

Biju Patnaik and UNESCO-Kalinga Prize

Prof. Surya Narayan Misra

Kalinga Prize, otherwise known as UNESCO - Kalinga Prize was instituted in 1951 by UNESCO. It was the product of seminal contribution of one of the proud sons of India, late Bijayananda Patnaik (popularly called Biju Patnaik). Shri Patnaik also founded the Kalinga Foundation Trust. The Kalinga Award was an innovative attempt by Shri Patnaik during the early days of the formation of the United Nations. Though British India was one of the founding members of the world body, the idea about the organisation and its specialised agencies was not properly disseminated. Further, the then Odisha was not one of the advanced states of the Indian Union. Late Biju Patnaik, though was associated with adventure and forward looking nationalist struggle, yet he was not the leading figure of the state administration. He was emerging slowly as an industrialist but with a strong passion for development of his motherland. He was greatly influenced by the personality and achievement of Samrat Kharavela of Chedi dynasty who extended the boundary of the state / his empire beyond imagination. Those were the days when Kalinga was a great empire and it had the historic impact upon Samrat Ashok of Kalinga War fame of 261 B.C. to transform him from Chandashok to Dharmashok. Late Biju Patnaik remembered the great days of our glorious past and attempted

to make Kalinga a household name. So was the institution of Kalinga Prize whose sixtieth foundation year is to be celebrated during 99th session of the Indian Science Congress inside the campus of KIIT University which symbolises the name Kalinga and the dedicated services of its founder.

The Kalinga Prize was first given in the year 1952 and the recipient was Louis de Broglie of France. The recipient of this annual award must have demonstrated during his/her illustrious career as writer, editor, lecturer, film producer, radio / TV programme director - talent in interpreting science and technology for the public. Further, the recipient should have striven to emphasise the international importance of Science and Technology and the contribution they make for the improvement of public welfare, enrichment of the cultural heritage of nations and finding solutions to the problems faced by human civilisation.

The Kalinga Prize is regarded as a prestigious international recognition for outstanding Science popularisation work. The Director General of UNESCO selects the prize winner out of nominations received from member - states on the recommendation of a four member international jury.

The annual prize known as UNESCO - Kalinga Prize is funded by the Kalinga Foundation Trust, the Government of Odisha and the Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India. The award consists of a prize money of £14,000 sterling which covers the monetary value of the prize, certificate, UNESCO Albert Einstein Silver Medal and the cost of administration of the prize.

The prize winner is offered Kalinga Chair by the Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India to tour four week period to interact with Scientists and Science communicators. The awardee is provided with appropriate facilities to familiarise him/her with Indian life and culture including Indian research, educational institutions, industrial development and economic progress. The Kalinga Chair also comprises of a certificate and cash award of US \$ 5000. He is also invited to visit Indian Universities and attend the meeting of scientific societies. The prize is awarded during the celebration of the World Science Day at New Delhi. Since 2011 to mark the 50th year of the award the Government of India has instituted the Ruchi Ram Sahni Chair which goes to the Kalinga prize winner.

Among the award winners since 1952 seven Kalinga awardees were Nobel Prize winners also. Sri Jagjit Singh was the first Indian to receive Kalinga Prize in 1963. In 1973 and 1975 no one got this prestigious prize. The other Indian Kalinga Prize winners are Narender K. Sehgal (1991), Jayant V. Narlikar (1996), Dorairanjan Balasubramaniam (1997) and Yash Pal (2009). Due to change of UNESCO rules there were no award from 2006 to 2008. According to a UNESCO circular in 2010 the UNESCO-Kalinga Prize has been awarded to 65 persons from 22 countries. The United

Kingdom has shared the credit 10 times followed by USA 9 times. India secured the prize four times. In South Asia besides India, Pakistan has got twice and Bangladesh once. Out of 65 laureates seven were Nobel Prize winners. Men have shown better role in popularisation of Science. They have taken this prize 60 times as against 5 times won by women.

Because of the laudable role of late Biju Patnaik, Kalinga (now Odisha) has claimed a visible space in the international prize scene as a donor country. The award initially was known as Kalinga Prize. But under new rules it is now called UNESCO - Kalinga Prize.

In 2001, during the Golden Jubilee year of this prestigious award another great moment appeared for Odisha / Kalinga. On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Kalinga Prize the International Astronomical Union through its Commission of Minor Planet Nomenclature had decided to name minor planet (Asteroid) No. 26214 as Kalinga. This asteroid was discovered in 1997 by the Czech astronomer Dr. Petr Pravel from the Ondrejov Observatory of the Czechoslovakia Academy of Sciences. Kalinga the asteroid is at a distance of 2946 Astronomical Units (AU) from the earth. An AU is equivalent to 149,597,871 Kilometres.

For all these, Odias will remain ever grateful to its pride product late Biju Patnaik. He was a statesman among politicians and a politician among the Statesmen.

Prof. Surya Narayan Misra, Emeritus Professor, KIIT Law School, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar-751024.