

## An Exposition into the Role of *Du'a* (Supplication) in *Da'wah* Programmes (Proselytization)

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### Abstract

Supplication was viewed as man's response to the exigency of the condition, in which he was driven to seek security, status, prosperity, sustainability and permanence by identifying himself with a reality greater, more worthy and more durable than himself. Being aware of this fact, man always seeks assistance from his Lord over daily challenges and endeavours. A *da'i* whose task is to call people to the Way of his Lord could not but seek the help of this Lord to grant him success and to remove any impediment that may hinder his ability to discharge his duty effectively. It is against this background that this paper aims to assess the role of supplication in *da'wah programmes*. To achieve this, Qur'anic approach that x-rays the prayers of the Prophets of Islam to facilitate their *da'wah programmes* was adopted. This approach has been recommended for present day *duaat* who intend to carry out *da'wah programmes* to enable them successful in their missionary activities.

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## 1. Introduction

The divine call received by Prophet Musa (AS) to go back to Egypt where he was considered as a fugitive in order to free the captive Israelites was a difficult task indeed. Yet, Allah's instruction must be carried out willingly or unwillingly. Prophet Musa being aware of the person Pharaoh was, knew that he needed more than might, knowledge, miracles and oratory power, but also, *du'a* (supplications) that could change the hard-hearted king. Musa was wise enough to identify the role supplications could play in his missionary work, that is the reason why he would always go to Mount Sinai to pray to Allah to ease his task and make the mission a successful one (Suratu at-Taha, chapter 20).

However, the word *du'a* in Arabic means "calling" – the act of remembering Allah and calling upon Him. Aside from the daily prayers, Muslims are encouraged to call upon Allah for forgiveness, guidance, and strength throughout the day. Muslims can make these personal supplications or request in their own words, in any language, but there are also recommended examples from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

*When My servants ask about Me, I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every supplicant, when he calls on Me. Let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me, so that they may walk in the right way* (Suratul Baqarah, chapter 2 verse 186).

Different scholars have given different shades of explanations on what *Da'wah* means and entails. One of such is that *Da'wah* is seeking favour (or hoping) in Allah by supplication, enjoining a divine spiritual call on others, or leading others in prayer or conveying for a purpose, i.e. coming together on a course, often on spiritual course (Afolabi, 2008). From the view point of another scholar, *da'wah*, has various interpretations and that its derivatives emanate from a number of meanings which are inter-related in their lexical composition which in general revolve around themes such as enjoining, encouraging, directing, inviting, driving or yearning unto a path, converging, congregating, and enacting a loud voice. All these can be summed up as *da'wah* being an act of calling people to the faith of Islam and standing firmly by it (Adetona, 2002).

It is also in the right direction that the call of Allah "let there arise from among you a community of people who invite to all that is good" places duties and responsibilities on Muslims- individually and collectively. Scholars have interpreted this verse to mean that the *Ummah* (Muslim community) must provide *da'wah* with the all the organization and support it needs. In addition, every Muslim male or female is obligated to call to Islam according to his/her capacity. For it is said that conducting *da'wah* is essential for maintaining one's faith and keeping away from disbelief (Adeniran, 2012).

There is no doubt that when calling to Islam, the *da'i* assumes the position of a medical doctor, whose job demands all the necessary tools that will help him to have a successful operation and a safe landing. Among these greatest tool to any *da'wah* worker is *du'a*-supplication. One may be tempted to ask that of what role does supplication plays in *da'wah*? A critical look into the missionary activities of most of the Prophets of Allah would give us a lieu into the question raised earlier. It is against this premises that this study aims to examine the role of supplication in Islamic proselytization.

## **2. Concept, Meaning and Scope of *Da'wah***

Etymologically, word "*da'wah*" covers meanings ranging from addressing, calling, appealing, requesting, demanding, to worshiping. Racijs (2004) citing Paul Walker provides an even more inclusive array of meanings for "*da'wah*" as "concepts of summoning, calling on, appealing to, invocation, prayer (for and against something or someone), propaganda, missionary activity, and finally legal proceedings and claims".

Thus, the only acceptable *da'wah* as supplication is the one directed towards God (Allah), as in 2:186: "If some servants of mine asked you about Me, I am indeed close and I respond to the call of a supplicant (*da'wah*) if he calls upon Me." Paul Walker, in his article on *da'wah* for the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, believes *da'wah* found in this verse to be "a basic meaning for *da'wah*, perhaps its cardinal meaning" found in the Quran (Walker, 1995: 343).

From what has been said about *da'wah* as prayer, it follows that such *da'wah* can be both supplication and invitation to religion. Since the Qur'an urges Muslims to avoid compulsion in persuading non-believers to convert to Islam ("No coercion in religion," 2:256), it would follow that the most acceptable way to convert someone to Islam would be to convince him or her of Islam's superiority and to also remember him in supplication as Prophet Muhammad did to Umar. And Muslims should do this by explanation and example suggested in the Quran: "Invite to the Path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice" (16:125).

Though *da'wah* is not made a pillar of the Islamic faith in the holy scripture of Islam, Muslims (or Muhammad, as it actually is in the text of the Qur'an and *Hadith* collections) are urged to invite non-believers to join their faith. One may even say that all Muslims are, by definition, missionaries/preachers. The Quranic injunctions for *da'wah* are further confirmed by the prophetic practice – Muhammad himself was above all a *da'i*.

In summary, the explanations and practical actions that led to conversion constitute an activity required of Muslims – the spreading of Islam to others. Such an activity is called *da'wah* in manifestation.

### 3. *Du'a*- Supplication and *Salat*-Prayer: Meanings and conceptual clarification

*Du'a* – an Arabic word, three small letters that make up a word and a subject that is large and breathtaking. This word '*du'a*' could be roughly translated to mean supplication or invocation. Although, neither word adequately define *du'a*. Supplication, which means communicating with a deity, comes closer than invocation which is known to sometimes imply summoning spirits or devils (Racius, 2004).

In Islamic terminology *du'a* is the act of supplication. It is calling out to God; it is a conversation with God, the Creator, the Lord, the All Knowing, and the All Powerful. In fact the word is derived from the Arabic root meaning to call out or to summon. *Du'a* is uplifting, empowering, liberating and transforming and it is one of the most powerful and effective act of worship a human being can engage in. *Du'a* has been called the weapon of the believer. It affirms a person's belief in One God and it shuns all forms of idolatry or polytheism.

*Du'a* is essentially submission to God and a manifestation of a person's need from God. Prophet Muhammad, (May the mercy and blessings of God be upon him), said, "A slave becomes nearest to his Lord when he is in prostration. So increase supplications in prostrations." "The supplication of every one of you will be granted if he does not get impatient and say, 'I supplicated my Lord but my prayer has not been granted' (Az-Zubaidi, 1996). What this depict is that every *da'i illa llahi* should be patient and be consistent while seeking for Allah's help.

Meanwhile, Prayer- in Arabic, is one of the pillars of Islam, and in performing the five daily prayers a Muslim actually engages in a physical form of *Du'a* asking God to grant them Heaven through their actions. Throughout the prayer one also supplicates to God directly. For Muslims, prayer is a set of ritual movements and words performed at fixed times, five times per day. God says in the holy Qur'an, "Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours" (Quran 4:103). Muslims pray in the early morning before sunrise, in the middle of the day, in the afternoon, at sunset and at night. Prayer is an act of worship, in which a Muslim reaffirms his belief in One God and demonstrates his gratefulness. It is a direct connection between God and the believer and it is an obligation.

*Du'a* on the other hand is a Muslims way of feeling that connection to God at anytime, in any place. Muslims call on God frequently throughout the day and night. They raise their hands in supplication and ask for His help, mercy, and forgiveness. *Du'a* incorporates praise, thanksgiving, hope, and calling on God to assist the one in need and grant his or her requests (www.invitation2islam.wordpress.com/2019).

*Du'a* can be made for the individual, their family, friends, strangers, those in dire circumstances, for the believers, and even for the whole of humanity. When making the *du'a*,

it is acceptable to ask for good in this worldly life and in the hereafter. A person making *du'a* should not hold back, but ask God to grant both the largest and smallest requests.

Prophet Muhammad, (SAAS), encouraged the believers to make *du'a*. He said, "The *du'a* of a Muslim for his brother in his absence is readily accepted. An angel is appointed to his side. Whenever he makes a beneficial *du'a* for his brother the appointed angel says, Amin. And may you also be blessed with the same" (Al-Mundhiri, 2000).

Although making *du'a* is not an obligation, there are many benefits to making *du'a* to God frequently and with full submission. Feeling the closeness to God that comes with sincere *du'a*, it increases faith, gives hope and relief to the distressed and saves the supplicant from the despair and isolation. Throughout the Qur'an, God encourages the believer to call on Him, He asks us to lay our dreams, hopes, fears and uncertainties before Him and to be sure that He hears every word.

You Alone do we worship and You Alone do we ask for help. (Quran 1:5)

And your Lord says, Call on Me; I will answer your (prayer). But those who are too arrogant to worship Me will surely find themselves in Hell, in humiliation (Quran 40:60).

Say, O My slaves who have transgressed against their souls; despair not of the Mercy of Allah: For Allah forgives all sins; for He is oft Forgiving, most Merciful. (Quran 39:53)

Say, Call upon Allah, or call upon Ar-Rahman (The Most Gracious): By whatever name you call upon Him, (it is well): For to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. (Quran 17:110)

And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the supplications of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright. (Quran 2:186)

Prophet Muhammad (May the mercy and blessings of God be upon him), called *du'a* the essence of worship. He also suggested that the believer be humble, yet firm when making *du'a* and said, "When one of you supplicates, he should not say, 'O God, forgive me if You will,' but be firm in asking and make the desire great, for what God gives is nothing great for Him."

When we make *du'a*, when we call upon God in our hour of need, or express our gratefulness, or for any other reason including simply to feel the comfort of being close to God, we must remember to examine our sincerity and to check our intention. *Du'a* must be addressed to God alone without any intermediaries. Our intention when making the *du'a* must be to please God, obey Him and trust Him completely (Az-Zubaidi, 1996).

When a person makes *du'a* God may give him what he asked for or He may divert a harm that is greater than the thing he asked for, or He may store up what he has asked for, for the Hereafter. God has commanded us to call upon Him and He has promised to respond to our call.

#### **4. Role of Supplications in the *Da'wah* programmes of the Prophets of Islam**

##### *The supplication of Prophet Nuh (AS)*

In the Qur'an, Allah relates to us the Prophet Nuh's (AS) request to Allah. While Prophet Nuh (AS) had supplicated to Allah for the destruction of his people, he also wanted Him to protect the believers. However, his son was not a believer. Recognizing his mistake, the Prophet Nuh (AS) felt and turned to Allah for His forgiveness: "He said, My Lord, I seek refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost" (Surah Hud, 47).

##### *The supplications of Prophet Ibrahim (AS)*

On the account of the supplications of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) after the reconstruction of the sacred Ka 'aba with the help of his first son, Ismail, Prophet Ibrahim prayed as follows: Our Lord, accept this from us! You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (Surat al-Baqarah, chapter 2 verse 127). The Qur'an further accounts that: And when Ibrahim said, My Lord, make this a place of safety and provide its inhabitants with fruits – all of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day (Surat al-Baqarah, chapter 2 verse 126).

The Prophet Ibrahim's supplications were not oriented only towards his own time but also intended for succeeding generations when he prayed: Our Lord make us both Muslims submitted to You, and our descendants a Muslim community submitted to You. Show us our rites of worship and turn towards us. You are the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful. Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them. You are the Almighty, the All-Wise. (Surat al-Baqarah, chapter 2 verses 128-129).

##### *The Prophet Lut's Prayers*

Prophet Lut (AS), who was mentioned in the Qur'an as a Prophet who was given "right judgement and knowledge" (Surah al-Anbiya, chapter 21 verse 74) conveyed Allah's message to his people for long years. However, his people who transgressed Allah's limits and practiced homosexuality always reacted negatively to his message. And in the face of their intransigence, he called on to Allah thus: He said, "My Lord, help me against the people of corruption" (Surat al-'Ankabut, 30). Allah answered the Prophet Lut's call and the insolent people around him perished (Surat al-'Ankabut, 34-35).

### *The Prophet Shu'ayb's Prayers*

Prophet Shu'ayb, who was sent to the people of Madyan, but the response of these people was not different from the Prophet Nuh and Lut. These people, who rejected the message conveyed by Prophet Shu'ayb, threatened him and his follower with exile. Thereby, Prophet Shu'ayb invoked Allah that: "Our Lord, judge between us and our people with truth. You are the best of judges" (Surat al-A'raf, 89). Consequently, the earthquake seized them and it was the people who denied Shu'ayb, who were the lost ones. (Surat al-A'raf, verses 91-92).

### *The supplications of Prophet Musa (AS)*

The supplications of Prophet Musa (AS) to Allah concerning the task given to him to carryout was for Allah to:

O my Lord! Expand my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say: and give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother; add to my strength through him, that we may celebrate Thy praise without stint, and remember Thee without stint. For You art He that ever regarded us. God said: Granted is thy prayer, O Moses!.

When commenting on the above verses, Ali (2002: 795) accounts that: The breast is reputed to be the seat of knowledge and affection. The gift of the highest spiritual insight is what he prays for first. This was the most urgent in point of time. There are three other things he also asks for: viz (1) God's help in his task, which at first appears difficult to him; (2) the gift of eloquence, and the removal of the impediment from his speech; and (3) the counsel and constant attendance with him of his brother Aaron.

From the above explanation, we can infer that supplication plays significant role in the *da'wah* activities of Prophet Musa.

## **5. Prophet Muhammad's (SAAS) prayers on Umar's Conversion to Islam as an Evidence of Prayer on *Da'wah* programme**

Umar ibn Al-Khattab was a feared and well-respected man from the Banu Adi clan from among the Quraish. He came from a middle-class family from Makkah. Well known from his determination and fearless nature; he became one of the early opponents of the religion of Islam. During the days prior to his acceptance to Islam: the religion was being taught in private. There was fear of persecution from the Quraish. The Muslims would meet in homes and would learn the religion from Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) (Rahim, 1987).

There were few men that had carried so much honour and fear in Quraish. Umar ibn al-Khattab was one of them. That is why, Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) once made a *Du'a* (supplication) to Allah: "O Allah! Give Islam strength through one of the men you love more:

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab or Amr ibn al-Hisham (Abu Jahl)’. The rest about Umar’s story of conversion into Islam and his laudable achievement to the growth and consolidation of Islam, is what every Muslims are familiar with. The Muslims that were hiding began yelling “Allah Akbar- God is the Greatest”. This became so loud that it could be heard throughout Makkah. After years of secretly spreading Islam, from that moment on, Islam began being preached in the open and outside for everyone to accept (invitation2islam.wordpress.com/2019)

In the same line, the editor of (www.iqra.net/tanbeeh6.html) put it that, Hadhrat Abdullahi ibn Abbas (RA) reported the Prophet (SAAS) as saying: “O Allah, strengthen Islam with Abu Jahl bin Hisham, or with Umar bin al-Khattab”. In the morning, Umar went to the Prophet (SAAS); then prayed openly in the mosque.

Another outstanding model character displayed by Prophet Muhammad was when he visited Taif for his *da‘wah* mission, he was insulted, maltreated and rejected by the people of Taif, yet, he supplicated to Allah to rather forgive them and made their children and generations to see the beauty of Islam. Today, Taif has been turned into Islamic city.

## **6. The Role of Supplication in *Da‘wah* programmes: A Critique**

It is not an overstatement that supplication is as old as the religion itself to the extent that, the first owns it sustainability on the other. Islamic ethics does not allow any human to pass judgment on the life of any Prophet of Islam, yet their life and history are good precautionary steps for the present *Ummah* to learning from. As this was proved from the last sub-section that, all the earlier Prophets of Islam have adopted supplication as a viable tool, either to pray:

- (i) To God for divine intervention when there is drought and famine in the land, and for quick recovery on their people’s ill-health
- (ii) To God to help the barren to have the fruits of womb. As the case of Prophet Zakariyah and Yahyah (Surat al-Anbiya 89-90).
- (iii) To God for having righteous genealogy as the case of Prophet Ibrahim.
- (iv) To God to assists the religion with the conversion of some perceived strong citizens, as the case of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and Umar.
- (v) To pray to God to send down His wonders and miracle so that the people may be convinced about their mission as the case of Prophets Musa and Isa (AS).
- (vi) To also pray to Allah to send down His punishment either inform of flood or inferno as the case of Prophet Nuh.



All these above, proved that, mostly all the Prophet of Allah have always employed supplications either for or against the people. It depends on the situation on ground and how the people accepted or rejected them and their messages.

In summary, this example reveals that supplications may not always be for the good of individuals or happiness in this world and the next. But rather, as a way of seeking Allah's wrath on the wicked people as a result of their gross disobedience to Allah and also wicked attitude displayed to some Messengers. The example of Prophet Muhammad's prayer on Umar proved that, a *da'i* should be wise enough to identify some key personality that the conversion will help to boost the image of Islam and to start praying for rather than to be seeking for Allah's wrath on them as a result of little evil done on him. There is no doubt that *da'wah*, is Allah's assignment given to all the Prophets, and He is aware about the likely challenges that may confront them while carryout this task, that is why He is always ready to yield to their supplications whenever the need arises.

### **7. The effect of supplication on *da'wah* programmes: The Yorubaland experience**

In the early period of Islam in Nigeria, the efforts of the itinerant Islamic *da'wah* workers were felt more on their effort to use supplication and other forms of Islamic spirituality in convincing people about the supremacy of Islam on the local religions (Seriki, 1986). May be that is why, Islamic religion was graciously welcomed by the kings and rulers of some kingdom and empires in African region. In the period of depression and turbulence, Islam became their source of solace and succor. The supplications of this early *du'at* really worked for the spread and growth of Islam in Africa (Gbadamosi, 1978).

To buttress the above assertion, most of the early *du'at* in Yorubaland had good and cordial relationship with those Kings and Obas. Most of them even served as spiritual consultants to these monarchs. Many subjects submitted to superiority of Islamic spirituality and also accepted the faith willingly without being forced.

Available records proved that among the scholars whose significant roles assisted in the spread of Islam in Yorubaland was Alfa Tajudeen Al-Adabiyy, who came from Ilorin. This man's spiritual efforts in leading other Muslims in *Salatul-istisqa'* (prayer for rain) produced a positive outcome of abundant rain after a long-term of drought in Egbaland; a feat that impressed the reigning king of Oba Gbadebo, the then Alake, who immediately provided the Muslim community of Egba a piece of land to build their mosque at Ake in 1841. Shaykh Tajudeen Al-Adabiyy who taught many Egba Muslims the reading of the Qur'an, was said to have lived near Ake palace where he was buried besides the Ake mosque (Owoyemi, 2004).

Nowadays, the case has rather changed from supplicating for the success of the religion (Islam) to supplicating and working for the goals and success of the caller (*du'at*) or their

individual organisations. Yet, the efficacy of supplication towards complimenting the effort of one's *da'wah* should not be re-packaged in order to exploit the masses, as it is being practiced by some Islamic *da'wah* workers of nowadays.

Evidences of supplication on *da'wah* programmes could be seen from the rapid growth of many *As-salatu* groups where people now congregate for spiritual and religious need, rather than seeking spiritual protections from un-Islamic source. This is a good development compared to what it used to be before. Yet, the *Ulamah* in these various organizations could be of help by making the avenue of more Islamic teaching and counseling by not limiting Islam to spiritualism alone, but rather a total way of life.

## 8. Conclusion

It has been pointed in this paper that *Salat*- five daily obligatory prayer is different from *du'a* supplications. Also, both the Qur'an and *Ahadith* supported that Muslims should seek help and divine intervention from no other source except Allah. Virtually all the Prophets of Allah mentioned in the Holy Qur'an have adopted supplications as a *da'wah* tool either to supplicate for the success of the people or otherwise. It is on record that employing prayer as a veritable tool by the past and present *du'at* in Yorubaland is a fact, although, it was observed that the case has virtually changed from calling to the success of the faith to the calling to the success of the individuals or their various Islamic organizations.

### *Policy recommendations*

Based on the above conclusion, it is recommended that:

- (1) It was observed that in some local mosque, some local *du'at*, do employ abusive and derogatory words on the non-Muslims when using the public address system for preaching. There is no doubt that such act will win more enemies for Islam than gaining new-converts. Rather, such *du'at* should be advised to adopt Prophetic method of praying for them for Allah to soften their hearts towards the Truth.
- (2) The *du'at* should endeavour to always see Prophet Muhammad as the best role model of whose methodology are applicable to all seasons and environments.
- (3) And finally, when calling to the Way of Allah, the caller should be more patient, not to be quick in resorting to seeking Allah's wrath on the people but to rather seek for Allah's forgiveness for them.

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