

Foreword

The fourth International Conference on Gravitation and Cosmology (ICGC 2000) was held during 4th and 7th January, 2000 at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. The conference was attended by about 100 participants from India and abroad. In contrast to the earlier ICGC meetings, this meeting was smaller, the idea being largely motivated by the need to focus on a few topics as opposed to a broader spectrum. ICGC 2000 focused on two topics of contemporary interest: (i) cosmology, (ii) black holes and other compact objects. There were ten plenary lectures which were delivered in the morning sessions by experts in the respective fields. The afternoon sessions were devoted to the four workshops where new results were presented by a large number of participants. Additionally, there were a couple of special lectures – one on *Einstein's days and works in Prague* by Jiri Bicak and another semi-popular lecture (the S Datta Majumdar Memorial Lecture) on *Black holes* delivered by Ramesh Narayan. Jayant Narlikar treated the audience to an enthralling after-dinner speech at the conference banquet.

The conference was made possible due to the help and support of a large number of people and organisations. The funding agencies include IMSc, Chennai; RRI, Bangalore; IOP, Bhubaneswar; SNBNCBS, Calcutta; IIA, Bangalore; IUCAA, Pune; CSIR, New Delhi; DST, New Delhi; ISRO, Bangalore; ASICTP, Trieste, Italy; and IIT, Kharagpur. We thank them all heartily for their response and timely support. IIT, Kharagpur provided the infrastructural base and a generous helping hand in many visible as well as seemingly invisible matters, ranging from those trivial, to ones which were non-trivial and complex. We warmly thank the people from all walks of life here at Kharagpur. IUCAA, Pune, though situated afar, deserves special mention for having provided active help through its own infrastructure – special thanks go to Snehalata Shankar, V Chellathurai and Susan Mathew for their immediate response and action to our numerous queries from IIT. We gratefully acknowledge the hard work put up by faculty members and students here at IIT, Kharagpur and, in particular, by Akhilesh Singh, without whom much of our success would never have been achieved.

The publication of these proceedings has been made possible by the funds provided by ISRO. We thank R Kasturirangan and other officials at ISRO for their support.

The plenary lectures by Ramesh Narayan, B Sathyaprakash and T Souradeep unfortunately, could not be included in these proceedings due to certain unavoidable circumstances. We would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for their cooperation as well as other speakers and participants who have contributed to the success of this meeting. Finally, we thank the editorial board of *Pramana* for having agreed to bring out the proceedings as a Special Issue.

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