



Marketing of achievements through fake awards – A ‘novel’ trend in modern academic and research systems

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Abstract: This article deals with fake awards that can be purchased by paying money. The University Grants Commission (UGC) should think of blacklisting such fake awards and preparing a list of quality awards under the Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE), which can be considered as true recognition for researchers/ faculty members.

Keywords: Fake awards; University Grants Commission

Introduction

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has set up a Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) to ensure academic misconduct prevention that includes plagiarism in academic writing among students, faculty, researchers, and staff. The CARE has been set up to identify, continuously monitor, and maintain the “UGC-CARE Reference List of Quality Journals.” This is for promoting quality research, academic integrity, and publication ethics in all Indian Universities. This is also for encouraging high-quality publications in reputed journals to achieve higher global ranks and prevent publications in dubious/ predatory/ sub-standard journals that tarnish the image of Indian academia.

There is another related aspect that also needs immediate attention i.e., fake awards. Many of us often receive unsolicited mails from certain organizations nominating us for ‘Best Scientist of the Year Award’, ‘Best Faculty of the Year Award’, ‘Distinguished Faculty Award’, ‘International Scientist Awards on Engineering, Science, and Medicine’, ‘Best Faculty/ Scientist/ Principal/College student/ Lifetime Achievement and Fellowship Awards’, ‘Educational Excellence Awards for Higher

Education’, ‘Research Excellence Award’, ‘Woman Scientist Award’, ‘Outstanding Scientist Award’ etc. These awards are given in various fields, including plant taxonomy. In some mails, it is stated that the awards will be given in certain categories, and we can submit our CV for the same. Somewhere in the instructions (or during the later stage of correspondences), it is also stated that the awardees are required to pay registration/ nomination/ entry fees for receiving the same.

The fees usually range between Rs. 1,500 – 11,000/- and cannot be waived by any means. In essence, such awards have nothing to do with work's quality or the contributions to academia or research field. The only criterion for getting these is by paying money. It has often been noticed that after ‘purchasing’ such awards, some people advertise the information in local newspapers, social media, etc., for gaining popularity and recognition, which is fatally detrimental to the education system. It misguides the young researchers/ faculty members and might also adversely motivate others to engage in such unethical practices for gaining easy recognition and popularity in society and the scientific community.

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Unfortunately, such fake awards also help the awardee to get job/promotions, depriving other deserving candidates. In our opinion, the UGC should think of blacklisting such fake awards and preparing a list of quality awards under the Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE), which can be considered as true recognition for researchers/faculty members. The central government

should also think in a similar line to bring genuine prestige to its various research organizations.

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