

UNESCO KALINGA PRIZE WINNER – 1989

Dr. Saad Ahmed Shabaan



**First Recipient of the Kalinga Prize to have had a long
and Brilliant Military Career
&
Only Representative of the Arab Region to Receive the Award.**

Responsibility of any Science Writer is not Just to explain to the general public modern inventions & discoveries, and their useful applications to the good of humanity – It is probably more important to expose and denounce the uglier side of the almost criminal misuses of technology that could lead our world to perdition.

...Dr Saad Ahmed Shabaan



United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

**CEREMONY OF AWARD
OF FOUR
UNESCO SCIENCE PRIZES**

Unesco House
Paris, 8 November 1989

PREFACE

by

The Director – General of Unesco

On November 8, 1989, the Kalinga Prize, the Unesco Science Prize, the Javed Husain Prize for Young Scientists and the Carlos J. Finlay Prize were for the first time awarded in a single ceremony timed to take place during the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference of Unesco. The wish expressed by many delegates to give more publicity to these prizes, as well as the success of the ceremony itself, motivated my decision to mark this important event with this brochure.

I am convinced that Unesco can and should contribute extensively to the public understanding of science and technology as a vital prerequisite for constructing our individual and our common future. The science prizes awarded by the Organization are an important means of making people more science – conscious and of drawing public attention to significant scientific research and its applications.

I hope that this brochure will enhance the prestige and impact of these international awards, thereby helping to promote the scientific literacy essential to all Unesco's Member States.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Federico Mayor', with a stylized, flowing script.

Federico Mayor

**Address by
Mr Federico Mayor**

**Director – General of the
United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization
(Unesco)**

**Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today's ceremony is exceptional in that, for the first time, Unesco's four science prizes are being presented on the same occasion. These prizes are: the Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science, the Unesco Science Prize, the Javed Husain Prize for Young Scientists and the Carlos J. Finlay Prize. I may mention that this ceremony is taking place, appropriately enough, at a moment when Commission III of the General Conference is deliberating Unesco's future science programmes.

Let me begin with the Kalinga Prize. Two thousand years ago, Emperor Ashoka, the ruler of the Kalinga Empire, solemnly renounced recourse to war in order to devote himself exclusively to the peaceful development of his Empire. With this example in mind, Mr Bijoyanand Patnaik, founder and President of the Kalinga Foundation Trust, India, generously made available to Unesco 1,000 pounds sterling annually for a prize for the popularization of science. On the basis of that donation, Unesco established in 1951 the Kalinga Prize to be awarded annually to a distinguished popularizer who had contributed significantly to the interpretation of science and technology to a wide public. Since its inception in 1952, the Kalinga Prize for the popularization of science has been awarded to an impressive list of distinguished scientists and science writers, who have lent it great prestige.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I announce that the 1989 Kalinga Prize has been awarded to **Dr Saad Ahmed Shabaan from the Arab Republic of Egypt.**

For the first time in the history of this prize, a representative of the Arab region has been selected as the winner. The laureate is unique also in being the first recipient of the Kalinga Prize to have had a long and brilliant military career (beginning as a young engineer-officer and rising to the high rank of Major General in the Air Force). Given Emperor Ashoka's progression from military to peaceful activities, this may be thought to be a fitting background for a winner of the Kalinga Prize.

Glossary on Kalinga Prize Laureates

Dr Shabaan has been engaged for over 35 years in propagating scientific and technological culture on the broadest possible basis in Egypt and the Arab world ranging out from his fields of special competence – electrical engineering aviation and space – into the large number of adjacent fields of science.

Throughout these years of uninterrupted work, he has spared no effort to break down the barriers between the scientific community and the general public with the aim of helping to establish the broad scientific basis necessary for the overall development of his society. Conscious of the importance of direct human contact and interaction, he has placed great emphasis on public lectures and symposia in educational, social and professional institutions. He has also made extensive use of the media- books, newspaper articles, radio and television programmes – to interpret science and technology to the public at large. His output in this regard is impressive: he is the author of 26 scientific books and some 400 scientific articles and he has produced over 200 radio and television programmes.

Dr Shabaan has earned numerous national as well as international honours, including the Medal of Honour of the World Aerospace Education Organization. He served for many years as editor-in-chief of a number of scientific and military magazines and also as a member of the space Commission at the International Aeronautic Federation. Currently, Dr Shabaan is Director of the Office of the President of Egypt.

Dr Shabaan, I congratulate you most warmly on having been awarded the prestigious Kalinga Prize for 1989 and I am happy to present you with the diploma and cheque that accompany the Prize, together with the Unesco Einstein medal.



Acceptance Speech

by

**Dr Saad Ahmed Shabaan
Winner of the 1989 Kalinga Prize**

**Mr Director-General of Unesco,
Mr President of the General Conference,
Mr Chairman of the Executive Board,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I stand here to received this prize, I must express my respects to the Director- General of Unesco, Dr Federico Mayor, the Prize jury members, the Egyptian National Commission for Unesco and the distinguished audience. It is certainly an honour which I will always hold in high esteem and pride. I feel, however, that this is too much for me, not out of modesty, but in recognition of the fact that fantasies of achieving maximum wisdom and learning only mean credulity and ignorance. Newton touched on the same meaning by saying that "all the knowledge that mankind could gather is only a grain of sand on an endless beach." And more than twelve centuries before Newton, the Moslem Holy Book (Koran) stated that the waters of oceans are not enough to record God's knowledge.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I received a telex from Unesco on 22 October telling me that I had been awarded the Kalinga Prize, the happy news coincided with a great scientific event that takes place twice every year in the Abu-Simble Temple in Upper Egypt. That temple is designed in such a manner that direct rays of sun fall twice annually on the face of King Ramses, the second statue: once on 22 October to mark his coronation, and the other time on 22 February to mark his birthday. The event, watched yearly by thousands of foreign tourists, has been recurring for more than 3,300 years without fail. It certainly testifies to ancient Egyptians' skill in astronomy and architecture as well as in chemistry and medicine. Here, I must remember with all gratitude the tremendous role of Unesco in saving the invaluable temple from being submerged in Nile water before the builing of the High Dam, south of Aswan.

But the Pharaonic civilization mingled in later phases with other civilizations, the most outstanding of which is the Islamic one. It is quite significant in this respect to note that the first quotation in the Moslem Holy Book urged the prophet to read and consider. There are even countless recommendations in the Holy Koran, in fact explicit orders, to man to think and reflect on every possible phenomenon in our universe, human or natural.

Glossary on Kalinga Prize Laureates

As a young man, more than 35 years ago, I found in these divine teachings motive enough to read and learn as much as I could, and later to present my people with the fruits of my readings through newspaper and magazine articles, television and radio programmes, books, lectures and every other possible means. Along this path, my experience taught me to resort to simplification and avoid detailed technical complexities which interest only experts and professionals. I emphasize again the absolute importance of simple rendering, because the Third World still suffers from a double-faced illiteracy: the inability to read and write on the one hand, and a scientific illiteracy on the other hand. Fortunately, educational efforts in my country have reduced illiteracy in recent years from 80% to 52%. At this point, I must admit, that my happiness with the Kalinga Prize is only exceeded by my happiness at knowing that Unesco has declared the year 1990 an international year for fighting illiteracy. We earnestly hope this noble move will persuade world leaders to devote more of their time and effort to eliminate this disgrace.

One more point I want to press as forcefully as I can: I strongly believe that the responsibility of any science writer is not just to explain to the general public modern inventions and discoveries, and their useful applications to the good of humanity. It is probably more important to expose and denounce the uglier side of the almost criminal misuses of technology that could lead our world to perdition. Examples of such dangers are: ecological pollution, diseases resulting from inordinate use of chemicals, and nuclear power without proper safety measures, the rise of temperature on earth due to excessive use of protected agriculture, and the excessive use of highly volatile gases which cause depletion of the ozone layer.

**Mr Director – General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The glow and warmth of the occasion shouldn't let me forget the fact that the coming of the prize from India bears, for me, added significance, since our two countries share so many tenets and values. I admit again I am particularly proud of this great honour because it originated in a pioneer Third World country that has proved that science and technology should never be the monopoly of a particular race or civilization. We all regard with admiration the giant steps that India has taken along the path of scientific progress in recent history.

And now that my efforts are happily crowned with the prestigious prize, I feel an added responsibility to continue the mission I started many years ago. I also feel deep gratitude to all those in my country and the Arab world who helped my work reach readers and audiences everywhere in the Arab nations.

Thank you very much again.