

Trinh Xuan Thuan Wins UNESCO's Kalinga Prize

UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – has awarded its 2009 Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science to University of Virginia astronomer and author Trinh Xuan Thuan; and to Indian physicist and educator Tash Pal.

The prizes will be awarded Nov. 5 during a ceremony at World Science Day in Budapest.

The UNESCO Kalinga Prize, created in 1952, recognizes distinguished careers in writing, editing lecturing, broadcasting or film productions that interpret science, research and technology to the public. The objective of the prize is part of UNESCO's efforts to promote public awareness of science.

Previous winners have included scientists, journalists, educators and writers – among them, Louis de Broglie, Bertrand Russell, Arthur Clarke, Fred Hoyle and Margaret Mead.

Thuan is a well-respected astronomer and best-selling author of popular books on science and nature. His research is focused on the evolution of galaxies and the chemical composition of the universe. He has taught astronomy at U.Va. since 1976.

Born and raised in Vietnam and educated in Vietnam and France, Trinh writes in French, and has published seven books, some of them best sellers in France. Several have been translated into English and several other languages.

His books include, *The Ways of Light* (2007); *Origins* (2003); *The Quantum and the Lotus* (2001); *The Secret Melody* (2001); *Chaos and Harmony* (2000); *Birth of the Universe* (1993); and *An Astrophysicist* (1992).

In 2007 the French Academy awarded its prestigious Grand Prix Moron to Thuan for *The Ways of Light*. That award is roughly equivalent to the American Pulitzer Prize or National Book Award.