

Dr. Martin Lings

AMSS UK 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award and Obituary

The *AMSS (UK) 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award* was presented to Dr. Martin Lings on 2nd May 2005 in London at *The Message of the Beloved* conference organized by Mahabba Unlimited to mark the occasion of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and attended by over three thousand people.

The award was presented by Ms. Fauzia Ahmad, member of the AMSS Executive Committee on behalf of the Association, its Chairman and Executive Committee. After presenting the award, Ms. Ahmad spoke briefly of the reasons why the AMSS had chosen to honor Dr. Lings with the Lifetime Achievement Award whose previous recipients have been Professor Ali Mazrui (USA), President Alija Izetbegovic (Bosnia), Professor Zaki Badawi (UK), and Professor Edward Said (USA).

Dr. Martin Lings she stated had left an outstanding legacy; a great scholar, writer, and intellectual he had worked tirelessly to bring to light the universal message of Islam and had shown the world that Islam was a timeless message of great beauty, spirituality, intelligence and mercy.

Born in Lancashire in 1909, Dr. Lings was raised a protestant, and then became an atheist. He studied English Literature at Oxford University and at the age of around twenty five began to investigate other world religions. In 1938 he became a Muslim and after studying Arabic in London joined the staff of the British Museum where he was Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts from 1970 to 1973 and where he had been in special charge of the Qur'an manuscripts, amongst other treasures, since 1955. The following year he held the same post in the newly founded British Library.

Respected the world over for his written legacy and for his tireless efforts to present with great depth, wisdom and passion the message of Islam Dr. Martin Lings is perhaps most famous for his authoritative biography of the Prophet (pbuh), *Muhammad: His Life Based on Earliest Sources*. The biography, first published in 1983 and subsequently reprinted, caused a sensation on its first appearance enthraling readers the world over. It is a timeless masterpiece of impeccable scholarship and one of the best biographies of the Prophet in the English language. In light of this it is perhaps appropriate that his last public appearance was made at a celebration to mark the occasion of the *mawlid* (the birth of the Prophet).

Having travelled a long road Dr. Martin Lings passed away at the age of ninety six in England on 13th May 2005 and is buried in the garden of his village home in the UK.