allegations made by the opponent in his talk part against his viewpoint. Usually, the first speaker comes first to rebut, and the second comes next to rebut. A *dā’i* should give a logical explanation to disprove the points put forth by the opponent to prove his viewpoint. If the opponent has mentioned many points to disprove the viewpoint, the *dā’i* should make sure that he replies to the most critical points at least or give a numbering in order of priority. If the opponent mentions many points against that *dā’i*’s viewpoint, he should reply to the shortest ones first. If the opponent gives any reference or statistics from the source which is not reliable, the *dā’i* should mention its weaknesses in the rebuttal.²

To Naik, if the opponent uses any dialogue or a punchline repetitively from time to time, then a *dā’i* may use the same dialogue verbatim after disproving his point. He should thank the opponent whether he has praised him or not. The *dā’i* should clarify any

¹ Zakir Naik, Structure and Contents of a Debate, (IDTP 2016) 2.

² Ibid.

misconception that the opponent may give him. A *dā'i* should give a witty reply to the opponent's sarcastic remarks if he makes any.

Second in the Rebuttal

We can see two formats of the debate here. The first format is that the two speakers delivered their talks part first. Then, the first speaker rebuts what the second speaker said in his talk part of the debate, followed by the second speaker's rebuttal. Hence, format A is that the first speaker delivers his talk part first, whereas he is the first in the rebuttal.

There is another format that we could say, 'format B', where the first speaker will wait after his talk until the second speaker finishes his talk and the rebuttal of the first speaker's talk. Then the first speaker will rebuttal the second speaker's talk and rebuttal parts together. The point to be noted here is that the second speaker should have a short break between his talk and rebuttal parts to differentiate between the talk and rebuttal parts. However, if the second speaker can mix his talk and rebuttal parts smoothly, he can mix them only by having a short break after the talk time.

To summarize format A, talk by the first speaker followed by the talk by the second speaker. Then the rebuttal by the first speaker, followed by the rebuttal by the second speaker. To sum up format B, Talk by the first speaker followed by the talk and the rebuttal of the second speaker with a short break between the talk and the rebuttal of the second speaker. Finally, the first speaker will continue his rebuttal.

The Implication of Naik's Technique: Observations

Not Carrying Notes on Papers

It is advised that Zakir Naik not carry the lecture sheets, even not the short note and points, to the stage because it is unimpressive and creates less impact on the audience. The lecture should not be read but delivered. It is incredible to deliver the whole talk and the rebuttal from memory. If it is of unavoidable circumstances while one needs to refer to the points, then it should be only headings, sub-headings, and difficult points with big and bold letters on a piece of paper. All the points should be well-organized with bullets and numbers to save time from final shuffling.

Verses Must be Relevant

As for the quotations, he recommends quoting the topic-related verses of the Qur'ān as many as possible in Arabic along with the translation. Besides that, he asks to refer to only authentic and unequivocal quotations

and warns against excerpting any unauthentic or weak one. In quoting from religious scriptures, Naik emphasizes giving quotations with references, possibly by showing the hard copy of that scripture like the Qur'ān, The Bible, Vedas, etc. Naik advised them to refer to the statistics with their sources and the citations from the books and the articles to make it more impactful.

Multimedia Arrangements

Audio-visual aids like video clippings, slide projectors, flipcharts, and PowerPoint, are helpful for seminars and small discussions, not for large audiences. Instead, stories, incidents, and typical examples from day-to-day life can be mentioned to make the talk more interesting. Suppose the topic of the speech is inherently difficult to understand and challenging to grasp by the audience. In that case, the speaker may include a humorous incident, example, or joke to break the monotony and keep the audience rejuvenated. This could also be a few words in Urdu, Hindi, and the local language. However, the joke should be relevant, not the silly one that does not go with the speaker's personality and the audience's environment.

Sincerity for the Cause of Allah

Some other vital points must be followed to make the talk influential and impressive. First and foremost, the speaker should bear in mind that his objective is to seek Allah's pleasure in conveying the message of Islam. Whatever achievements he has, he should not boast of them but remain polite and humble. The speaker should establish his credibility so his audience can trust him. For that, one should provide the maximum references and quotations in the shortest time possible. Last but not least, the speaker should give the translation of every single verse, the hadith, and all the quotations from the other sources if they are not from the language of the talk.

Issues to be Avoided

There are some aspects that are not relevant to the discussion of the topic. If a speaker cannot avoid such aspects, his talk will be very unusual. For instance, if a speaker forgets any point and gives a long pause, it will create a concentration break. To avoid that situation, the speaker should either jump to the next point or say something relevant to the previous point while trying to recall the forgotten part. There should always be some previously prepared fillers, like certain verses of the Qur'ān, to create conjunctions in forgotten parts. They could be very

general, like the verses of da'wah from the Qur'ān, for instance, *Surat al-Nahl* 16:125.

The speech should not be interjected with unnecessary phrases like "I mean", "Hmm", "You know", "Hope you understand", and so on. The slang words like "stuff" and "guy" should be avoided. The point of caution is to avoid a similar sentence or phrase repeatedly. It is also advised not to say, "I am sorry, I did not have time to prepare", "My speech will not be good", or "I do not know about the subject of the talk". The speaker should not break the audience's patience by crossing the time limits.

Techniques while Speaking

Research shows that the impact and effectiveness of a public talk and debate depend mainly on the quality of the presentation. Then, the content of the talk comes in the second stage. The research displays that almost 93% of effectiveness depends on the presentation and communication, while only 7% depends on the talk's matter and content.¹ According to Zakir Naik, the Islamic perspective of a Public Talk is that of compatibility of the content and the presentation with the Qur'ān and the Authentic Hadith, which sum up the effectiveness of the talk. Hence, the issues related to the presentation will be discussed here.

Personal Appearance

An Islamic speaker should keep his beard as it is mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Narrated Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, Cut the moustaches short and leave the beard (as it is).² If anyone wanted to trim his beard, it was allowed as Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) whenever he performed the *ḥajj* or *'umrah*; he used to hold his beard and cut whatever remained outside his hold.³

If the label shows the intent, a *dā'i* should wear it. For example, a *dā'i* should wear a clean cap or something to cover the head based on the country and the culture. He should wear formal clothes and shoes and avoid a T-shirt, jeans, track shoes, slippers, and other casual wear. If shoes are not allowed, he should wear clean and untorn socks. A *dā'i* should not wear anything that distracts from the primary matter and the

¹ Albert Mehrabian, "The Mehrabian myth", *Training Journal*, (November 2008) 34.

² *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Book of Dress*, Vol.7, Chapter 65, Ḥadīth 5893.

³ *Ibid.*, *Book of Dress*, Ḥadīth 5892.

purpose of the talk, like a neck chain, wrist chain, shining watches and rings, and belt with big showy buckles. All shirt buttons should be closed except the collar button.

Moreover, the sleeves should not be folded while lecturing. Trouser pockets should not be cluttered with things that are not required, and the same goes for shirt pockets. If a *dā'i* wears spectacles, then the frame should not be glamorous. If the talk is video recorded, the glasses should preferably have an antiglare coating. In short, a *dā'i*'s look and overall appearance should be decent, appealing, and confident.

Posture

It is preferable to stand and talk rather than sit and speak. The speaker should keep a moderate distance between two legs, neither too far nor too close. He should stand on both feet without bending them at the knees and should stand upright, not with drooping shoulders. He should not move sideways or front and backward. He should neither lean on or to anything like a chair or table nor shake his body unnecessarily. His posture should be as confident and energetic, not tensed.

Gestures

How the posture is explained above does not mean that a *dā'i* will stand rigid like a statue. Moreover, a *dā'i* shall gesture with his hands often, but it should be natural, not acted out or pre-planned. To observe and evaluate the effectiveness and impression of the gestures, he can have a trial in the mirror. These gestures should be matching with the matter that is being spoken, not merely moving hands. For example, if a *dā'i* talks about the five pillars of Islam, he should point out his five fingers one by one while counting those five pillars. He should avoid similar gestures repeatedly throughout the speech. The facial expression should be according to the matter of the talk. It should be friendly, welcoming, cordial, and not stern or angry. Gestures should always look good, not something which is not odd.

While not making any gestures by hand, to Zakir Naik, they should be placed one on top of the other on the navel or slightly above the navel. A *dā'i* should not put his hands in his pockets or behind the back. Similarly, he should not play with his fingers or fidget with the clothes, mike, wire, or any article such as pen, paper, etc.

Regarding eye movement, a speaker should glance at the whole audience at the beginning of the talk. If the audience is small in number, it is better to give a gesture to everyone. More importantly, a *dā'i* should look more at the targeted audience, such as questioners, Non-Muslims audiences, etc. He should not look at the opposite gender if there are opposite gender

available in the audience. However, a passing glance over the opposite gender occasionally is accepted.

To enhance a *dā'i*'s energy and confidence, a speaker may look at the active, supportive, and attentive audience. To draw the attention of those who disturb him, he can look at them directly for a short moment. If they continue disturbing him, he may ask them politely not to disturb him. The speaker should not fix his gaze on the ceiling, the floor, the space, or above the heads of the audience. If keeping the notes is unavoidable for a *dā'i*, he should not peep up at the notes from far away in a half-hearted apologetic manner, but instead, he should hold them close to him and look at them properly in a dignified manner.

Speech

A speaker should deliver his speech loudly and confidently, clearly but not slurred. The speed should be moderate, neither too fast nor too slow. People can listen at a faster speed than the speed they usually speak. Therefore, there should not be pauses and blanks that will divert the attention of the audience. If the speaker delivers a complex matter, there may be a repetition or a short pause to let the audience grasp and assimilate the information.

The speaker should enthuse and charge up the audience; it is only possible when he speaks with energy and enthusiasm. He should speak forcefully and assertively with conviction to be a persuasive speaker. During an ordinary speech, there should not be any repetition, but the most crucial message of the speech should be repeated to emphasize more, as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to repeat any crucial thing three times.¹

Modulation

A speaker should not talk monotonously. If a person recites the Qur'ān, for example, and continues with the same tone and tune that does not match with the Prophetic manner, like he used to be soft and crying while passing by the verses of the Hellfire and joyous melody while he was passing by the verses of the Paradise. Likewise, a speaker needs to influence and emulate his audience to modulate his voice according to the subject of the talk. So, he should alter his voice, and change the speed, pace, tone, and pitch appropriately, like sometimes high tone, sometimes low tone, and sometimes hushed voice depending on the matter.

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, The Book of Knowledge, Chapter: Repeating one's talk to make others understand, No. 30, (Vol. 1) 112.

It does not mean that he should go sing-song voice which goes up and down at regular intervals. Usually, the audience loses concentration when it seems the speaker has memorized his talk and is gabbling and gurgling whatever he has memorized. However, rhythmic tempo in the choice of words can be used.

Body Language

Speaker's body language is imperative for the audience to understand the talk better. To Zakir Naik, speaking without a podium is better than with a podium. It lets the audience observe the body language of the speaker. It is also preferable to avoid holding notes and a microphone or any other obstruction or hindrance that can be a barrier to body language. Because it is proven that not only the mouth can speak but also the other parts of the body can speak. For instance, sign language for the deaf and hard-of-hearing people. The deaf cannot hear, and the dumb speak, but they understand everything by sign language. Therefore, body language helps the audience to understand the matter and the content clearly and effectively.

Preliminary Preparation

The topic should be suitable for the time and context. The speaker should have a brief idea of the audience. For instance, the language they understand, the background of most of the expected audience, their levels in terms of profession and specialization, and whether they are hostile or friendly. The speaker should study the occasion and the reason for his aimed talk.

Intensive and Extensive Research

A speaker must do intensive and extensive research for the talk he wants to deliver. The speaker should know the topic enough beyond what he will deliver. To be an expert in a specific topic or field, he should study many books by different writers on the same topic and watch videos of different speakers on the same subject. For referring to the speakers, he should check the authenticity of both the reference and the quotation before passing them on to others. The logical and convincing statements and examples should be extracted from audio-video lectures, books, and articles as much as possible. The speaker must be well prepared for the question-and-answer session because the impact and credibility of a good speech will be lost if the speaker fumbles while answering questions or gives long, incoherent, and unconvincing replies. To achieve that credibility, one may prepare relevant questions about the

topic and the answer to those questions. He can share the topic and the content of the topic with his family members and friends who are experts on the relevant topic to get comments and questions for the preparation.

Preparation of the Contents of the Speech

According to Zakir Naik, a speaker should follow a few steps to prepare the talk's contents. First, he should prepare notes of the entire speech well in advance. Second, he should draw a skeletal outline of his ultimate talk for a final glance or revision. Third, all relevant Qur'anic verses should be kept together along with their translation in a separate paper sheet for a final glance or revision. Fourth, a speaker should make a short talk between fifteen to thirty minutes, and the long one should not exceed forty-five minutes unless the speaker is an expert orator who can hold the audience's attention, concentration, and interest for an extended period. However, in no way should the duration exceed the length of one hour.

The order of the talk should be topic-wise rather than chronologically ordered unless required. There should be a rhythmic link among the points presented in the speech. Then the sequence and the coherence should flow smoothly throughout the lecture from the beginning to the end.

Rehearsal for the Final Talk

Practice makes a man perfect-thus; that goes the maxim. Rehearsal gives confidence to a speaker. It provides the speaker with an opportunity to rectify his mistakes and helps to know and manage the timeframe of the talk. The more rehearsal a speaker conducts the better delivery of the speech he can offer in the final presentation. It is preferable to have an experienced person sitting in the audience during the trial who can point out the mistakes in the speech. The last option is to give a rehearsal in front of the mirror.

The trial of the talk could be recorded and given to an expert for more accurate evaluation. The rehearsal and the actual versions may be recorded and compared to improve in the future to reach an excellent level. Last but not least, the speaker must check and practice the pronunciation of new and unfamiliar words to him.

Conclusion

Zakir Naik adopted a holistic approach in substantiating his argument and counterarguing the opponents' claims. Four layered foundational premises of argument-scriptural, comparative theological texts, rational and logical, and scientific events have been a striking technique of his comparative theological struggle. Above all, he faithfully recites Qur'anic supplication in

all the lectures delivered before the audience. Perhaps, this Islamically holistic approach characterized by the combination of rationalism and spirituality has brought Naik such splendid achievement in comparative theology. In fine, Naik's four-layered foundational premises of the argument and his adhesiveness to the supplication and the principle of sincerity for the cause of Allah, the Almighty, would function as a formidable benchmark for an individual or a group of people who intend to dedicate their whole life to spread the message of Islam in this multiplex diverse global audience.

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AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Volume: 6

Special Issue No. 4

December 2022

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