

In Memory of



**Dr. Abdul Hamid
Abu Sulayman**
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TALK BY
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IN MEMORY OF DR ABDULHAMID

It is at the midst of the historic occasion and landmarks of the International Islamic University Malaysia [IIUM] and the renaming of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences [KIRKHS] we remember Dr AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman, the second rector of IIUM. He was an excellent student, close friend, and colleague of Prof Dr. Ismail Raji al Faruqi. It is important to note that the Kulliyah of IRKHS is now renamed after one of the pioneers of the movement of Islamization of Knowledge [IOK]. This concept of IOK and movement was conceived, constructed and popularized throughout the world within a short span of time by both Dr. Ismail Raji al Faruqi and Dr AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman.

Dr. AbdulHamid who envisioned a new and remarkable future of IIUM laid the foundations of various Kulliyahs specially the Kulliyah of IRKHS which now would be called as AHKIRKHS. He joined IIUM as rector in 1988 and constructed within ten years a new, huge, beautiful and a meaningful campus in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. The uniqueness of this campus is that the mosque is in the center of the campus surrounded by library and Kulliyahs. He left a remarkable history behind it.

Hope of Young Generation

His involvement and experience prior to his appointment as rector with youths and their organizations allowed him to unleash his creative and productive ideas at IIUM. He turned IIUM into an educational center of spiritual, moral, intellectual and academic excellence with special focus on the production of comprehensive, holistic, balanced and moderate graduate personalities. Soon he became at the campus the hope of young generation as he attracted through the developmental process of the University and admitted thousands of students from inside and outside of the country. He had

ability and contacts with philanthropists to pull out funds to help needy but talented students. His tremendous contributions to IIUM would always be remembered.

No doubt his vision, dedication, commitment, critical insight and creative abilities were unique and allowed him to come up with the formation of biggest Kulliyah of the University, KIRKHS, with 13 departments. The establishment of KIRKHS is neither the result of any improvement nor imitation of existing faculties of modern and traditional universities. It reflects his individual as well as collective spirit and creativity of the academics of IIUM. Dr AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman spent many of his evenings, nights and Sundays before the expansion of the University and establishment of KIRKHS for consultation and persuasion. He did not impose any of his ideas on IIUM rather motivated people to perceive and accept the idea of IOK as the urgent and important need of Muslim youths around the world. He convinced, through dialogue and discussion, to the then existing authority and academic staff about the need for the implementation of the concept and theory of Islamization of knowledge in IIUM. Administrative and academic staff in IIUM joined him willingly, consciously and participated practically in his scheme of expansion, establishment of new kulliyahs and implementation of IOK in the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methodology and development of the departments. As a result of this, within ten years of time, IIUM had become the attraction of the world as an educational center of comprehensive and holistic excellence.

Dr AbdulHamid consistently went above and beyond for his goals in IIUM for example, he was successful attracting many experts of various disciplines to join the IIUM. He gathered from all over the world the galaxy of Islamic scholars, professors and academics like Dr Anis Ahmad and Dr Malik Badri etc. As a strong proponent of IOK, Dr AbdulHamid stood like a mountain for the spiritual and academic excellence for the revival of Islamic civilization across the world

through the creation of new Islamic thought for the overall development of Ummah vis a vis humanity. He was fully aware of the reality: how history is created and how revolution is introduced. So, he was thinking, developing and implementing his ideas in IIUM through consultation and persuasion. IOK for him was not merely an academic or professional activity but rather a mission which he realized as the result of his spiritual, epistemological, methodological and missiological consciousness. As I observed him, IOK for him, was not only an issue of the production of the Islamized textbooks but an epistemological and methodological concern of Islamic thought. This was the reason that he suggested the establishment of a new Kulliyah, IRKHS, integrating the faculties of Islamic or *Shariah* studies and human sciences into one single Kulliyah of IRKHS in which, from both epistemological and methodological point of view, Islamic revealed knowledge occupied the highest as well as the foundational place. It was Dr AbdulHamid who visualized that in this Kulliyah academics not only would teach but create and develop the Islamic thought necessary for the development of the Ummah in time space context.

Dr Ismail Faruqi and Dr AbdulHamid both had earlier contended, at the level of theory, that the main problem of the Muslim Ummah lies in dual system of education prevailed in the Muslim world. After joining IIUM as its rector, he realized that the issue of integration of two educational systems, modern secular and traditional religious, had been resolved in the form of the establishment of IIUM as the symbol of integration of two educational systems into one. The biggest challenge, therefore, for him was not only the challenge of expansion of the University but the production of new Islamic thought. This was the real test for him: how theory of IOK can be transformed into practice for the purpose of creating new Islamic thought. Syed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas and Ismail Faruqi had already asserted that as the first step towards the practice and

implementation of IOK, the Islamization of self is required. Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman was fully aware of this fact. He also realizes that neither all the academic staff of the University nor the required reading materials were capable to equip students in classrooms with Islamic understanding of life, society and the world. To overcome this dimension, Dr AbdulHamid suggested a different mechanism and strategy. What was the significant and effective strategy of Dr AbdulHamid in IIUM at that time of history? Dr AbdulHamid demonstrating his futuristic vision carefully diagnosed at both theoretical and practical level the above-mentioned aspect and suggested practical and result oriented-measures and implemented them:

Islamic Orientation Program [IOP]

At the very outset along with the expansion of the University to help the academics and students he suggested after consultation the need of IOP. The attendance in IOP program was made compulsories for all academic staff. At least once a year outside campus a three to four days workshop was held for this purpose in which a sort of moral training and Islamic understanding was shared on various aspects of the Islamic worldview, Islamic morals and teachers' students' relations. It helped teachers to teach effectively from the perspective of IOK.

Diploma for IRK and HS Academics

It was also suggested that to motivate and strengthen academic staff in terms of Islamic vision and its worldview a diploma in IRK and human sciences should be introduced. Academic staff of IRK and of human sciences who studied either in modern Western system of education or traditional religious education must take Diploma in human sciences or in Islamic Revealed knowledge disciplines respectively. For this purpose, a diploma program was designed by the Kulliyah of IRKHS to meet necessary needs of academics. Human

science academics were required to take diploma in IRK and IRK academics in human sciences. It was hoped the academic staff equipped by this training would be comparatively in a better position to teach their courses in classrooms from the perspective of IOK. The main concern was to study everything from a critical, analytical and comparative point of view making the Islamic revealed knowledge as the criterion of analysis and criticism leading to creativity.

Concept of Minor and Major

With the same spirit of helping academics and students to provide effective teaching it was recommended that the students who major in human sciences must take as minor some courses in IRK discipline so that they know the basics of Islamic Revealed Knowledge disciplines especially their methodologies. In the same way IRK students who major in IRK disciplines were persuaded to take minor courses in any one human science discipline so that they learn the methodology and some basics of human science disciplines. The knowledge of human sciences for IRK students and the knowledge of IRK disciplines for human sciences students was considered as necessary to equip them to be capable to deal with the contemporary challenges and issues.

Program of Double Degree

Dr AbdulHamid also suggested for making students dynamic and relevant to contemporary societies to pursue double degree program. For this purpose, the arrangements of double degree programs were developed. It was argued the students who will take double degree would be in a better position on one side to serve the community and nation in a more viable way and on the other to acquire worthwhile positions in the job markets. This idea of double degree was introduced, and incentives were provided to achieve one of the goals of IOK i.e., knowledge of both IRK and human sciences not one sided as happens with modern secular graduates or religious science graduates.

Emphasis on Interdisciplinary Approach

From the very first day after the establishment of KIRKHS the interdisciplinary approach for teaching and research was emphasized. At the level of Kulliyah of IRKHS under the guidance of Dean, a platform for Interdisciplinary Seminars was provided. I was appointed as the Director of this seminar. I organized several interdisciplinary seminars for several years in which academics from different specialization presented their research-based papers followed by two discussants selected from other disciples from various Kulliyas. Dr AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman himself participated in these seminars without any prior notice. This showed his interest in interdisciplinary approach, the University was emphasizing and encouraging.

Establishment of Research Center

It was Dr AbdulHamid who took initiative to motivate academics for interdisciplinary research. For this purpose, a full-fledged research center at the level of the University was established. For interdisciplinary research the guidance and funds were provided by research center. All proposals for research submitted by the academics were finally approved by the rector himself. I realized this arrangement was adopted to motivate academics for research. This experience was appreciated by academics.

Critical and Creative Thinking

From the very beginning Dr AbdulHamid emphasized the critical and creative thinking in both teaching and research. He believed the imitative tradition of Muslim scholars in general caused damage to the scholarship of Muslims. He, on one side, himself criticizes many aspects of Muslim scholarship and on the other encourages creative thinking. This tradition of critical approach and creativity demonstrate even today the unique aspect of IIUM as traditional Islamic universities were subject to stagnation in thought and action.

Dr AbdulHamid left several good traditions for which he would be always remembered in the history of International Islamic University Malaysia especially by the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human sciences after being renamed in his name as a symbol of recognition of his valuable contributions.