CHAPTER III

AHMED DEEDAT'S VIEW ABOUT THE EASTER OF ISA AS

A. Biography of Ahmed Deedat.

Ahmed Deedat was born in Surat district, Gujarat, India in 1918.[51] His father had migrated to South Africa shortly after his birth. He had no recollection of his father until 1926. When he was nine, Deedat left India to go join his father in a place what known as Kwazulu Natal-Durban. His mother was dead only a few months after his departure.[52]

In South Africa, Deedat, a boy with no formal education applied himself with diligence to his studies, this smart child not just overcoming the language barrier, but also excelling in school, even getting promoted until he completed standard six. However, lack of financial interrupted his schooling and start working by the time he was 16 years old.

In 1936, while working as a furniture salesman, Deedat came across missionaries at a Christian seminary on the Natal South Coast. The missionaries in their efforts to convert people of Muslim faith, would often accuse the Prophet Muhammad of having "used the sword" to bring people to Islam. Such accusations seemed to offend Deedat and such attacks were to

[51] *Islamic Research Foundation,* retrieved on 29 of july 2009.
[52] The preface 'about the author' of Deedat book entitled *The Choice; Isalam and Chritianity,* (Durban: South Africa), April 1993.

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form a major influence on Deedat's subsequent interest in comparative religion.[53]

On 3 of May 1996, Sheikh Ahmed Deedat suffered a stroke which left him paralyzed from the neck down because of a Celebral Vascular Accident affecting the Brain Stem, and which also meant that he could no longer speak or swallow. He was flown to King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, where he was reported to be fully alert and hence taught to communicate through a series of eye-movements via a chart whereby he would form words by acknowledging individual alphabets read out to him, this way he would form complete sentences.

Deedat spent the last nine years of his life in a bed in his home in Verulam, South Africa. He was looked after by his wife, Hawa Deedat, and was reported to have no bed-sores. He continued to receive hundreds of letters of support from around the world, also local and international visitors continued to visit him and pay homage to his work.

On 8th of August 2005, Ahmed Deedat died at his home on Trevennen Road in Verulam in Kwazulu Natal province. He is buried at the Verulam cemetery.

[53] *Ahmed Hoosen Deedat* (1918–2005): by Goolam Vahed, Department of History, University of Kwazulu Natal.

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B. Ahmed Deedat's Functions and Activities.

1. His Expedition on Missionary.

Ahmed Deedat first lecture entitled "Muhammad: Messenger of Peace" was delivered in 1942 to an audience of fifteen people at Durban movie theatre named Avalon Cinema.[54] Overtime, Deedat's popularity as a public speaker grew in Durban, to the point that he was invited to speak in other cities in South Africa. A decade later he was filling City halls with audiences numbering in the thousands in cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town.

A major manner of Deedat's early missionary activity was the 'Guided Tours' of *Jumma* Mosque in Durban. A sophisticated program of luncheons, speeches and free hand-outs was created to give an increasingly large number of international tourists often their first look at Islam. Deedat himself featured as one of the guides, hosting tourists and giving succinct introductions to the Islamic Religion and the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

By 1956, missionary work in the form of frequent public speaking engagements and the popular guided tours of *Jumma* Mosque had begun to pay dividends. Enquiries about Islam from the general public in South Africa had started to pour in at an increasing rate. Soon it became apparent that working from the mosque office was not going to be sufficient to

[54] *Demystifying Islam and Debating Christianity*, Imran Garda, 2006 on *IslamOnline.net*

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handle the demand for literature and to facilitate an increasing number of people showing more than simply tourist level interest in Islam.

Among Deedat's close friends were Goolam Hoosein Vanker and Taahir Rasool.[55] In 1957, Deedat—together with Vanker and Rasool—founded the **Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI)** with the aim to print a variety of books on Islam and offer classes to new Muslims converts.

In 1958, Deedat also established an Islamic seminary called **As-Salaam Educational Institute** on a donated 75-acre[56] piece of land located in Braemar in the south of Natal province.

With these newly founded missionary organizations as his backbone, Deedat engaged into a broader range of activities over the next three decades. He conducted classes on Biblical Theology and numerous lectures. Inviting people towards Islam became the dominant factor of his life, with audiences at his lectures often reaching in excess of forty thousand. He also wrote a large number of booklets, distributing millions of copies of these and other free literature across the world.

2. His International Speaking Tour

By the early 1980, Ahmed Deedat's work was beginning to be known outside his native South Africa. In 1985, for instance, he twice rented the prestigious Royal Albert Hall in London to debate Christian's

[55] *The life of Shaikh Ahmed Deedat* by Asim Khan, 21 January 2006 on *Aljazeera.net*
[56] Acre = 4840 yard square measure (0,4646 ha).

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contemporaries in front of a packed audience. His international profile was significantly boosted, when in 1986 he was awarded the King Faizal Award for his services to Islam in the field of Islamic missionary activity (*da'wah*). The award squarely brought Deedat into the international limelight and the attention of the Muslim communities worldwide.

As a result, at the ripe old age of 66, Deedat began a new phase in his lifetime mission of empowering Muslims to preach to Christians, a ten years long period of International speaking tours around the world. He travelled far and wide to Muslim communities from Australia to North America. Some of his known tours include:

- Saudi Arabia and Egypt (on several occasions)
- United Kingdom (on several occasions between 1985 and 1988, including Switzerland in 1987)
- Pakistan, where Deedat met Zia al-Haq, UAE and Maldives Islands (November–December 1987), where Deedat was honored by President Gayhoom.
- United State, Tour Number 1 (late 1986 featuring debates with Swaggart, Robert Douglas and several lectures including two in Arizona)
- Sweden and Denmark (late 1991 featuring three debates)
- United State and Canada Tour (1994 tour featuring debate in Canada and lectures in Chicago)
- Australia Tour (his last tour in early 1996 just before his stroke).

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C. Ahmed Deedat's Books, Debates and Speeches

Syeikh Ahmed Deedat had so many books entitled on Isa AS. In his works he usually told Isa as Jesus. His books are:

1. Al-Quran the Miracle of Miracles
2. Arabs and Israel, Conflict or Conciliation?
3. Christ in Islam
4. Combat Kit against Bible Thumpers
5. Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction?
6. How Rushdie Fooled the West
7. Is the Bible God's Word?
8. Muhammad the Greatest
9. Muhammad the Natural Successor to Christ
10. Resurrection or Resuscitation?
11. The Choice, Islam & Christianity-Volume. 1
12. The Choice, Islam & Christianity-Volume. 2
13. The Choice, Islam & Christianity-Volume. 1 and 2 combined
14. The God That Never Was
15. The Muslim at Prayer, Comparison to Prayer in Bible
16. The People of The Book
17. What is His Name?
18. What the Bible Says about Muhammad SAW
19. What was the Sign of Jonah?

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20. Who Moved the Stone?[57]

In otherwise, Deedat also had some lectures and debates forum on TV, seminary or off air, some of them are:

1. His debate with Josh Mc Dowell in Durban, South Africa, occurred in August 1981.
2. Debates with Anis Sorrosh. From many debates they was had two highly contentious debates:
   - The first of which entitled "*Is Jesus God?*" in December 1985 at the prestigious Royal Albert Hall in London.
   - The second debate was organized with much fanfare and held in Birmingham, United Kingdom on 7 August 1988, entitled "*The Quran or the Bible: Which is God's Word*".[58] This debate spanned a total of 240 minutes including the Questions & Answers session.
3. Debates with Jimmy Swaggart. The debate entitled "*Is the Bible the Word of God?*"[59] was held in Swaggart's hometown of Baton Rouge, Louisiana in November 1986 at the University of Louisiana, where it was attended by about 8,000 people
4. Debate with Dr. Floyd E. Clark.
5. Debate with Dr. Robert Douglas, PhD (Zwimmer Institute) entitled "*Crucifixion: Fact or Fiction*" in his US tour of 1986 at the University of Kansas in November.

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[57]List of *Deedat's Books on Comparative Religion,* www.halalco.com
[58]*Ahmed Hoosen Deedat* (1918–2005): by Goolam Vahed, Department of History, University of Kwazulu Natal.
[59]Ibid.

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6. Debates with Wesley H. Wakefield (Bishop General of the Bible Holiness Movement of Vancouver), took place at the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, Canada on 17 July 1994.
7. Christianity and Islam, This debate appeared on the SABC-TV program "Cross Questions" on Sunday 5th June 1983 with the Chairman, Mr. Bill Chalmers.

Besides those numbers, Deedat also published and mass produced over one dozen palm-sized booklets focusing on the following major themes. Most of Deedat's numerous lectures, as well as most of his debates in fact, focus on and around these same themes. Often the same theme has several video lectures to its credit, having been delivered at different times and different places.

D. Ahmed Deedat's Thought about the Easter of Isa AS.

As a Muslim apologist, inter-religious public debater and Islamic missionary, Ahmed Deedat always described Isa AS based on two sides, the Quran and Bible.

As was written in the chapter two about the story of Isa AS, Ahmed Deedat, in his numerous books and speeches also told loudly that Isa AS was just an apostle of God. He is definitely not God.[60] Isa was anything other than a natural man and a prophet of God, sent unto the house of Israel to bear the good news of the coming of the Kingdom of God, which prophesy was

[60]Ahmed Deedat, *The God that Never Was,* p: 6.

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fulfilled with the advent of the holy prophet Muhammad saw.[61] Isa AS was one of the mightiest messengers of God that born miraculously without any male intervention, that he gave life to the dead by God's permission and that he healed those born blind and the lepers by God's permission.[62]

Talking about the raised of Isa AS and his resurrection to this world, in his book entitled *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction* Deedat told that Isa AS was neither killed nor crucifixion. Isa AS was disguised as another man (gardener) because he afraid from the Jews. In chapter 11 by the sub-title "A Practical Joke" Deedat rebutted Christian belief about the resurrection of Isa AS (Jesus).

> Jesus is there, he is watching this woman. He knows who she is and he know why she is there. He approached her from behind and finds her crying. So he asks her: *"Woman, why wee pest thou? Whom seekest thou?"*
>
> Before she replies, allow me to interject: "Why does he ask what appears to be silly questions? Doesn't he know the obvious reasons? Of course he does! Then why the silly questions?" The answer is that in reality they are not silly questions, though they appear to be so. He knows that this woman is looking for him, and she is disappointed on not finding him; hence the weeping. But he also knows that because of his heavy disguise she would not be able to recognize him.[63]
>
> Now why should she suppose that he is a gardener? Do resurrected persons look like "gardeners"? No! Then why does she suppose him to be a gardener? Because he disguised as a gardener. Why is he disguised as a gardener? Because he is afraid of the Jews! Why is he afraid of the Jews? Because he did not die and did not conquer death! If he had died, and if he had conquered death, then he would not be afraid anymore. Why not? Because a resurrected body cannot die twice![64]

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[61]Ibid, p: 6.
[62]Ahmed Deedat, *Christ in Islam,* a transcript of debate entitled "Christianity and Islam" which appeared on SABC-TV on Sunday 5th June 1983.
[63] Ahmed Deedat, *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction?*, p: 42.
[64] Ibid, p: 42.

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Moreover, in next chapter, Deedat also said that Isa AS was reluctant to die and beseeched God to help him and keep him alive.[65]

In his book entitled *Was Jesus Crucified?* Deedat declared the statement which Isa was death (or in Christian version was crucified) on Friday then he buried on Friday night[66] was a theory has no Biblical foundation and contradicted by the Quran which teaches. According to him Isa AS was never put on a cross. This statement approved by the verse surah an-Nisa, 4:157.[67]

In addition, according to his book entitled *The Choice; Islam and Christianity* Deedat argued that Isa AS was not dying on the cross but he was dead normally. Isa AS was a mortal and no son of man can be immortal.

> The soul does not really die, but when it separates from the body at the time of the death of the body, the soul will get a taste of death. Moses is here with us today in his teachings. Jesus is here with us today in his teachings and Muhammad also is here with us today in his teachings.[68]

These quotations of Ahmed Deedat statements were in harmony with Islamic teaching that Isa AS was never crucified, even dying on the cross. Isa AS was disguised and replace by his follower.

In contrary, Deedat's book entitled *the Crucifixion of Christ; a Fact not Fiction* cited that Isa AS was crucified on the cross. The crucifixion unto Isa AS was a fact and it done by the Jews on Friday morning. While Deedat said that Isa AS really crucified on the cross but he never declared that Isa was dead on it. Isa AS was only swooned for a moment then aware at that time.

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[65] For more detail see *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction?*, chapter 18 about the truth shines, p: 71.
[66] *Was Jesus Crucified?*. a booklet by Ahmed Deedat p. 3.
[67] A preface of transcript of Ahmed deedat speech on the title *The Crucifixion of Christ; a Fact not Fiction* by John Gilchrist.
[68] Ahmed Deedat, *The Choice; Islam and Christianity,* p: 57.

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E. The Appraisal and Criticism of Ahmed Deedat's works

In 1987, Deedat refuted rumors in South Africa that he was a Qadiani and was distributing a *tafsir* of the Quran attributed to a well-known Qadian, Muhammad Asad, by issuing a public statement clarifying his stand, re-stating his view that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad al-Qadiani was a non Muslim or *kafir*, and so were his followers.[69]

David Westerlund, *Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion: Apologetics through Polemics*. Journal of Religion, Africa 2003 as cited by John Gilchrist said Deedat's debates and writings have been labeled a form of apologetics. Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon, professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Glasgow writes:

> Ahmed Deedat's pamphlets are being recycled to a brand new British Muslim constituency. Thus, a new generation is exposed to his malicious new disinformation. The reason for the popularity of such polemicists as Ahmed Deedat is varied: Muslim self-understandings as "the best of all communities" leads them to suppose that Islam prevails over all religions. Combined with the wounded pride of living in a post-colonial world within the continuing hegemony of western culture, some dignity can at least be preserved by claiming moral and religious superiority.[70]

Still, Deedat's influence was certainly wider than confined to the underground. Muslim scholar Farid Essack has criticized Deedat, comparing him to such fundamentalists as Rabbi Meir Kahane and Jerry Falwell[71]. Essack wrote:

> Deedat's multitude of anti Christian, Jewish and Hindu videotapes have told us all that there is to be told about the other

[69] *A declaration by Ahmed Deedat*. Islamic Propagation Center International, 23 July 1987.
[70] Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon, *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, (Palgrave-Macmillan 2001) p: 214.
[71] *To whom shall we give access to our water holes?*, by Farid Esack

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> and we are comfortable with that. There are times, of course, when questions surface about the importance of correct dogma, about the importance of labels to a God whom we believe sees beyond labels and looks at the hearts of people. Instead of pursuing these questions, we hasten back and seek refuge in "the known". We order another of those Deedat tapes.

The "*Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary anti-Semitism and racism*" in Tel-Aviv University calls Deedat "anti-Jewish" but does not elaborate. In France, his books have been forbidden for sale and distribution since 1994, alleging it to be violently anti-western, antisemitic and inciting to racial hate.

Following his 1981 debate with Deedat, Josh McDowell released a book which included criticism of a number of Deedat's arguments, from a Christian perspective. Deedat responded to part of McDowell's book in chapters 17 and 19 of "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction".

Some said that Deedat statements were confusing audience and readers. Many of Deedat's statement were the own opinion of him, often Deedat declare the opinion that not based on the Bible or the Quran. Muhammad Bana of Durban expressed the wild statement about the ambiguous of Deedat's statement. He says of Deedat's theory:

> Mr. Deedat is fond of making lectures about other denominations but very seldom on Islam. He seems to have a fixed notion about Prophet Jesus Crucifixion Theory. In his lectures he hardly gave the Islamic viewpoint or seldom the Christian viewpoint, thus confusing his audience. I believe he likes to make the Qadiyanis of this country very happy by mostly giving their viewpoint that Jesus after being put on the cross, swooned. Now why should Mr. Deedat tell his audience that Jesus

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> was put on the cross and he swooned because nowhere the Qur'an speaks that Jesus was put on the cross and he swooned.[72]

Then, John Gilchrist added: "Mohammed Bana has rightly endorsed our complaint that the crucifixion booklets published by Mr. Deedat are contrary to the teaching of both the Bible and the Qur'an and should be rejected by Christians and Muslims alike".

Because of many statement of Deedat that confused the audiences, Some of Muslim Scholars claimed that Deedat was *kafir*.

[72] Allegations confirmed of Muhammed Bana, copied by John Gilchrist in his article as an attack of Ahmed Deedat ambiguous statement.

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