

Prof. Thanu Padmanabhan



Prof. Thanu Padmanabhan was born (1957) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India. He obtained his BSc, MSc degree from University College, Thiruvananthapuram with gold medal. He took Ph.D degree from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai and became a faculty member there in 1980. His field of research includes gravitation, structure formation in the universe and quantum gravity. He made several contributions related to the analysis and modelling of dark energy in the universe and the interpretation of gravity as an emergent phenomenon. His research contributions have made a significant effect on the subject of gravitation and cosmology. He held various faculty positions at TIFR during 1980-1992 and also spent a year (in 1986-87) at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge for the Post-Doctoral Research. He moved to IUCAA in 1992 and served as its Dean, Core Academic Programmes, for 18 years (1997-2015). He has also served as Adjunct Faculty of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (Mumbai), the Harish-Chandra Research Institute (Allahabad), the Raman Research Institute (Bangalore) and the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER, Pune) at different periods in his career. He served as the Chairman (2006–09) of the Time Allocation Committee of the Giant Meterwave Radio Telescope of NCRA. He was the Chairman (2008-11) of the Indian National Science Academy's National Committee which interfaces with the activities of the International Astronomical Union.

He was elected as the President of the Cosmology Commission (2009-2012) of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and was providing advice to IAU activities in this field. He was elected in 2011 as the Chairman of the Astrophysics Commission (2011-2014) of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) and co-ordinated the activities of IUPAP in this area. He has also been a Visiting Faculty at many institutes including the California Institute of Technology, Princeton University, and a Sackler Distinguished Astronomer of the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge. In addition to his scientific research, Padmanabhan actively engaged to popularize science and has given over 300 popular science lectures and has authored more than 100 popular science articles. He did a comic strip serial "The Story of Physics" intended for school children, Published by Vigyan Prasar (New Delhi). It was translated into half a dozen regional Indian languages. To commemorate the International Year of Astronomy (IYA) 2009, he published (with J.V.Narlikar and Samir Dhurde) the IYA Astronomical Diary 2009, which comprises 53 illustrated pages of astronomical information. In 2019, he co-authored with Vasanthi Padmanabhan the "Dawn of Science" published by Springer. This is a comprehensive and delighting book which takes the reader back to the early history of all the sciences, starting from antiquity and ending roughly at the time of Newton. He has published nearly 300 research papers and reviewer in International journals and authored more than 10 books. He was ranked 24th amongst top scientists in the world by the Stanford University for his research in Theoretical Physics.

Prof. Padmanabhan has received several National and International awards including: M.P. Birla Memorial Award, TWAS Prize in Physics, Infosys Science Foundation Prize for Physical Sciences, J.C. Bose National Fellowship (DST), INSA Vainu Bappu Gold Medal, Padma Shri in 2007, Miegunah Fellowship Award (University of Melbourne, Australia.), Homi Bhabha Fellowship, G.D. Birla Award for Scientific Research, Al-Khwarizmi International Award, The Millennium Medal (CSIR), Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award, The Birla Science Prize, Young Scientist Award, (Indian National Science Academy) etc. He was an elected fellow of the World Academy of Science and all the three National Academies of Science in India.

Prof. Thanu Padmanabhan passed away on 17th September 2021.