

Speech of Mr.
SALMA LUTFI AL-HAFFAR AL-KOWZBARI

Co-winner of the 1995 King Faisal International Prize
For Arabic Literature
(Studies Dealing with Prominent Modern Arab Writers)

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan Ibn Abd AL-Aziz,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a great honour to stand before you tonight to receive the 1995 King Faisal International Prize for Arabic Literature.

This is a splendid occasion for me for two reasons. The first is my presence on the soil of this blessed land from which, and after centuries of darkness, the radiance of Islam shone over the entire world through the revelation of the Holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This Glorious Book calls us to seek knowledge, hold firmly to moral values and righteous deeds and foster goodness for all mankind. The second reason is that this esteemed Prize carries the name of a great Arab monarch who has served his country and defended Arab rights heroically, and whose sole motives to do so have been his faith, moral values, and love for justice and knowledge. He paid with his life for his gallantry but he set an example for all faithful men to follow. May his soul rest in peace, and may Almighty Allah bless his noble brothers and sons and may He guide them, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad Ibn Abd Al-Aziz, in their efforts to serve the causes of Islam and Arabs.

In order to fulfill our responsibilities as writers, we are obliged to derive and enrich our capabilities in the usage of language eloquence from the treasures of the Glorious Qur'an which has been revealed in this blessed land in a language of unequalled richness and beauty, and which has called upon all Muslims, men and women, to provide themselves with useful knowledge. Praise be to Allah who has said in His Noble Book:

"Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created - Created man, out of a leech-like clot;

Read! And thy Lord is most bountiful,
He Who taught the pen
Taught man that which he knew not".

Arabic and world literature had been and continue to be a heritage for all nations and all generations throughout history, enriching libraries and adding value to our lives. The same applies to all aspects of science and arts. The message and responsibility shouldered by all men and women of letters throughout the generations obliges them to read profusely and search for knowledge continuously. What I would like to say to our younger generation of writers is that this alone is inadequate to become an able writer. This is a seed that promises fruits and shade but which be nurtured in order to blossom and bring forth its fruits.

At this point, allow me to take a few moments to pay tribute to a man who strived to support me in my journey with the pen and the book. That man is my father, Lutfi AL-Haffar, may his soul rest in peace. I am indebted to him for wisely guiding me and encouraging me to use his library and derive from his rich collection of books on Islamic and literary heritage, and on science and sociology. He taught me perseverance and encouraged me to perfect my work and learn foreign languages because he believed that no nation can rise and catch up with civilization without the rise and progress, side by side, of both its men and women, for woman is the mother, the sister, and the daughter.

Praise be to Allah for his guidance and help. My sincere thanks are extended to the patrons of The King Faisal International Prize, which I receive with pride and which is an inspiration for all researchers, scientists, and intellectuals.

God bless you