

a cautious stand as to the deepening impact of Pilkada due to the continuous presence of elitism, party-dominance and rampant money-politics in Indonesia's electoral politics.

Islamic *Da'wah*: Theory and Practice. By Sohirin M. Solihin. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, Malaysia, 2008, pp. 260. ISBN: 978-983-3855-44-5.

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Da'wah (literally means claim, prayer, invocation) refers to calling or inviting people to embrace Islam. Though not an article of the Islamic faith, Muslims are urged to be actively engaged in *da'wah* activities. The book under review explains, as the title indicates, the theory and practice of *da'wah* and is thus addressed mainly to the Muslims. It is a significant addition to books on *da'wah*. The author, while teaching Qur'ān and Sunnah at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), is himself involved in *da'wah* activities including inter-faith dialogues. He has published numerous articles and books, conducted researches and presented papers related to religious understanding and peaceful coexistence at national, regional and international levels.

The author argues that in their capacity as the vicegerents of Allah (SWT), Muslims are responsible to dedicate their lives to Allah's will and work for peace, prosperity and progress of the human civilization. He laments that the work of *da'wah* is mistakenly perceived to be done through mosques only. The *da'wah* activity, to be effective, must be carried out with proper planning and strategy. For Solihin, "*da'wah* and education should go hand in hand" (p. xi) as both represent a single entity. Therefore, he calls upon Muslim leaders to restructure the educational curriculum to make *da'wah* more meaningful and effective.

The book contains eleven chapters and an index. It begins with a discussion on the etymology, semantics and usage of the term *da'wah* and other cognate expressions in the Qur'ān and the works of Muslim scholars (ch. 1). The *dā'ī* (caller to Islam) has to be equipped with the knowledge of the science of *da'wah* (*'ilm al- da'wah*) to be able to invite others to the way of Allah (SWT) with wisdom (*hikmah*) and good preaching, as this was the method adopted by all messengers of Allah (SWT). For this, the *dā'ī* should be cognizant of the *ḥadīth* (pl. *aḥādīth*, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *sīrah* (life of Prophet Muhammad SAW), *'aqidah* (faith), history of the companions, as well as of the means and sources of *da'wah* that would help him understand the process through which the peaceful expansion of Islam took place over a large part of the world.

According to a *ḥadīth*, seeking knowledge (*ṭalab al-'ilm*) is mandatory for every Muslim. This is all the more applicable to a *dā'ī* who has to be well-versed in religious knowledge and has to practice what he/she preaches from the divine sources. Methodology of *da'wah* is derived from the shining examples of the Prophet (SAW) who used different methods, depending upon the occasion, the place and the audience, for conveying the message of Islam (ch. 2). *Da'wah* entails myriads of tasks and responsibilities. It is an individual as well as a collective obligation. Families and organisations have their roles pertaining to *da'wah* activities (ch. 3). *Tawhīd* (unity and sovereignty of Allah), the author argues, is a vital and integral component of *da'wah* (ch. 4). *Da'wah* has various objectives, the most significant of which is to convey the divine message and save humanity from moral, socio-economic and political degradation. Human beings have different ideological beliefs and are faced with multi-dimensional crises. Muslims should emulate the Prophet (SAW) who confronted and successfully resolved problems relating to the individual, the family, the society and the humanity at large (ch. 5).

The *dā'ī* should possess noble traits like religious commitment, simplicity, discipline, patience, perseverance, and the spirit of cooperation (ch. 6). In addition, he/she should be aware of contemporary issues and problems. Intellectualism cannot be dispensed with. Understanding the psychology of the audience in

the course of *da'wah* work is inevitable. This calls for a strategic and systematic approach to *da'wah* rather than strictly adhering to the traditional dogmatic approach (ch. 7).

The strategies of *da'wah* in contemporary times include, among others, Friday sermons, public talks, study circles, seminar discussions, *'ibādah* camps, forums, and in recreation centres, the last one being an effective means of *da'wah* among the youth (ch. 8). The author puts a heavy emphasis on *da'wah* through mass media. Given the rapid development of technological information, latest means of communication should be used to spread the divine message. These, among others, include newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the Internet (ch. 9).

The subject of *da'wah* among children and the youth is explained in the tenth chapter. This is extremely important as today's educational system is predominantly secular in nature. Religion has been marginalised and relegated to one's personal life. The author rightly stresses upon the need to restructure the educational system to incorporate simplified studies of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *sīrah*, stories of the companions as well as Islamic arts and culture. Muslims in general need to comprehend the meaning of *dīn* and *sharī'ah*, which are not restricted to rituals and do's and don'ts but encompass the entire range of human life and human civilisation.

The eleventh and final chapter of the book touches upon the challenges faced by the *dā'ī* when disseminating the divine message in a pluralistic society. Islam recognises pluralism, but carrying out *da'wah* in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society requires special skills of interaction, discernment of modern thought, knowledge of other religions and ideologies, awareness of cultural traditions, etc. In addition, the *dā'ī* must be an embodiment of virtues. I am reminded of the phrase: "example is better than precept."

With ample references to the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and works of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, the book covers a multi-faceted approach to *da'wah* and could even, with certain modifications, be recommended as a textbook for undergraduate students. The book could be enriched by including an explanation on the failure of *da'wah* work to produce the desired results. This failure may be due to structural deficiencies, inappropriate strategies, individual

feelings or hostile external environment. These and many other reasons need serious introspection to make any headway in propagating Islam. Another point of discussion could be the comparison of Islamic *da'wah* with the proselytising activities of Christianity, for example. With Muslim institutions of *zakāh* and *awqāf* not doing enough, is there a way to Islamise the concept of "Social Gospel" that applies Christian ethics to social problems, especially poverty, inequality, liquor, crime, racial tensions, slums, bad hygiene, poor schools, and the dangers of war? Discussions on how the reverts to Islam feel once they enter the fold of Islam and what steps should be taken to make them comfortable to live with the Muslim *Ummah* may also add value to any work on *da'wah*. A bibliography and other selected readings on *da'wah*, if incorporated in this book will further benefit students, teachers and researchers.

It is hoped that the book will be well received. The second edition of the book will hopefully see an improvement in the usage of grammar, syntax and style, accuracy in the translations of the Qur'ānic verses and typographical errors, as well as correct transliterations of Arabic words and expressions. Editorial lapses, however, do not undermine the importance of the topic nor belittles the efforts of the author.