

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

Speech delivered by

**DR. MAHMUD YUSSIF ALI MAKKI**

Winner of the King Faisal International Prize  
for Arabic Language & Literature (1988-1408H)

Your Royal Highness Prince Naif bin Abd Al-Aziz,  
Your Highnesses, the Princes  
Your Eminences, the Ulema  
Eminent Assembly

Praise be to God, who favoured us with His unequalled grace and blessings, and may Peace and Blessings be upon our Prophet, His Messenger, and may His blessings be extended to His Kinships and Companions, and to all guided by his guidance and followed his righteous path.

I am, but, unable to express my feelings while I am present on this holy and chaste land, which the Almighty had blessed as He blessed this eminent assembly which is honoured by the presence of HRH Prince Nayif, representative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; I find myself overwhelmed in the presence of such eminent elite of the Ulema' of our nation which is blessed and favoured by choosing it to be the most chosen among nations and favoured it with His revealed Book in eloquent Arabic. I am incapable of expressing these feelings which are, partly feelings of awe and extreme happiness to be one of this assembly and to be honoured in winning the prize; it is an honour which I pray that I may be worthy of it.

The initiation of King Faisal International prize in 1397H, was a great event, both culturally and scientifically, which deserves to be recorded with characters of light, for it was an event which witnessed that, after our Arab and Islamic Nation had survived fourteen centuries of its march in history, its present is still linked and adhered to its past and that we are at the starting point of a new renaissance from which we seek our true originality in our glorious heritage. Ever since this Land was illuminated by the light of Islam, knowledge was the first issue, we were ordered with, by God; the first verse revealed to our Prophet, God Bless Him and grant Him salvation, was: "Proclaim! (or Read) in the Name of thy Lord and Cherisher who Created. Created man, out of a (mere)

clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy lord is Most Bountiful. He who taught (The use of) the pen, taught man that which he knew not”, and in a holy Hadith related to our Prophet, God Bless Him and grant Him salvation, “Pursuit of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim” yet, in another holy Hadith, I quote “Whoever follows a path seeking knowledge, God would pave him the path to Paradise”.

Along these sublime principles procured from the book of Allah and the Sunna of His prophet, our great predecessors had lived and applied; thus, our Nation had become a community which believes that knowledge is the path of righteousness in this world as well as in the hereafter, and hence could achieve wonders in all fields which could never be achieved, otherwise, by any other nation before. Perhaps, it is best to cite Andalus, as an example of a nation, which transferred, thanks to Islam, to educated community, in every sense of the word. In fact, Al-Andalus was never conquered by force and arms, as much as, it was by way of the teachings and principles of Islam. These lands were conquered, at the beginning, by soldiers after only seven decades of death of the Prophet – God Bless Him and grant Him salvation – they were few thousand soldiers only and yet, no sooner, they conquered these lands, then we see a people that received Islam and the Arab civilization, all heartedly, as if these people were reborn anew: ambitious to attain knowledge to be scientifically conscious. Soon, that Andalusian civilization had astonished neighbouring peoples of Europe which were drowned in the depth of ignorance and darkness; we read of those seeking knowledge who had frequented the metropolitans of Andalus to learn at the hands of Muslim scientists, and translate texts into their own languages; we have seen how on these translations relied and stood the European Renaissance which prevailed. Not only in Europe, but also in America later, we witness today of scientific progress, despite its lacking of spiritual principles and moral values on which Islamic civilization was based.

Fortunately, I have spent long years of my life in pursuing Andalusian studies and it gives me great pleasure to see that the Prize has been appreciated this year, for these studies, and it is Dr. Sharifa’s honour, as well as mine to be conferred with this great prize; it is not only an honour, but also an indication that this esteemed institution, in its jealousy over Arab Islamic heritage, has not neglected the Andalusian legacy which was almost lost in the course of ignorance and fanaticism; however, it is restoring today, to stand upright in front of jus, with all its awe, glory and esteem. Again, it is my pleasure to express my deep gratitude to the prize, its corpus and committees of nomination which conferred it upon me. This great honour which is reminiscent of His Majesty the late King Faisal – May God has mercy upon his soul – whose great deeds to Islam and Arabism are unforgettable. I hasten to say, amongst this assembly, to cite the favours of their Highnesses, his sons who are the patrons of the prize, especially, Prince Khalid who is in-charge of the Foundation. No doubt, that the encouragement which this great edifice of knowledge offers in all fields of literature, sciences and Islamic is, but, a demonstration that our Islamic nation is in good care and that its leaders are children of this blessed land, from which Islam light effused and are still carrying the torch of that new light.

Dr. Mahmud Yussif Ali Makki