

**The Speech of Prof. Mahmood Mohammad Shakir at the ceremony of
conferring the King Faisal International Prize
1404H. - 1984**

Praise be to God, the creator of Heaven and Earth, He who bestow His graces onto the headful who praise Him and are grateful. Praise be to God who had chosen, of all His believers, the illiterate Prophet to be his Messenger to the world; He to whom the Quran was revealed in eloquent Arabic and to whom it is a guide as well as to his people, forever. Praise be to God alone, Peace and Blessings be Upon His Messenger and upon all Prophets and conveyors of God's Message.

I have never felt so thrilled and tongue-tied as I feel now before this venerable assembly that is characterized by the presence of His Majesty the King and the notable learned men. I can never express my deep feelings and thoughts, while I am so exposed to multitudes of contradictions and restrained by awe that leads to fear and pity; I am stimulated by an ecstasy that incites boldness; will there be yet stanger boldness than to stand, here, before you! Will there be more amazing boldness than to stand here and address you! Will there be greater audacity than to venture the border of fear, awe and pity, and stand before you, to express my thanks and gratitude I am indebted for the favours extended to me.

And, notwithstanding the awe and fear that captivate me and bound my tongue, or certain feeling of happiness, ecstasy and bliss overwhelm me on the opportunity of being favoured by God, with so dear and rare occasion, learning of the founding of the King Faisal International Prize in the year 1399 H., just before the fourteenth century of the Hijra concluded. I had visioned the forthcoming years of following Fifteenth century; I had visioned an Arab Islamic World shaking off itself and wiping off its face, a long slumber. Then I had visioned a world of celebrated scientists, men of letters, poets and intellectuals; I had also visioned that no sooner had "The King Faisal International Prize" been announced than mortals, whether they be young or old, cited this prize with praise as well as they cited, with the some praise, Faisal who could, on the 10th of Ramadhan, unmask and disclose a world that nearly weakened us to strengthen itself, while offering us, in return, what made us envious of each other. However, when the mask was dropped, the infamy of that world was stripped off and it became crystal-clear to every beholder, that it was deceiving us with its hypocrisy, to weaken us and rob us of our own potentials; and was arrogantly counterfeiting all facts as well as dazzling our eyes with its cunning and crooked ways, to blind us to its ugly deception and arrogance.

In my dream, I had also visioned the generation of the Fifteenth Century Hijrite, citing Faisal as, no doubt, was the man of the bygone century; whenever they cited the Prize which was named after him, one would discern in the faces of people, a happy and joyful sense of intimate 'belonging' to a welcoming Arab Islamic World no to an alien world. I had visioned the generation of the Fifteenth Century saying: "That world is theirs, not ours." What a venerable vision I had experienced and wonderful world it would have been; nothing is inaccessible, if God will.

Now that we are in the beginning of the Fifteenth Century, it would sadden me and disturb my happiness if my dreams would not come true. However, I believe that what is decreed will be achieved, if God Will and guide His true believers and if they, too, fulfill their pledge to Him, in world and deed, and if they were not dispersed by dissensions. We seek His refuge and mercy.

This was a vision, I had seen, of a placid but concealed world behind the veils of the unknown; this was my vision that I had told, in brief. Nothing remains to be said, save that I cannot bear parting you at this venerable assembly without telling you my rather perplexing story.

I have received, from the General Secretariat of the Prize, its congratulations on

winning the prize for the current year, for my book, "Al Mtanabbi" which I published in 1976 A.D., and which is the only one I have ever written. And no sooner had I read the decision of the General Secretariat than I was stunned by the fact that the prize meant someone else, who bears the same name as mine and whose book bears the same title as my book's; but his was published in 1936 A.D., that is forty-years ago. Moreover, I was certain that the author of that book had long passed away and his book was long forgotten. So, I figured, if the decision of the General Secretariat meant the author who bore my name and who had long passed away, then it suffices me the honour to be congratulated, on winning the prize, to be invited to Riyadh and to be present in this assembly; but I most feared that the old author should be resurrected from his grave, carrying his book under his arm, and claim his rights to the prize, from the General Secretariat. But this is no concern of mine; it is the General Secretariat's to decide, at its free will. As for me, no one will ever be able to rob me of the appreciation I deserved and of the pleasure I have, upon receiving the invitation for my awarding the prize, publicly, for this year. And moreover, it suffices me the honour to have my book well-received by His Majesty King Fahad Ibn Abdul Aziz. This gesture of His Majesty is, indeed, an honour in itself, accredited to me as well as to my book.

To conclude, I can now express my deep gratitude and thanks, for whoever neglects thanking people neglects praising God.

Peace, Mercy and Blessings be upon you.

Mahmood Mohammad Shakir