

IQBAL DAY SYMPOSIUM IN COPENHAGEN 10 NOVEMBER 2007



From left to right H:E. The Ambassador of Bosnia Mr. Said Maslo, H:E: the Ambassador of Pakistan Ms. Fauzia Abbas Mufti, Mustansir Mir and Ghulam Sabir

The Iqbal Academy Scandinavia held an international symposium on the eve of Iqbal Day at Taastrup in the greater Copenhagen on 10th. of November, 2007. The theme was “**Actuality of religious thought in a modern multi-cultural society**”. It was a mixed gathering consisting of persons from different countries, belonging to different schools of thought, with various cultures and different religions. Among the speakers there were three Pakistani, one American, two from Bosnia, four Danish (Christian) and one Danish Muslim. The session was presided over by Professor Mustansir Mir, the Director Islamic Studies at the Department of Philosophy and Religious studies; Youngstown University, Ohio, USA. Our functions organiser Abid Ali Abid welcomed the guests and handed over the stage to Miss Sadia, a learned Muslim girl who travelled from London to attend the symposium. Programme started with a recitation of Qur’anic verses by Muhammad Kamil followed by translation in Danish by Ellen Wulff, who has recently translated Qur’an from Arabic directly to Danish language. A brief of the speeches of the participants in the symposium is given below:

Hadi Khan, General Secretary Iqbal Academy Scandinavia was the first speaker. His speech was brief as he wanted to leave maximum possible time to the guest speakers. After arriving on the mike he was so impressed by the presence of a number of top ranking persons coming to participate in the speeches and high number of audience that he remarked: “A dream has come true, and it was important for us to celebrate”. He said that this shows not only Eastern or Western values but is an example of human values, for which Iqbal Academy Scandinavia is struggling. A young student from Bosnia named Safet Bektovic, who has done his Ph.D. in Søren Kierkegaard, spoke of living in a multi-cultural society. He threw light on the importance of creating a sense of belonging to one society rather than defining ourselves by different religious groups. His speech was literary and carried full demonstration of the idea behind the event of the day.



Ellen Wulff (*photo to the left*) spoke of her work of translating Qur’an directly from Arabic to Danish language. She worked hard and determinedly on this project for three years to complete translation. She said that at first she had to devote herself in learning Arabic and knowing about the Muslim culture. She said that she had tried her best to do justice in her translation of Qur’an keeping in view the ancient, eternal words, unaffected by later centuries’ Muslim theology and philosophy. She recited various verses from her Danish translated Qur’an and conveyed message from God. She was highly applauded by the audience when she declared that she intended to translate Hadith also in Danish language. Pia Hartvig Jacobsen, a well known figure in Danish society, TV and media,

spoke of her own harmonious upbringing in a multicultural society. She highlighted practical difficulties in Denmark for different cultures to integrate particularly for the young people. Miss Sadia, who was performing as a host of the session, managed to handle the stage tactfully keeping the house lively all the time. Before the refreshment break she presented a short piece of drama from '*An Ideal Husband*' by Oscar Wilde.

After the break second session started. Abdul Wahid Pedersen, a well known religious person, Imam and a prominent relief worker from Copenhagen, spoke of the importance of Muslims to celebrate their origin whether it is from the West or from the East, and to celebrate the light and beauty of Islam. Dr. Erik Skovbjerg, a literary person and a well known psychiatrist of Copenhagen, spoke of psychotherapy and the different approaches and techniques that need to be used to treat people from different ethnic backgrounds, with the aim of global integration. Tahir Mahmood spoke about the poet and philosopher Iqbal. He also praised the efforts of the people organising the function. Ghulam Sabir, the founder and chairman Iqbal Academy Scandinavia, in his address tried to trace the existence of religion in a multicultural society. During his speech he recited a couple of Iqbal's verses and explained them in English. He quoted Iqbal on 'religion' in these words: "Religion in its more advanced form moves from individual to society. ... The essence of religion is faith, and faith, like the bird, sees its 'trackless way' unattended by intellect which only waylays the living heart of man and robs it of the invisible wealth of life that lies within". Anne Risager Sabir spoke of her philosophy on life and religion. She impressed upon the importance of people to raise their consciousness to love. She said that we must feel the responsibility in dealing with our fellow human beings and use the immense power given in our minds. Our main speaker of the day was Professor Mustansir Mir, who came from America to participate in Iqbal Day symposium. Winding up the session he felt that in the foregoing speeches there was not enough talk about Iqbal. Therefore he covered the theme of the day by speaking elaborately on Iqbal. The audience, mostly from Pakistan origin, took great interest and enjoyed his beautiful speech tremendously. He spoke on Iqbal being a poet of tomorrow and a poet of today said that Iqbal is a poet of today and a poet of today: he translated Iqbal's own verses to demonstrate these points and also eloquently depicted the dialogue between God and Man; at one place, as said by him, Iqbal addresses God (as 'Man'): "You created night, I made lamp; you created earth I made goblet out of it, you created mountains, pastures and jungles, I made beautiful flower gardens and a paradise of this barren earth. I am who made mirror out of stone and I am who made life saving drink out of poison."

The two guest Ambassadors were the last to address. Her Excellency the Ambassador of Pakistan Ms. Fauzia Abbas Mufti. She spoke on the importance of Danish Muslims to ensure that Islam is a daily part of their lives, and to use Iqbal as a source of inspiration to us all. She appreciated the great job performed by the founder and the team of Iqbal Academy Scandinavia. His Excellency the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr. Said Maslo also praised the devotion and valuable work naming the persons behind it. He spoke of his own country's struggle to reconcile cultural differences and hostility, and their work towards a harmonious community. He demonstrated that they are now reaching a successful end to these struggles, and can hopefully be a model for the rest of the world. After that Abid Ali Abid thanked all the guests for their participation and making the symposium a real success.

IQBAL ACADEMY SCANDINAVIA
<http://www.allamaiqbal.com/ias/>