

Dr. Muhammad al-Ghazali, Professor, IRI

Islamic Research Institute A Forgotten Monument

The Islamic Research Institute (IRI) is celebrating its 52nd anniversary on 10th March 2012, which marks the historic day of its founding in Karachi in 1960. Please find following article for publication. Thanks

By: Dr. Muhammad al-Ghazali, Professor, IRI

The founders of Pakistan were alive to the need of reconstructing the society on the basis of Islamic ideals and requirements of the new ethos. Allama Iqbal, the author of the idea of an independent Muslim state in the sub-continent left no opportunity to stress this need. In fact, he could be credited with conceiving and constructing an Islamic Research Institute in the last years of his life. He had entrusted its management to Khwaja Abdul-Waheed. The latter did initiate work on the project, though he was soon overtaken by the rapid changes on the political scene. After the creation of Pakistan, Allama Muhammad Asad, the famous Austrian Muslim scholar turned Pakistani, was entrusted with a similar task, albeit with a different name. He also issued under his supervision a journal called '*Arafat*' to advance the same objective of 'reconstructing the Pakistani society on a truly Islamic basis' (a phrase repeatedly used in the constitutional documents of this country).

It was, therefore, quite natural and befitting that the Constitution of 1956 provided for the creation of an Institute for this purpose. With this background, Central Institute of Islamic Research saw the light of day in March 1960 pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Parliament to this effect. There were to be two more similar institutes in the Eastern and Western provincial capitals: Dacca and Lahore. Hence the adjective 'central' with the main organization set up by the central government in the metropolis. Afterwards, the name chosen by Allama Iqbal i.e. 'Islamic Research Institute' was given to this Institute.

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The first founder-director of the Institute happened to be no less a person than the world-renowned scholar of Arabic literature namely Mawlana Abd al-'Aziz Memon (father of the famous Pakistani American scholar Umar Memon). He laid the foundation of this Institute with great zeal and spirit with the help of his colleagues. A party of scholars went to Cairo and Beirut to collect books for the library, that was going to be the mainstay of the Islamic Research Institute. Soon after that a man of encyclopaedic knowledge became available to the Institute to supervise the building up of a high class resource centre for Islamic Studies. He was the famous scholar Mawlana Abdul-Quddus Hashimi, a student of Mawlana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, author of *Sirat al-Nabī*.

The Institute received great boost with the leadership of some luminaries of our country who headed it in its early phases. It had men like Dr. Ishtiaq Husain Quraishi and Dr. Fazlur-Rehman as its directors in the sixties. It was in the tenure of these world-class scholars that the Institute became known world-wide as the premier seat of Islamic scholarship. With the shifting of the capital the Institute was also transferred to Islamabad in 1967.

In its 52 years of existence IRI has published hundreds of well-researched books on various aspects of Islamic thought and culture in three languages; Arabic, Urdu and English. These publications earned recognition in the academic circles of the world. IRI also issues regularly three refereed quarterly research journals in Urdu, Arabic and English respectively. These periodicals are well-received in the contemporary academia. Scores of well-reputed universities of the world recognize the English and Arabic Journals of IRI for promoting faculty members on the basis of their publications in them.

The Islamic University, now in 32nd year of its existence was conceived and planned in the Institute. Its first faculty members were also drawn from amongst its scholars. In the initial years of its life – the stage of a sibling – the University was fed and fostered by the Institute and its resources remained available to it. Its library served both the students and the faculty. Later, the University authorities decided to merge IRI as its own constituent unit declaring it as its research arm.

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A number of outstanding scholars from Pakistan and abroad have been associated with the academic life of this once vibrant dynamic nerve-centre of Islamic Research. These include men like Prof. Mazharuddin Siddiqi, Dr. Ahmad Hasan, Dr. Ismail Faruqi, Shaykh ^ʿaw^ʿ ‘Ali Shalan and Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi to name a few. The latter two scholars jointly translated selections from Allama Iqbal’s poetry into versified Arabic. This was way back in 1968. And this monumental work was accomplished under the umbrella of IRI.

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