

Speech of Professor

Khurshid Ahmad

At the ceremony of awarding him the Prize

9.8.1410 H - March 6, 1990

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Royal Highness, Prince Abd Allah Ibn Abd Al-Aziz,
The Crown Prince,
Your Highnesses, the Princes,
Your Eminencies and Excellencies, Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I deem it a distinct honour and a unique privilege that the Selection Committee of the Faisal International Prizes has chosen me to be a co-recipient of the prestigious Faisal Prize for Service to Islam. I thank Allah Subhanahu Wa Talala for this generous recognition by the Ummah of my very humble service in the promotion of the cause for which Allah raised His prophets (peace and blessings be on them) and for which savants and soldiers of Islam have persevered for the last fourteen centuries. Frankly speaking, my soul trembles on the realization as to how little and how insignificant my own efforts have been in this respect. Your recognition is an honour, but it is a greater trial and a challenge. May Allah enable me to live up to the trust my brothers have reposed in me. And above all may Allah Subhanahu Wa Talala accept those humble efforts, as their sole purpose has been to seek His Good Pleasure, and to be of some relief on the Day when the fate of all of us is to be decided.

Your Excellencies, Friends and Colleagues:

Permit me to confess that the honour you have done to me may apparently be related to the efforts I have been able to make during the last forty years, but it is an honour I share with a number of persons, movements and institutions whose support, cooperation and guidance enabled me to play

some role in the promotion of Islamic thought and da'wah. My thoughts naturally go back to my parents (may Allah have mercy on them) who made it an objective of their lives to bring me up as a Muslim and install in my heart loyalty to Islam as the supreme value. The thoughts and the living examples of Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyed Abu Ala Mawdudi, Hassan Al-Banna, and Saiyyid Kutb (may Allah be pleased with them) were the most decisive force to fashion the pattern of my thought and determine the course of my life ever since my youth. It was under the spell of these influences that I could imbibe the real meaning of Islam as a complete way of life and as a commitment to live it and to struggle for establishing its supremacy on all other paths:

" قل إن صلاتي ونسكي ومحياي ومماتي لله رب العالمين " (الانعام – 162)

and that

" هو الذي أرسل رسوله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون " (الصف – 9)

This realization of the Prophetic mission and of our unceasing obligation to continue it till we breathe last, changed the course of my life, motivated me to make the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as the real fountain of guidance and prompted me to try to live, strive and die as a da'iyyah. Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba Pakistan, was the real nursery in which I had my first education and training (1949-56). The Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan has been the movements which made me what I am and provided me with all the opportunities to learn and live Islam and to share its blessings with others. The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, the International Islamic University, Islamabad and particularly its International Institute of Islamic Economics, the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, the Islamic Research Academy, Karachi and Lahore, the Centre for Research in Islamic Economics, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, and the International Association for Islamic Economics, UK, are but some of the institutions through which I have been able to operate and with the fullest support of all the brothers who have dedicated their lives to the service of these institutions. Through this award you have not honoured me alone; you have honoured all these individuals, movements and institutions.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues:

Mankind today stands at crossroads. Western civilization, based on the values of secularism, nationalism and economic liberalism, has finally driven human society into the throes of a crisis. Unparalleled strides in the fields of material advancement, scientific innovations, technological transformations and frequent political re-orderings have failed to get the house of humanity in order. Man has learned to swim in the oceans like fishes and fly in the skies like the birds but has not learned to live on the poor earth as good human beings. His soul is empty and he is groping from one wilderness to the other. Socialism and Communism emerged with great fanfare, yet after a spell of seventy years their feet of clay have been fully exposed. Man is as unhappy in the "socialist paradise" as he has become in the "brave new world" of Western capitalism. The grandiose experiment of building civilization on separation of religion and society have proved a catastrophic failure. Humanity is faced today with the very prospects of extinction, from forces of her own creation. The impending destruction can be avoided only by discarding the dominant paradigm and finding out a new set of values as the basis for civilization.

Islam provides an alternate basis for human life and society. It addresses to man as man, makes the individual the corner-stone of its scheme of reform. It is through awakening of faith that it transforms the soul of man and motivates him to play the role of God's deputy (Khalifa) on the earth. It transforms the individual from within, and mobilizes this reformed man to reconstruct society and its institutions. Finally, it harnesses power in the service of virtue and justice. It neither negates nor neglects the physical and material dimensions of life; it controls and harnesses them in the service of higher moral ideals and social purposes. It stands for the middle path - the gold mean (خيراطهسر أوومالا). This is what humanity has missed in its groping between extremes.

The Islamic Ummah bears a great responsibility, not only to itself but also to the entire human race. We are the trustees of the great Message Allah has sent to mankind. We can acquit ourselves of this gigantic responsibility only by sharing this blessing with all human beings. The way to achieve this is through da'wah. It is our duty not only to convey this message to all human beings, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but also to translate this guidance into our own lives, individual and collective, so that the world could see the Islamic model through eyes under its brows. This was the strategy of da'wah pursued by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).³ He conveyed Allah's message, not merely through the word, he

also exemplified it through his Sunnah, individually as well as collectively, in the form of the Model of Madinah. And once this shahadah of word and deed is there, evil melts and truth prevails. The most pressing need for the Muslims is to set their own house in order, illumine it with the light of Islam and present to the world the Islamic model - individual and society, in its true colors. This is the only way we can fulfill our calling:

" كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر وتؤمنون بالله "

Before I conclude, let me once again thank the Faisal Foundation, the Selection Committee for the Award, and the Government of Saudi Arabia for the honour they have done to me, my country, Pakistan, and the Islamic movement I belong to. As a token of my commitment to Islamic Da'wah I donate the financial reward that goes with this Prize to a Waqf which will utilize half of it for the promotion of Islamic dawah in the youth through Islamic Jamiat-e-Talaba Pakistan and the other half for dawah work in Europe through the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK. So help us Lord.