



you?
Crusade is the wrong word. Calling or invitation is more correct. Islam is a challenge to the Jews as well as the Christians. Islam claims to correct, complete and supersede Christianity. As such, we are supposed to deliver the invitation. This is what Allah commands us in the Holy Qur'an. He says, "Say, O people of the book, come". We are asked to invite people to the way of Islam so that they may enjoy the fullness of the messages of Moses and Jesus.

Your polemics against the incoherence of Christianity have made you a household name in the Islamic world. But for many you are simply an entertainer with no constructive role to play in the advancement of the ummah. Do you think this criticism is fair?

If it was fair, I wouldn't be a household name. People can see through men. Either you are putting on an act or you are educating people. And for me people are getting educated. People are hungry for this specialised knowledge; the ability to talk to the non-Muslim from his own background and experience. This is something that is unique to the Muslim world. My critics don't have anything to offer in preference to this. No doubt, there's something natural about me that whenever I speak, no matter how serious the topic, people are being entertained. They enjoy everything that I'm telling them. To me this is a great advantage because I know the message is hitting home.

Although satellite television has

around which you can find a parking space. Ditto in Ramadan. And all this without music or willing to dance naked. We have a stupendous advantage Allah has given us in Islam so that it is by its own merits able to attract people.

Although many Muslims in your country were leading members of the anti-apartheid movement, many others of Asian extraction have been accused of oppressing black people in order to safeguard their own superiority in the colour scale. Has this had a negative impact on da'wa activities in South Africa?

It is wrong to blame simply the Asiatics. In the battle to free South Africa from apartheid, Muslims have been at the forefront. Nobody ever hears that Muslims who are less than two percent of the South African population have made more than twenty percent of the sacrifices. Nobody hears about Imam Abdullah Haroon who died in prison; Ahmed Timol died in prison; Ahmed Hafeji died in prison. Imprisoned on Robin Island with Nelson Mandela for twenty-seven years was another Muslim called Ahmed Katrada but nobody hears his name. As a result of the sacrifices Muslims have made in the struggle, we are now seeing the fruits. Muslims form ten percent of the total number of ministers in the new government. The minister of Justice is a Muslim, as is the second in command in the Foreign Ministry. Even among the Asiatics Muslims are a minority, but thanks to our attitudes and justice we are a large part of the government.

How receptive are the

example Saudi Arabia, I am introduced to a young man with the statement, "This is the Deedat of Jeddah." I go to Riyadh, there are two princes -twins in fact- and both are referred to as the Deedats

world, London, Birmingham. I live day to day. Every day is an opportunity for me to deliver the message Allah has given me. I'm out to share and I believe that the old soldier dies with his boots on.



Man Of Many Talents

Born in the Surat district of India in 1918, Ahmed Hoosen Deedat has no recollection of his father until 1926. His father, a tailor by profession, had emigrated to South Africa shortly after this birth.

With no formal education and fighting off extreme pangs of poverty, he went to South Africa in 1927 to be with his father. His farewell to his mother in 1927 was the last time he saw her alive for she passed away a few months later.

In a foreign land, a boy of nine with no formal schooling and command of the English language began preparing for the role he was to play decades later without realising it.

Applying himself with diligence to his studies, the little boy not only was not only able to overcome the language barrier but excelled at school. His avid passion for reading helped him gain promotions until he completed primary school with flying colours. Lack of finance, however, interrupted his schooling and at the early age of about 16, he took on the first of many jobs in retailing.

The most significant of these was in 1936 where he worked at

a Muslim-owned store near a Christian seminary on the Natal South Coast. The incessant insults of the trainee missionaries hurled against Islam during their brief visits to the shop infused a stubborn flame of desire within the young man to counteract what he saw as false propaganda.

As fate would have it, by pure chance Ahmed Deedat discovered a book entitled *Ishar-ul-Haq*, (Truth Revealed). This book recorded the techniques and enormous success of the efforts of Muslims in India in turning the tables against Christian missionary harassment during the British subjugation and rule of India. In particular the idea of holding debates had a profound effect on Ahmed Deedat.

Fired by his new found zeal, Ahmed Deedat purchased his first Bible and began holding debates and discussions with trainee missionaries. When they beat a hasty retreat in the face of his incisive counter arguments, he personally called on their teachers and even priests in the surrounding areas.

These success spurred Ahmed Deedat in the direction of da'wah. Not even his marriage, birth of children and a 3 year sojourn to Pakistan after its independence

dampened his enthusiasm or dulled his desire to defend Islam from the deceitful distortions of the Christian missionaries.

During the last three decades he has immersed himself in a host of activities including giving classes on Bible studies and a series of lectures. He established the As-Salaam, an institute to train propagators of Islam. Together with his family, he erected the institute's buildings including the masjid which is still a landmark today.

He was a founder member of the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI) and became its President, a position he still holds today. He has published over 20 books and distributed millions of copies free of charge. He has also delivered thousands of lectures all over the world and successfully engaged Christian evangelists in public debates. Several thousand people have come into the fold of Islam as a result of these efforts.

In a fitting attribute to this monumental achievement, he was awarded the King Faisal International award in 1986

● Ebi Lockhat
Durban, South Africa