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Remembering the “author” of the concept paper of IIUM

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By Thameem Ushama

The Muslim world is heartbroken by the demise of Emeritus Professor Tan Sri Dr Mohamed Kamal Hassan, a remarkable and distinguished writer, author, thinker, scholar, and intellectual of the 21st-century Malay world.

Kamal Hassan wrote the International Islamic University Malaysia concept paper. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, the former

Malaysian prime minister, on the other hand was the driving force behind its establishment in 1983.

Kamal Hassan came up with the concept for the IIUM while writing the concept paper for the University. All professional and humanistic sciences were blended with Islamic values under this methodology. This idea eliminated the division between secular and religious sciences.

He served the University in various capacities from 1983 to 2017 as Shaikh al-Kulliyah, Dean, Deputy Rector and third Rector. His demise causes a significant loss to the entire Muslim community and Malaysia.

Since joining the University in 1983, Kamal Hassan had been devoting his entire career to ensure its expansion, viability, and sustainability. Along with academic achievements, he also cared about the growth of students’ personalities, characters, and conduct, enabling them to become excellent and trustworthy leaders.

His writings and lectures demonstrate that he was legitimately interested in producing graduates well-versed in the fundamentals of Islam and with strong moral character, intellectual soundness, integrity, competence, good governance and spiritual abundance.

As a thinker concerned about students’ holistic and comprehensive excellence, Kamal Hassan developed Weekly Halaqah (non-formal educational circle) and semesterly Ibadah Camps, among other non-formal educational programmes that supplemented the academic study at the University.

Kamal Hassan debated the concept of the integration of Knowledge for years before embracing the Islamisation of human Knowledge or Islamicization of Knowledge. He explained the term “Islamicization of Knowledge” and its application and advocated operationalising its process.

Kamal Hassan wished to develop holistic human beings to cite his term, *al-insan al-kamil* (literally, perfect human being), including the moral and spiritual quality of the students, the intellectual growth of academic staff, and faculty and student well-being.

Kamal Hassan was non-partisan, maintained a consultative spirit, used friendliness and cordiality, analysed deviant Islamic religious movements, examined the implications of secular ideologies, and reminded students about the dangers of postmodernism and liberal culture.

Kamal Hassan had actualised several fundamental values and wished the University to apply them. He observed quality, cordiality, honesty, integrity, humility, punctuality, authenticity, ethicality, spirituality, and religiosity. His talks were filled with the call to all IIUM academic and administrative staff and students to apply these principles and values.

Readers, educators, and scholars applauded his comprehension of the integration of Knowledge and the clarity with which he presented these ideas.

Kamal Hassan coined “Relevantisation” for Islamic disciplines, thought, and prior interpretations of Islamic issues, edicts, and other statements, interpretations, reflections, and judgements produced at various times.

He argued that the “Relevantization” strategy would help avoid blindly following the traditions or patterns without seeing their relevance to the contemporary context, clear the way for proper interpretation, and show how classic Islamic philosophy and ideas are still valuable today.

In order to prevent misunderstandings and move forward with relevant interpretation in contemporary Islamic discourses, he claimed that “Relevantization” would help form a new understanding of Islamic thought, addressing various concerns affecting the Muslim community and humankind.

Kamal Hassan’s core value has been the “purification of the self or soul” of all academics, administrators, and students, and he claimed that each student at the International Islamic University must follow this procedure, including academics, administrators, technical staff, support workers, and others.

Kamal Hassan urged that academics value trust and integrity, practise work ethics, and develop a culture of student assistance. He called on the University community to maintain unity, develop the *ummatic* spirit and fraternity, adopt the method of

moderation, be on time for meetings and lectures, and cultivate a culture of positive thinking and perform congregational prayers.

Hence, Kamal Hassan became a godfather and a role model for many.

Kamal Hassan developed the University’s vision and mission. The mission of the IIUM has been briefly written as, Integration, Islamization, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence.

In the IIUM anthem that he composed, he emphasised the fundamental values that the University should uphold: *Iqra’*, *Amanah*, *Khalifah*, and *Rahmatan Li’l Alamin*.

According to Kamal Hassan, the IIUM aims to become a leading international centre of educational excellence which revitalises the intellectual dynamism of Islam and the *Ummah*, integrates Islamic Revealed Knowledge and values in all academic disciplines and educational activities, seeks to restore a leading and progressive role of the Muslim *Ummah* in all branches of Knowledge, thereby contributing to the improvement and upgrading of the qualities of human life and civilisation.

Kamal Hassan focussed on brotherhood, human interactions, and developing moral, intellectual, spiritual, and leadership abilities.

He aimed to put students on a course of moral excellence and provide them with the tools necessary to achieve and maintain spiritual greatness as role models throughout their professional lives.

Kamal Hassan advised students to think deeply. He encouraged audiences by focusing on the purification of the soul and instructed students that whoever purifies his soul will succeed, and whoever has a corrupt soul will fail.

Tazkiyyat al-qalb wa al-nafs (purification of heart and soul) was Kamal Hassan’s favourite Arabic phrase. He encouraged everyone—staff, students, and parents—to study the Qur’an to sharpen their *taqwa* (God-Consciousness), and he believed that maintaining a stable, constant connection with the Qur’an was the only way to achieve purification.

Kamal Hassan asserted the requirement to cultivate a holistic Islamic personality (*Shakhsiyyah Islamiyyah*).

Kamal Hassan had a thorough understanding of the Islamic worldview. He was a thinker with clarity. He spoke against erroneous doctrines while acknowledging true Sufism and was eager to stop Shiism’s covert development in Malaysia.

Drawing attention to Shiism, Kamal Hassan emphasised the doctrinal distinctions between Sunnis and Shias. He was concerned about students drawn to schools that misrepresented Sufism and did everything to clear up misunderstandings among those who adhered to unconventional methods of Sufism.

Kamal Hassan was not affiliated with any political groups. Nevertheless, all groups respected him as a non-partisan academic because of his political analysis with impartiality, neutrality, honesty, and integrity.

The ruling class and the opposition treated him highly for his candid political opinions, particularly his concerns about dishonest and corrupt politicians. He was concerned about Muslim divisiveness, which led to the emergence of several political parties.

He wished to see IIUM graduates excelling in good governance in conformity with Islamic ethical qualities. He envisioned seeing Muslim leaders who were free from corruption and hypocrisy. He hoped that all parties worldwide would apply Islamic principles and that students would be sufficiently warned against Machiavellian strategies.

Kamal Hassan argued that University students should not engage in active politics during their studies, for it would stoke discord in the institution. He reminded students to become politically aware of events in Malaysia and other Muslim countries and keep a distance until they have the education and experience to handle these and other issues.

Kamal Hassan hoped that IIUM students, upon graduation, would practise ethical politics rather than imitate their immoral forebears who had little regard for the needs of the general populace.

Indeed, he provided insights into many other issues his successors would promote and improve, assisting the *Ummah* and humanity.

May God accept his endeavours and reward him for all he has done for the University, nation, *Ummah* and humanity.***

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