

Speech of  
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ABDUL RAHMAN (BINT ALE SHATI)**

**CoE winner of the 1994 King Faisal International Prize  
For Arabic Literature (Studies Dealing with Ancient Arabic  
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Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan bin Abd Alh Aziz,  
Your Highnesses,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests

On this memorable occasion, the pledge to recognize scholarship and value the accomplishments of scholars and their contributions to knowledge is renewed, and today's world is reminded of the great cultural values of our nation, after being neglected too long.

Allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to introduce myself as a Muslim, Arab woman. With the guidance of Allah, praise be upon Him, I started my journey in the pursuit of knowledge by memorizing the Holy Qur'an and, thereafter, by rooting myself firmly into the school of Islam. It is from that school that I come to stand before you tonight on this prestigious platform. My journey proceeded through three distinct phases, foremost of which was my basic learning of the Islamic faith and the Arabic language at hands of my own father and his colleagues, the Shaikhs of Azhar, from whom my insight into the profound impact of Qur'anic knowledge on my studies in the arts of Arabic started to grow.

Then I joined the university, where I was fortunate to have been taught fundamental methodology by my professor Amin Al-Khouli, Islamic jurisprudence by Shaikh Faraj Al-Sanhouri, a most eminent *Fiqih* of that time, and various contemporary subjects by leading professors and scholars. With that background, I started my career as a faculty member and rose to the rank of Professor in Arabic Language and Literature at Ain Shams University, a chair which I held for more than ten years. Throughout that period, I was pre-occupied with associating the arts of the Arabic language with my Qur'anic studies. Indeed, Arabic eloquence never could be fully appreciated and understood without extensive reference to its richest and most miraculous source, the Holy Qur'an. My approach towards understanding the riches of Qur'anic language stemmed from a firm conviction of its divinity, such that no word in it could ever be interpreted but as word of Allah, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful; that conviction has led me to search for the meaning of each Qur'anic word in the Qur'an itself, and not in any source invented by man. My efforts have been directed towards understanding precisely the usage of each particular word, and no other one, in each particular verse, as well as its overall concept in the Qur'an. In that way, Qur'anic verses and chapters were my reference to grammatical structures and philological techniques and to all the arts of the Arabic language.

This methodical juncture between the Arabic language and the Holy Qur'an has many benefits: on the one hand, it frees our minds from obscurities and misinterpretations of the Qur'an and, on the other, it profoundly enriches the Arabic language, because Qur'anic eloquence imparts a glittering shine, richness, and real beauty on it. Indeed, this juncture has paved the way for the appearance of a series of elegant researches and classical works, embracing the treasures of the Qur'an and the best of Arabic, but unfortunately those works have never been fully utilized. Besides, it widens our horizons of Qur'anic studies, from a philological perspective.

Then came a major change in my academic life when I took up the Chair of Higher Studies in QI-Qaraween University in Morocco, a journey that has extended, so far, for more than twenty years.

With the guidance and help of Allah, praise be upon Him, I have been able to share with my students my experiences in methodologies, authentication and verification techniques of literary works based on my efforts to understand the miraculous Qur'anic eloquence and language that challenges the minds of humans.

It has been a great source of pride for me to dedicate my life to the service of the

Arabic language through studying the Holy Qur'an, the eternal miracle of that language and its true essence of humanity. It has also given me a considerable satisfaction to participate in the education of many graduate students and to enjoy their company. I urge them all to remain in the heart of our nation and to proceed in the footsteps of their predecessors in the long and difficult road to knowledge.

I have always been attached to this beloved country, our meeting place for Hajj, the passion of our hearts, and the *Qibla* of our nation. My first visit to the Kingdom was with a delegation from Cairo University in response to a kind invitation by the late King Abdul Aziz and under the guardianship of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, HRH Prince Faisal bin Abdul Aziz. While being surrounded by their utmost attention and kindness, we were allowed to full liberty to organize the programme that best suited us. We toured the Kingdom by length and breadth, waiting to see the "Land of Miracles": miracle of Revelation, miracle of Arabic and, lately, miracle of development—at that time, oil was springing out to declare the appearance of a new world and new standards.

Today, the Arab woman occupies her place among your distinguished gathering, neither secluded nor denied that place. But this attitude is nothing new to this blessed land. Not far from here, at *Al-Muraba'a* in the heart of Riyadh, we have had the privilege of meeting the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad bin Abdul Aziz, and to discuss with him the concerns of our nation. I can never forget how proud he is to be called *Akhu Noura*.

Each time we turn to the Holy Mosque, we enjoy the sight of Muslim crowds performing *Umrath* and walking hurriedly seven times between the mountains of *Al-Safa* and *Al-Marwa*, in the same way as Lady Hejra, the mother of Prophet Ismail, grandfather of the Adnan Arabs. That sight represents a true Mother's day for us a day we spend worshipping and thanking Allah, the Most Gracious, and Most Merciful.

Not far away from here are the remains of the Palace of Queen of Sheba; her formidable character as she presided over her advisory council, reminds us of the principle of *Shoura* as stated in the Holy Qur'an. She was a queen of no equivalent in the modern world.

Allow me to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to King Saud University and the University of the United Arab Emirates for nominating me, and to the King Faisal Foundation for awarding me the prize.

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