

## **The Space Girl**

Man's quest to explore newer frontiers of space has propelled him into yet another space sojourn. This time to the spectacular planet of Saturn. The ringed planet as it is called, has always been a constant source of curiosity for space explorers. Studying the composition of rings around the planet is only one of the many mission objectives of Cassini, the largest spacecraft ever sent into space. As is the case with most other space missions, Cassini is also expected to provide vital information about the possibility of life on other planets. And if any body thought that Cassini would be sending photographs from Saturn soon, they would be thoroughly disappointed. Cassini would have to travel billions of kilometers before reaching Saturn in July 2004! On the way, it is scheduled to fly past the other planets in the solar system including Earth, Venus and Jupiter before ultimately reaching Saturn. Cassini will send valuable information about Saturn for the next four years after that. Unlike other spacecrafts, Cassini is not powered by solar energy because of Saturn's large distance from the Sun.

Cassini is equipped with the most sophisticated instruments on board including a unique microphone which picks up sounds of distant space, cameras, magnetometers, radars and most importantly a detachable probe – the Huygen's probe which descends on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. Watchout for the future issues of Technoworld to know more about Cassini's advances.

Staying on in space, it was a proud moment for India on November 19, 1997. Indian born Kalpana Chawla made history by becoming the first Indian woman to go to space. The 34-year old Chawla was one of the mission specialists on board the space shuttle Columbia which blasted off into space from Kennedy Space Centre, the US.

Ms. Chawla who is the second Indian to go to space after Captain Rakesh Sharma, was born and brought up in India.

Kalpana Chawla's achievement would have a great influence on the Indian psyche. There's no doubt, this will inspire a whole generation to achieve greater heights in future.

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