

## Seminar On Nicholas Copernicus and Astronomy

The scientific community throughout the world will celebrate during 1973 the 500th birth anniversary of Nicholas Copernicus whose work in astronomy not only gave a new dimension in astronomical thinking but provided one of the major factors for European renaissance and the emergence of modern science. In India, a two-day seminar was held at New Delhi on February 19-20, 1973 to commemorate the 500th birth centenary of the Polish savant. It was jointly organized by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare of the Government of India and the Indian National Science Academy. Presided over by Professor D. S. Kothari, the President of the Academy, the proceedings were formally inaugurated by the Minister of Education, Professor S. Nurul Hasan, who also released a Hindi translation of Copernicus' masterpiece *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. The function was attended, among others, by two distinguished scientists from Poland and one from the U.S.S.R.

In the first session of the symposium devoted to the work of Copernicus, Professor Jozef Smak of Poland presented a paper on 'Copernicus and his theory', Professor Eugene Kharadze spoke on 'Copernicus and modern science', while 'Commentariolus' was the subject of a paper by Dr. S. C. Joshi and the 'Heliocentric Theory' that of a paper by Dr. S. K. Ghosh.

The second session, devoted to ancient and medieval astronomy, heard and discussed a number of papers from Indian scholars currently working in the field. The various aspects of Indian astronomy covered included: the main characteristics of Indian astronomy of the period by Shri T. S. Kuppanna Sastry, contribution by Indian astronomy by Shri P. M. Upadhye, heliocentric theory and Indian astronomy by Dr. C. G. Pendse, prime meridian in Indian astronomy by Dr. R. N. Rai, Aryabhata's theory of the rotation of earth by Dr. Bina

Chatterjee, the *Pancasiddhantika* by Dr. K. S. Shukla, the Kapitthaka of Varahamihira by Professor D. G. Dhavale, astronomical triangle in *Tantrasamgraha* by Dr. R. C. Gupta, contribution to the cult of sacrifice to the development of Indian astronomy by D. G. Sundaramoorthy, astronomy in the *Puranas* by Shri N. Gangadharan, planetary retrograde motion by Dr. D. Arka Somayaji, epicyclic eccentric planetary theories in Indian astronomy by Shri S. N. Sen and Greek influence in Indian astronomy by Shri M. L. Sharma.

In the third session, Professor Andrzej Trautman spoke on Copernicus and modern physics and cosmology, Dr. S. M. R. Ansari presented a paper on 'Arabic antecedents of Copernican method', and 'Pre-Copernican astronomy' was the subject of a paper by Dr. M. C. Pande.

The fourth session, devoted to modern astronomical researches in India, presented a broad summary of work being pursued at several centres in India. Dr. M. K. Vainu Bappu of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Kodaikanal gave a brief history of the Kodaikanal Observatory going back to the 18th century, discussed some of the important works in solar physics by Evershed and others and summarized current work being pursued by his Institute. Professor R. V. Karandikar of the Nizamiah Observatory and Dr. S. D. Sinval of the U.P. State Observatory reported on the work of their respective observatories. Professor M. S. Vardya, Professor T. K. Menon and Professor B. V. Sreekantan of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research summarized the work of their respective groups in the field of theoretical astrophysics, radio astronomy and X-rays from space.

A picture exhibition on Copernicus was another attractive feature of the celebrations.

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