

Professor Stephen William Hawking - Scientist with an iconic status

Mr Thusitha Malalasekara



Scientist with an iconic status

“Intelligence is the capacity one has to accept challenge” - Hawking
A great scientist of modern times, who developed new theories around Black-hole, Hawking’s radiation (Black hole radiation), Quantum mechanics and gravity which are the greatest challenges facing theoretical physics even today.

Author of many scientific texts, including “ The large scale structure of space time”. (ê George Ellis), “ General relativity:an Einstein centenary survey” (ê.W.Israel) 300 years of gravitation (ê.W.Israel)



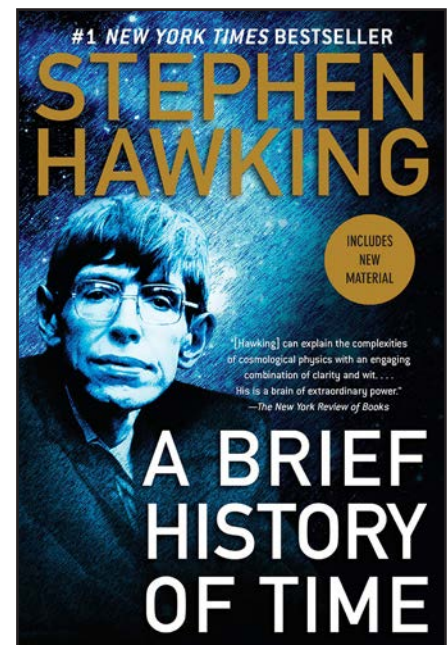
Popular Science writer, His works included “A brief history of time (1988), copies of which were sold to more than 10 million people around the world, and translated to more than 15 languages. It not only raised Hawking to stardom, but also gave a fresh face to theoretical physics. His other popular publications are “Black holes and baby universe”, and other essays, “The universe in a nut shell”, “The grand design and my brief history”.

Freelance Science writer, who contributed to a number of international scientific magazines and newspapers.

Excellent Broadcaster, conducting and participating in

many radio programmes of BBC and other popular international radio channels, providing his views and explanations.

Versatile Television Personality, appearing in “Star Trek” “The next generation.” “The Big Bang



Theory” and also in the cartoon series titled “The Simpsons” In some of these programmes he acted the character of Hawking. He also conducted and participated in many TV programmes produced by B.B.C. , C.N.N and other reputed TV stations.



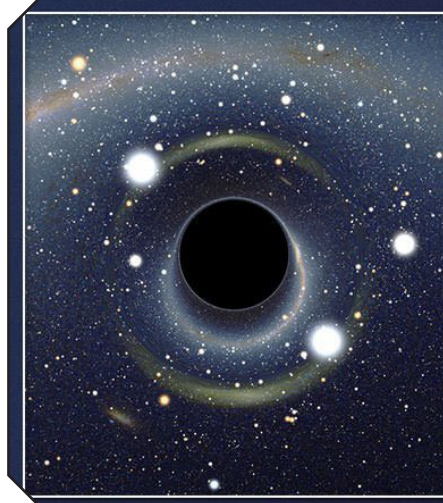
being it can be no one other than Professor Stephen Hawking.

Though his cultural status amplified by his disability and the media storm it involved, often over shadowed his scientific legacy. However he was the most recognizable scientist of our era. He had an endearing source of humour and a super human mind.

Stephen Hawking was born on 8th January 1942 in Oxford in England. It was exactly the date of the 300th death anniversary of Gallilio. When he was 8 years old, his family moved to St.Albans

of Cambridge.

His intention was to study, and to conduct research in Cosmology under the famous astrophysicist, Fred Hoyle. But his wish could not be fulfilled due to the selection of the full compliment of students to work under Hoyle was finalised by then. Stephen Hawking had to study under Physicist, Dennis Sciama. Fred Hoyle was a popular scientist, who used to travel widely delivering lectures, attending seminars and workshops inside and outside the country. Therefore he was seldom available for the students in the department. But



Contributed to the cinema industry, through the “Theory of Everything” in which his early life was the subject. This 2014 production made its main actor Eddie Redmayne an Oscar winner. **Consultant to universities, institutions, organizations and media**, on Black-holes, time travel, cosmic happenings, quantum theory, artificial intelligence, alien life as well as on the health facilities of the country.

If all this and many other multi-skills were present in one human

where he got his primary education. He entered the University College, Oxford in 1952. Though his father wanted Stephen to study Medicine, his preference was mathematics. Unfortunately mathematics was not available as a subject in the university college, where he pursued Physics, and at the end of 3 years he was awarded a first degree in Natural Science.

In October 1962 Stephen Hawking entered the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP) at the University

Sciama was available around for guidance, and to stimulate the research students.





Hawking's distinguished academic career earned him the doctoral degree in 1965, and was a Research fellow, (1965). Subsequently he became a Fellow of Distinction in Science (1969), and won the Adams prize as well as many other qualifications. Finally he was appointed as Professor of Gravitational Physics (1977) at the DAMTP. From 1979-2009 he

held the Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics at the university. This chair was founded in 1663 from the money left by Rev. Henry Lucas in his last will, which was earlier held by famous scientists such as Issac Barrow and Isaac Newton. From 2009 onwards he was the Director of Research in a affiliated institution of DAMTP.



Professor Hawking in his life time had received 13 honorary degrees. He also won many awards, medals and prizes including CBE (1962), Companion of Honour (1989), Presidential Medal of Freedom (2009), Fundamental Physics Prize (2013), Copley Medal (2006) and the Wolf Foundation Prize (1988).

He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, The U.S.National Academy of Science, and Pontifical Academy of Science.

He achieved all there accolades while being inflicted with a progressive disability which was diagnosed shortly after his 21st birthday in 1963. As a patient suffering from “Amyotropic Lateral Sclerosis-ALS” a degenerative motor neuron disease that quickly deteriorate the ability of voluntary muscles, doctors gave him 2 years to live, with disability to communicate and moving around.

Although Hawking's body may have weakened by the disease, his mind and intellect remained sharp. In spite of being wheel chair bound and dependent on a computerized voice system for communication, Stephen Hawking continued to combine his family life (He was married to Jane Wilde and had 3 children, Robert, Lucy and Tim) with his research into Theoretical Physics until his death.

Professor Stephen William Hawking died on 14th March 2018.

Mr Thusitha Malalasekara

Writer is an author, journalist, editor, broadcaster and TV programme moderator with experience of nearly 40 years and has won several national awards. He edited the magazines “Sapatha” and “Vidya”.

He worked in Health Education Bureau and as an assistant consultant in formulating communication strategies for reproductive health for UNFPA. He is also a member of the Science Popularization Committee of the NSF and editor of Vidurava (Sinhala).

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