

PREFACE

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

The first series of Awards in Architecture within the vast community of Muslims has been given. It is well to ponder at this time what they mean, what questions they raise, what implications they may have for the future, as well as for our deeper collective concern for the continuous integrity of Islamic architecture and, through architecture, for the whole of Islamic culture. I trust and hope that over the years scholars, architects, planners, officials at all levels, and users will discuss among themselves the significance of the choices made by the Jury and the Selection Committee among some one hundred eighty submitted buildings and architectural ensembles. Many even contradictory conclusions could and should be drawn from the Jury's decisions, and I would like to share with you some impressions, some thoughts, some queries, perhaps a few worries about the results of these choices.

First, let me recall that it was in Pakistan that the idea of this Award was made public some four years ago. It is in part for this reason that the first recipients of the Award were gathered in Lahore to be recognised for their achievements. Pakistan, located roughly in the geographical centre of Islam, possesses some of the wonders of classical Islamic architecture, such as the Shalimar Gardens, some of the most genuine vernacular traditions, and some of the most important contemporary architectural efforts within the Muslim world. It is only fitting that this microcosm of Islamic traditions should have served as a host for the contemporary achievements of the whole Muslim world, which ranges from the arid shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the tropical splendour of Indonesian islands. There, better perhaps than anywhere else, the richness and glory of both the past and the creations of today can be seen in the context of a vibrant and exciting concern for the environment. For it is indeed for this concern that an award has been established, and we must recognise that we are not permeating a country, a city, or a building, but the whole Muslim world, all its nations and peoples, as it enters into its fifteenth century of existence.

Second, we may well ask whether the awarded projects truly correspond to the great traditions of Islamic architecture. There are no mosques among them, no madrasas, no palaces, no gardens, no mausoleums, hardly any of the monuments that are visited by millions of tourists, cherished by those who live near them, and utilised by historians to define the Muslims' past. The paradox, however, is more apparent than real. For, great though the celebrated monuments of the past are as

works of art, they were only part of the built environment of the past. They were the creations of great and wealthy patrons, often made no doubt for the use and pleasure of the masses, but rarely lacking in personal or dynastic vanity. All too frequently the settings developed by the masses themselves have been lost or changed beyond recognition. In the contemporary works, the Awards have recognised that other part, perhaps now much more important than in the past, the part of the common man creating for himself and his neighbours a setting for life and for health, preserving and utilising what nature has created, developing ways to maintain his identity rather than accepting the elephantine massiveness of so much of today's world.

This recognition of a human scale, of local decisions (even if they required outside expertise), of local needs and concerns is, I believe, a profoundly Muslim requirement. It is the expression of that societal requirement, that consideration of thousands of separate communities within the whole *umma*, that is so uniquely a central part of the Muslim message. We have recognised an architecture for men, women, and children, and not yet an architecture for history books and tourists. Through architecture we are recognising the quality of life within the Muslim world today. And, by recognising a medical centre or housing project developed by a whole community, we are preserving for all time the memory of this quality of life.

There is a deeper and more intriguing side to this recognition that forms my third observation. These Awards may indeed illustrate or sharpen an issue that has been sidetracked over the past four hundred years as scholars and patrons become fascinated with the personalities of architects as artistic and formal creators. The issue is: What architecture are we recognising? Is it the planning and design of master architects? Is it the architecture of the craftsmen, artisans, and specialists of all sorts who put a building together? Is it the architecture of the users? Is it the architecture of certain lands, with their peculiar physical characteristics? Is it the architecture of a faith that transcends national, geographic, social, or technological limits?

It is easy enough to answer "yes" to all of these questions and to identify the merits of any one project according to each one of these criteria. In part, the decisions of the Master Jury have done that. But in a deeper sense, the important point is precisely that none of these criteria has taken precedence

over any of the others.

The implication is that we are recognising as unique a creative and generative process in which the imagination of one architect and the expectation of Muslim patrons and users interact constantly. Within this continuum no single moment or decision can be isolated like the element of a chemical compound, because it is creative life itself, it is the elusive process of human existence, not merely a monument, that is the winner.

A fourth observation is that the Jury used the word "search" for nearly all of the projects it recognised. What does this mean? It could mean, no doubt, that no building, no ensemble, no reconstruction or reuse has quite been able to meet some abstract criteria for architectural excellence. This is not surprising. The Alhambra probably would have been received with very mixed reviews by architectural critics at the time it was built, and many a source from ancient times is critical of architectural projects that enthrall contemporary historians. For while historians can quite often, centuries later, understand architectural quality in its purest form, contemporaries often see its social and economic costs and weigh them against the other needs of society. Clearly, architectural excellence is not enough. Therein lies the positive side of the notion of "search." We are only beginning to grasp the social, intellectual, aesthetic, cultural, and historical needs and emotions of the Muslim world. To impose from the very outset of the Award process formal or even social criteria of excellence would be not only an exercise in vanity and folly, but a profound moral wrong. We only know the issues and the problems. We know that social changes of momentous proportions are taking place everywhere. We know that expectations have arisen for both a good life and a good Muslim life. We know that we are far too ignorant of our past and far too careless in preserving it. We know that Muslim lands are subjected to pressure and temptations from cultures that are not Muslim, even though nearly all Muslim lands are independent of foreign rule.

But the solutions, the answers to these problems are still unclear. They must be sought, and this is why the Award process itself is designed to be one of the means for this collective search. A partial failure can be as important as a unique success. It is in this spirit of common search for solutions to thousands of problems that these Awards will play their part. It is a spirit which is well proclaimed in the Muslim message, for the intention of man (the *niya*) is a fundamental part of his action.

Finally, we may turn from the Muslim world to the whole world. Many of the issues that led to the creation of the Awards are not unique to the Muslim world. They are issues found in all new lands, as on our shrinking planet all new countries, or all developing countries, grope for a visible self-

identification of their own and for the satisfaction of new, worldwide expectations about the quality of their lives. But why think only of new or underdeveloped countries? Social problems plague lands with the highest per capita income, and self-identification is a concern of countries with the longest history of independence and expansion. It may just be that, as the Award highlights the search of the Muslim world for an architecture centred on man and proclaiming the potential of life, an example is given to the whole world of how this can be done. In part it is simply that the Muslim message is a universal one, not restricted to a few areas or a few ethnic groups. But, in a deeper sense, what we are trying to achieve, this environment we are looking for, is not only ours. It is also something we want to share with the whole world, not as an exercise in pride or vanity, but because of our belief that the means at our disposal may allow us to sharpen issues, to discover solutions for all mankind to use and understand.

Such are a few observations based on the Awards themselves, on recognised achievements from Morocco to Indonesia, from Turkey to Senegal, from humble houses to grand hotels, by architects and by masons, by anonymous bureaucracies or by specific individuals and collectives, by Muslims and by non-Muslims, yet always for Muslims.

But this is not the end of our effort. What challenges lie ahead? The first one is perfectly exemplified by the setting in which the Awards were given, the magnificent Shalimar Gardens. From the very beginning we felt that the Awards should be given in places of overwhelming historical and aesthetic interest. This is to remind us all of the great traditions to which we are the heirs. But what in fact is the re-



lationship of our roots to what we are today? Surely we do not expect of contemporary architects copies or imitations of the past; we know only too well how disastrous such copying has been. There are two things, I feel, we may appropriately seek from the past. One is what I would call our moral right to decide on the environment that will be ours. However useful and essential outside experts may be, however international contemporary architecture has become, our past, our roots, give us the right to say that the choices we make are *our* choices and that the opportunities we have today will do for the next decades what early Muslims did in Spain, Syria, or Iraq, what the Ottoman Turks, Timurids, or Mughals did some five to six hundred years ago in Anatolia, Iran, or India: that is, understood sufficiently well what was available and appropriate in non-Muslim lands to create something profoundly Muslim. And this leads me to my second point about the monuments of our past. We must learn to understand them well, not simply to preserve them as museums of past glories, but to feel in every part of them—a stone masonry, a brick dome, a window, an ornament, or a garden arrangement—that unique spirit, that unique way that made these

monuments Islamic. Only then will we be able to impart the same spirit to the technical means and to the forms of today.

A second challenge is of a very different order. As time goes on, more and more of the major environmental and architectural programmes within the Muslim world will utilise the high technology developed for the most part outside the Muslim world. As airports, office buildings, hospitals, schools, industrial complexes, whole new cities grow in numbers and in quality, they will quite naturally satisfy much less easily the originality of our traditions. The models of the past, even if available, will be technically or economically unsuited to new needs. These new creations will run the risk of becoming homogenised, internationalised monuments with an occasional arch or dome. But need it be so? While preserving and nurturing the immense variety of our vernacular architecture, how will we be able to channel the necessity of high technology without becoming its slaves? There are areas, perhaps, such as those of solar energy, of water conservation, of thermal control, or of prefabrication, where we should become leaders rather than followers, where our needs can revolutionise the rest of the world.

And, finally, let me mention one last challenge: the challenge of education. Not only do we know too little about ourselves, but we have not as yet been able to form in sufficient numbers our own experts and practitioners with the full competence to solve the environmental problems of tomorrow. Too many of our best minds are trained outside their own countries. Why is this so? Is it a question of teaching staff? Is it a peculiar trust in outside expertise? Clearly we must develop ways to make our own schools of architecture and of planning places to which others will want to come, and this will require yet another kind of intellectual and practical effort. For, even if we create an architecture worthy of praise, we will have partly failed unless we form for ourselves the men and women who will realise that architecture.

I do not claim that these are the only challenges left to us. Others exist, no doubt. But, as we celebrate the first Awards and open the way for the forthcoming ones, all these challenges can help us in defining the attitudes we must develop in thinking of the future and of the areas of discovery open to

us. It is a task we must accomplish together, fully acknowledging our diversities, but knowing, as well, that there is a Straight Path, which is that of our Faith.

Let me close, therefore, by reminding you of Attar's great poem, the Conference of the Birds, *Mantiqat at-Tayr*.

The birds, you will recall, went in search of the Simurgh, the ideal and perfect king. After many tribulations, thirty of them did reach the end of the journey and came to the gate of the Supreme Majesty. The Chamberlain tested them and then opened the door, and they sat on the *masnad*, the seat of Majesty and Glory. And, as an inner glow came into them, they realised that it was *they* together who were the Simurgh, and that the Simurgh was the thirty birds.

Is this not what these Awards mean? From the travails and labours of thousands, humble masons or expensive experts, there have emerged those works made by us and for us which we can present as being, all together, as an aggregate, as a group, the statement of our hopes and of our expectations as much as of our achievements. This is indeed the way in which Pakistan's beloved poet, Muhammad Iqbal, put it in two quotations that say best what the Awards can mean. Speaking of Islam in his vision for tomorrow, he wrote that it was

*A world eternal, with renewing flames and
renewing leaves, fruits, and principles.
With an immovable inside and an outside of
Changing, continuous revolutions.*

And then, in another poem, he said:

*The journey of love is a very long
journey.
But sometimes with a sign you can cross
that vast desert.
Search and search again without losing
hope.
You may find sometime a treasure
on your way.*

On behalf of the Master Jury and of the Award Committee, it is to this search for our new environment that I wish to invite the immense community of Muslims, and the whole world as well.