

Kerala Astronomer Aswin Sekhar has an Entire Asteroid Named After him

Earlier this year, the International Astronomical Union honored the Indian meteor astronomer Aswin Sekhar by naming a minor planet after the solar system dynamicist.



Paris, France Aug 11, 2023 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - In June of 2023, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) named an asteroid after Aswin Sekhar, the 38-year-old Indian meteor astronomer. It was done to honor the astronomer's contribution to the field of meteors in meteoroid stream dynamics. The asteroid was discovered in 2000 by the Lowell Observatory Near-Earth-Object Search program, which was funded by NASA and now after the renaming, it will be called '(33928) Aswinsekhar = 2000 LJ27'.

Apart from Aswin, three other Indians had asteroids named after them for their honorary contribution to the field. They are astronomer Kumar Venkataramani, planetary geologist Rutu Parekh, and senior flight dynamics engineer Ashok K. Verma. Together they have finally joined the elite group of Indian scientists who have had the same honor like CV Raman, Srinivasa Ramanujan, Vikram Sarabhai, Vainu Bappu, and Subramanyan Chandrasekhar. Aswin and other Indian scientists and astronomers were honored through a process which is "non-ceremonial nomenclature". Here accomplished individuals from the astrophysics field can nominate a fellow scientist for this honor.

The news was definitely overwhelming for the meteor astronomer who said, "The recognition was particularly significant as my expertise lies in meteor sciences, an area considered niche even within the broader field of astrophysics". He then continued, "Most attention tends to gravitate towards cosmology, stellar physics, or solar physics, which boasts a much larger community of professionals. This recognition by the IAU felt like a tribute to the legacy of meteor scientists who came before me and those

who diligently worked in the field despite lacking acknowledgment.”

It was two prominent celestial events that sparked the interest of the Indian meteor astronomer in studying the sky. The first one was when the Halle-Bopp comet appeared in the sky in 1997 as he recalled, "I visited my uncle posted in the Assam rifles in Nagaland, Kohima. And I remember seeing this beautiful comet. The sky was spectacular." The second one was the Leonid meteor shower in 1999. The celestial fireworks from the meteor shower left an ineradicable mark on his mind that later got him into this field. Aswin now works as a solar system dynamicist whose day-to-day work includes and mainly focuses on understanding and predicting orbits in the sky.

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