

ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE ENG. (DR.) A. C. VISVALINGAM AWARD

The **Eng. (Dr.) A. C. Visvalingam Award (ACV Award)** stands today as one of the most distinguished recognitions conferred by The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL). It is not merely an award, but a symbol of professional excellence, ethical commitment, and meaningful service to society through engineering.

Instituted in honour of Eng. Dr. A. C. Visvalingam—an eminent engineer of international repute and an Honorary Life Member of IESL—the award reflects the values he embodied throughout his remarkable career spanning over six decades. Known for his analytical rigor, professional courage, and unwavering commitment to good governance, Dr. Visvalingam set a benchmark for engineers to aspire to. This award, therefore, celebrates not only technical brilliance but also integrity, leadership, and dedication to national and global development.

Purpose and Significance of the Award

The ACV Award is designed to recognize an outstanding engineer who has demonstrated exemplary commitment to the profession while making significant contributions to society. The evaluation goes far beyond a single achievement; it is a holistic recognition of sustained excellence across multiple domains—technical competency, innovation, leadership, governance, resourcefulness, and commitment to safety and environmental sustainability.

What distinguishes this award is its emphasis on **ethical engineering practice and societal impact**. In an era where engineering decisions increasingly influence economic stability, environmental balance, and public safety, the importance of such recognition cannot be overstated. The award serves as a powerful reminder that engineering is not only about infrastructure and systems, but also about responsibility, accountability, and nation-building.

My Journey as a Recipient

Being selected as a recipient of this prestigious award has been one of the most humbling and defining moments of my professional career. Reflecting on my journey, I recognize that this honour is not attributed to any single project or milestone, but rather to a sustained commitment to engineering practice grounded in strong fundamentals, ethical conduct, and service to society.

Throughout my career in civil engineering, I have had the opportunity to engage in a diverse range of projects spanning water resources, transportation, healthcare infrastructure, and urban development. My work has been guided by a multidisciplinary approach, integrating structural, geotechnical, and hydraulic engineering principles to deliver practical and sustainable solutions.

Equally important has been my commitment to **innovation and adaptability**. Engineering challenges, particularly in a developing country context like Sri Lanka, often demand resourcefulness and “out-of-the-box” thinking. Applying fundamental engineering principles in creative ways has enabled me to contribute effectively even under constraints.

In addition to professional practice, my involvement in **academic and professional institutions** has been a cornerstone of my journey. Through mentoring young engineers, contributing to professional bodies, and participating in knowledge-sharing platforms, I have endeavoured to support the growth and evolution of the engineering community in Sri Lanka.

I believe that my adherence to the core values outlined in the award criteria—competence, integrity, leadership, innovation, and service—along with an unblemished professional record, would have contributed to my selection for this honour.

The Broader Context

The introduction of this award came at a critical time when the engineering profession, both locally and globally, was facing unprecedented challenges. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with economic instability and governance issues, underscored the urgent need for principled and resilient engineering leadership.

In such a context, the ACV Award plays a vital role in **reaffirming the importance of ethical practice, transparency, and accountability**. It encourages engineers to stand firm against corruption, mismanagement, and short-term thinking, and instead contribute to long-term, sustainable development.

Guidance for Prospective Applicants

As the call for applications for the 2026 ACV Award approaches, I would strongly encourage eligible engineers to consider applying or seeking nomination. This is not merely a competition—it is an opportunity for self-reflection and professional recognition.

Prospective applicants should carefully align their submissions with the evaluation criteria, which include:

- Demonstrated excellence in engineering practice and project leadership
- Innovation and creative problem-solving
- Resourcefulness and contributions beyond routine professional duties
- Leadership and commitment to good governance
- Focus on safety, sustainability, and environmental stewardship
- Strong adherence to professional ethics and role modelling

Applicants are expected to present a **comprehensive career narrative**, supported by evidence, that highlights their contributions across these domains. Importantly, the award recognizes sustained impact over time—typically requiring over 15 years of professional experience, including significant contributions following attainment of Corporate Membership (CEng) of IESL.

Equally crucial is the role of **credible sponsors**, including Fellow Members of IESL, whose endorsements carry significant weight in the evaluation process.

A Call to Inspire

I urge all engineers who have dedicated themselves to advancing the profession and contributing to society with integrity and commitment to step forward. Whether through innovation, leadership, mentorship, or service, your contributions matter—and they deserve to be recognized.

The ACV Award is more than a personal accolade; it is a platform to **inspire the next generation**, to showcase what is possible through dedication and ethical practice, and to reinforce public trust in the engineering profession.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, the Eng. (Dr.) A. C. Visvalingam Award continues to serve as a beacon of excellence within the engineering community of Sri Lanka. It challenges us to uphold the highest standards, to innovate responsibly, and to contribute meaningfully to society.

Let us embrace the spirit of this award—not only by recognizing excellence but by striving to embody it in our daily professional lives. Through collective effort and unwavering commitment, we can continue to build a stronger, more sustainable, and more ethical future for our nation.

Eng. K.L.S. Sahabandu

B.Sc.Eng.(Hons.), Pg. Dip. (Hyd. Eng.), M.Sc. (Structural Eng.), C.Eng., M.Cons.E.(S.L.), M.I.C.E (London), H.L.F.I.E. (S.L.), Hon. F.S.S.E. (S.L)
AWARD WINNER - 2023