

TRANSLATION

Speech of Professor
Makarim Ahmad AlG Ghamri

Co Winner of King Faisal International Prize
for Arabic Literature 1999/1419H.

Tuesday 2.3.1999 (14.11.1419H)

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

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

It is a great pleasure to stand before you tonight to thank, first and foremost, Almighty Allah for rewarding me for my efforts and, secondly, to express my appreciation and gratitude to the sponsors of King Faisal International Prize, the referees, and the members of the Selection Committee for bestowing upon me this great honour.

It was on a blessed night during the holy month of Ramadan that I received a telephone call informing me of my selection as a co winner of the King Faisal International Prize for Arabic Literature, and conveying to me the congratulations of His Royal Highness Prince Khalid AL Faisal and the Secretary General of the Prize. I would like to thank them for their kind and encouraging words.

It is a happy coincidence that this year's King Faisal International Prize award ceremony comes while the Kingdom is celebrating the centenary of its establishment by the late King Abd Al Aziz Al Saud, who laid the foundations for the Kingdom's unity, prosperity and progress a progress which is reflected in tonight's ceremony. I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Kingdom's people on this happy occasion, and to wish them further progress and prosperity, and even greater success in their quest for the welfare of the Islamic

and Arab nations.

To award a prize of Arabic and Islamic origin and international dimensions in the field of comparative literature is a reminder of the great respect of Islamic and Arabic civilisations for knowledge and of the contributions made by those Civilisations, over many centuries to the progress of humanity. This Prize is the breeze of an everlasting fragrance of those great civilisations.

The human community has witnessed, throughout its history, a continuous dialogue between civilisations. Literature, as a product of civilization, has been an important instrument of that dialogue. It is through cultural interactions that the Islamic and Arabic civilisations have made undeniable contributions to the progress of Europe, and have influenced Significantly many other cultures throughout the world.

It was not long after the Arabs had brought the splendors of their poetry and architecture, along with their chivalry and heroism, to Spain that their influence on western and eastern European cultures was felt.

The spiritual heritage of Islam has continuously inspired writers throughout the world. Its influence on Russian literature is most visible during the 19th century, which is considered to be the golden age of Russian literature. In their search for values, righteousness, and faith. Russian writers benefited Significantly from the spiritual realm of Islam, as embodied in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's sayings and deeds.

Another source of inspiration for those writers was Arabic literature which, too, contributed substantially to the richness of Russian literary works during the past century.

To award a prize on a subject associated with the international dimensions of Arabic literature is not merely a recapitulate of the past; it is an outlook to the future - a future that requires a more concerted dialogue between civilisations. It is important to continue searching into the riches of our own culture, its contributions to other cultures in the past, and its potential future role in achieving the required balance between spiritual and material aspects of modern civilization, and between traditionalism and modernism. It is also our duty to strive to preserve our culture and tradition while trying to contribute more effectively, as Muslims and Arabs, to modern civilization.

This Prize brings me great happiness but it also puts on my shoulders, and those of my colleagues, a tremendous responsibility. May Allah Almighty help and guide us to shoulder it.

Best wishes and Assalam Alaikum.