

CITATION OF  
DR. ABDUL WAHEED KHAN  
**Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa***  
*Written and read by Dr. Seah Soo Aun*

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Our honorary degree recipient has an exciting story of a self-made man. His journey from an agricultural family in the remote village of Basti, Uttar Pradesh, India; to a high level position with a UN agency tells an exciting, real-life story of a high achiever, a visionary, an innovator, and a dynamic leader.

His father wanted him to be a veterinarian, but was disappointed to learn that due to minimum age requirements, his son could not be accepted into the veterinary college. As a result, the young man was sent to the Government Agriculture College, in Kanpur, where he obtained his Bachelor's degree in Agriculture. After earning his Master's degree in Agricultural Extension, he became a college lecturer – there again, was the disheartened dad, who wanted him to be an Agricultural Officer! However, when our honorary recipient was subsequently appointed the Vice Chancellor of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), the beaming father then publicly admitted for the first time that his son had exceeded all his expectations.

Certainly, Abdul Waheed Khan's accomplishments have exceeded all expectations. He currently occupies the position of President, Talal Abu Ghazaleh Business University, Bahrain and Senior Advisor to Arab Open University. After an illustrious career as Vice Chancellor at IGNOU, Abdul Waheed spent almost a decade serving as Assistant Director General for Communication and Information at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). For all his experience and wisdom, he was invited to sit on the Wawasan Open University's International Advisory Board.

An internationally recognised leader in education and application of ICTs – Information and Communication Technologies - Abdul Waheed has proven to be a true global citizen with strong commitment to improving the lives of marginalised groups and communities by empowering them with access to information and knowledge.

It is worth noting that Abdul Waheed was one of the forerunners in anticipating the development of knowledge societies, recognising the economic, social and cultural consequences of the rapid development of ICTs. In pursuit of a vision that all societies should have equal access to information and knowledge, within an atmosphere of respect for cultural diversity, he has designed and developed strategic initiatives in the application of ICTs in open and distance education.

Upon completing his PhD in Mass Communication from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA in 1973, Abdul Waheed joined G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology as Associate Director-in-Charge of the Communication Centre. He developed it into a Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Communication, recognised by UNESCO and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In 1975, he was appointed Director of Programmes at All India Radio where he managed a national rural broadcasting network. Driven by his vision of granting access to knowledge, he launched Farm School on air, educating farmers in scientific agriculture. In 1980, UNESCO appointed Abdul Waheed as their Communication Research Specialist, assisting the Government of Bangladesh in the development of broadcasting services. Impressed by his performance, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) followed suit and appointed him as their Communication Specialist in 1984 to assist the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Forestry in Nepal to develop capacities in communication.

In 1986, he was invited by the newly created Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to be the founding Director of the Communication Division. In this capacity, Abdul Waheed built a state of the art educational media production facility.

He subsequently joined the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in Vancouver, Canada in 1992; firstly as Senior Programme Officer, and finally as Principal Communications Specialist in 1998. At the COL, he assisted open and distance learning institutions in developing Commonwealth countries, particularly in the dire African nations, to develop human resources in educational media.

He returned to India in 1998 to take up the position of Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU (1998 – 2000), which was then one of the largest universities in the world. There, he was responsible for strategic planning, resource mobilisation and management of a knowledge network, which included a consortium of 72 universities. After being appointed Chairman of the Distance Education Council, responsible for coordinating all open and distance learning programmes in India, Abdul Waheed launched an educational broadcasting network of television and radio.

In 2001, Abdul Waheed was nominated to the position of Assistant Director General for Communication and Information within UNESCO, where he provided, until his recent retirement, valuable leadership to the Communication and Information Sector.

Abdul Waheed has earned a global leadership position in fostering digital opportunities for social and economic inclusion. He represented UNESCO at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Global Knowledge Partnership, and Strategic Council for the Global Alliance for ICT for Development and the UN Secretary General's Task Force on ICT. He has demonstrated great leadership in distance education, learning technologies and development communication, and has served as President of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), Vice-President of the International Council of Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and Chairman of Digital Opportunity Trust (Canada).

For his extensive contributions, Abdul Waheed has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the:

Rajiv Gandhi National Integration Award (1998)

Commonwealth of Learning's Distinguished Service Award (1998)

Super Brain of India Gold Award (2000)

India Millennium Award for Education and World Peace (2000)

Honorary Doctorate of Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi, India (2005)

Dayawati Modi Foundation Award for Art, Culture and Education (2006)

Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning (2008)

Kempelen Medal of the Slovak Technical University (2009)

The conferment of the Honorary Doctor of Letters is therefore an appropriate acknowledgement and recognition of Abdul Waheed as a self-made man, a visionary, a champion for the lesser people, and achiever in global education.

It is with great honour and pleasure that I present Dr. Abdul Waheed KHAN for the award of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

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