

Professor Ajit Kembhavi, PKC and IUCAA, Pune

Ajit Kembhavi is the Principal Investigator of the Pune Knowledge Cluster, along with Professor L. S. Shashidhara.

Kembhavi is a Professor Emeritus and former Raja Ramanna Fellow at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune. He was Director there until August 2015. He did his Ph. D. from TIFR, Mumbai with Professor Jayant Narlikar, and was a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge.

Professor Kembhavi is a distinguished astronomer who works on galaxies, quasars and other extragalactic objects, various areas of high energy astrophysics, X-ray and radio pulsars. He has published a large number of research papers and several books in English and Marathi, the latter including a He has co-authored a popular science book in Marathi on “Gravitational waves: a new window to the Universe” with Prof. Ajit Kembhavi. The book has bagged the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule award given by the Government of Maharashtra for the year 2018.

Professor Kembhavi is involved in many international collaborations and for several years been involved with the Thirty Metre Telescope (TMT) Project and the LIGO India projects. He is now on the Apex Committees of these projects and a member of the LIGO USA Oversight Committee.

In the field of data driven science, Professor Kembhavi has led the Virtual Observatory-India project for fifteen years, which has made important contributions to data management, analysis, visualisation and the development of tools for statistical analysis, much of which was done in collaboration with Anand Deshpande and Persistent Systems Ltd. He now is head of a Big Data project supported by the National Knowledge Network (NKN), and works on applications of Deep learning to astronomy and biology.

Professor Kembhavi has been a member of the Space Commission and is presently a member of the ISRO’s Apex Science Board. He is Vice-President of the International Astronomical Union and former President, Astronomical Society of India. He was Chair of the International Virtual Observatory Alliance, Chair of the Scientific Council of the Astronomical Data Centre at Strasbourg and Chair of the Council of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics. He is a Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences, India.