

Acceptance Speech of  
**PROFESSOR AKRAM DIA' A AL-UMARI**

Winner of the 1996 King Faisal International Prize

For Islamic Studies  
(The Life of Prophet Muhammad)

*In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate*

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan ibn Abdul Aziz,  
Your Royal Highnesses,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,

Assalam Alaikum,

Our forefathers wrote detailed accounts of the Prophet's life in order to guide successive Muslim generations. Writings about the Prophet's *Seerah* [life] continued through the centuries; however, most of these writings were by narrators whose primary concern was to authenticate and record, the Prophet's sayings, or *Hadith*, rather than to describe and review the daily events of his life. Narrators developed demanding and reliable techniques for authenticating the Prophet's sayings and longed to apply these methods to the study of other aspects of his life and deeds. However they did not accomplish this as they were engaged in other issues at that time,

With the rise of the Islamic civilisation, several scholars wrote about the prophet's life but in a modern style, hoping to bring it closer to the understanding of newer generation. From an intellectual standpoint, this was a worthy effort.

Nevertheless, it fell short of exhaustive authentication and analysis.

I have recognized this deficiency my youth. Thirty years ago I published the first of a series of articles dealing with authentication methods comparable to those applied by narrators of the Prophet's sayings. My endeavours, however, required a careful balance between the nature of the saying of the sayings and that of historical stories and how I should view them from both the religious and historical perspectives. My objective was to critically review and revise available historical materials and verify them as part of an attempt to rewrite the history of Islam.

Five years ago I published my book on the prophet's *Seerah*.

This effort benefited tremendously from the lengthy and fruitful discussion I was fortunate to hold with my post-graduate students at the Islamic University in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah. My physical presence for 20 years in the immediate neighbourhood of the Prophet's mosque was also a stimulus which constantly reminded me of the glories of the prophet, peace and prayers upon him, and of the impact of his teaching on his followers throughout the past 14 centuries.

The religious awakening presently spreading across the Islamic world is an expression our desire to build a society based on tolerance, benevolence, and cooperation, a society that promotes values and

morals required to accomplish social justice and equality among all people. This revival coincides with increasing evidence - furnished by physicists, medical scientists, and psychologists - that strengthens our belief in the existence of God and in how the universe, of which we are part, was created the knowledge we have gained about the origin, structure, delicate balances of the universe has enhanced our spiritual perceptions, leaving no doubt in our minds about the higher power that created this cosmos.

Modern scientific knowledge has developed extensively over the past seven decades and, given the tremendous advances made during this period, we can envision the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the Century of Faith. By reflecting on the Prophet's *Serrah*, and by contemplating and analyzing his life and values, the coming generations can learn much that would help them create a better intellectual and moral atmosphere for coexistence and cooperation of all mankind.

I take this opportunity to thank the patrons of The King Faisal Foundation for their persistent efforts to promote the King Faisal International prize's objective of enhancing culture and scientific progress. I also thank the university and other circles that nominated me. I call upon scholars to continue their endeavours to prompt our Arabic and Islamic culture.

Thank you