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Glass Ceiling Smashed: Meet the 1st Woman President of the Astronomical Society of India

In charge of Ladakh's Hanle Observatory, G C Anupama is also the India group head of the international team of scientists that is building the \$1 billion Thirty Meter Telescope in Hawaii!

by **Rinchen Norbu Wangchuk** February 20, 2019, 3:00 pm

The Astronomical Society of India, the leading association of professional astronomers in the country, recently elected its first woman president. Dr G C Anupama, a senior professor and Dean of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics in Bengaluru, is also the second person from Karnataka to hold this honour after ISRO's former Chairman Professor U R Rao.

Dr Anupama is also a recipient of the Karnataka government's CV Raman Young Scientist Award for the year 2001.

At present, she is part of an international team engaged in setting up a Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) which would enable astronomers to conduct research infeasible with current instruments.

“The TMT is designed for near-ultraviolet to mid-infrared (0.31 to 28 μm wavelengths) observations, featuring adaptive optics to assist in correcting image blur,” says **this description** of the telescope. It will be built at an estimated cost of over USD 1 billion.

As a member of the Indian delegation, her team has been tasked with providing some critical components.



Dr G C Anupama (Source: **Growth Pire**/Twitter)

Through the course of her storied academic careers, she has presented numerous papers on Astrophysics (supernovae) at international conferences, besides leading the charge for the design and construction of the famous Himalayan telescope at the Hanle Observatory in Ladakh. It is one of the world's highest sites for optical, infrared and gamma-ray telescopes—which studies supernovas.

“We try and understand the outburst by analysing the type of star that might have caused it and other topics regarding the same,” she told **The New Indian Express**.

What's remarkable about her rise to the top is that the number of women in the fields of Astronomy and Astrophysics in India is very low.

According to **this report**, women make up a mere eight per cent of the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) scientific and technical staff, with no woman ever having headed it since it was founded in 1963.

UNESCO **notes** that women comprise just 14 per cent of 2.8 lakh scientists, engineers and technologists working in R&D institutions across India – versus the global average of 28.4 per cent. However, according to Dr Anupama, this dynamic is changing, particularly at IIA.

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/172950/gc-anupama-first-woman-astronomical-society-india/>