

Obituary: Prof Rohini Godbole

12 November 1952 – 25 October 2024

TWAS mourns the death of Professor Rohini M Godbole. Professor Godbole, a towering figure in particle physics and a passionate advocate for women in science, has left us, leaving an enduring legacy of groundbreaking contributions to theoretical physics and an unwavering commitment to mentorship and bridging gender gaps in science. Known for her profound insights into the Higgs boson and quantum chromodynamics, her work has profoundly shaped the field of high-energy physics, both in India and globally. As a pioneering particle physicist, her contributions were instrumental in advancing our understanding of the Standard Model and paving the way for deeper studies on the properties and interactions of fundamental particles. Her publications, often cited as seminal in her field, reflect her deep analytical skills and dedication to expanding the boundaries of human knowledge.

Beyond her scientific achievements, Prof Godbole's was an active member of TWAS and the National Science Academies in India. As Chair of the TWAS Gender Advisory Committee, she initiated an insightful and granular analysis of the root cause of gender divides by scientific discipline to unravel systemic gender gaps that was exemplary of her commitment and attention to detail in whatever she undertook. Her thoughtful analyses and dedication to equality in science were invaluable. Notwithstanding her health challenges over the past year, in February this year in New Dehi she launched the SWATI portal (**S**cience for **W**omen – **A** Technology and Innovation portal), a joint project across the three Indian Academies of Sciences to connect a network of women scientists across India to both profile their accomplishments as role models for the next generation and facilitate a peer learning and support initiative for early and mid-career scientists. I was privileged to be at the launch and witness Prof Godbole in action. Her influence, impact, and effective and inspiring leadership style was evident in the presence of high level government officials from different Ministeries and each of the Presidents of the Indian Science Academies; the large number of volunteers; the impressive programme and high level women scientists who delivered outstanding presentations – all on a Sunday!. Her vision was to extend the Swati portal to be a global resource in partnership with TWAS and OWSD.

Her iconic and legendary presence was tangible by the long lines of participants taking selfies with her or simply wanting to greet her and bask in her presence. Prof Godbole inspired countless students and colleagues alike. She was a vibrant and energetic force, bringing enthusiasm to every project she undertook. She played a key role in facilitating strategic partnerships and collaborations including a key collaboration with IIT Mumbai and ICTP, and was close to concluding on a substantial agreement between the Ministry of Science and Technology and ICTP to advance this partnership.

She was one of the most decorated scientists in India. She received India's Padma Shri, the S.N. Bose Medal from INSA, and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from IIT Bombay as well as the Ordre National de Merite from France. Elected as a Fellow of both INSA and the Indian Academy of Sciences, her accolades reflect her esteemed status in science and her enduring impact on women in STEM.

Her legacy as a mentor and advocate extends beyond her research. After earning her Ph.D. from the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and refining her expertise at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, she joined the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore, where she became a guiding light for students and researchers. She co-founded the Indian chapter of Women in Physics, actively creating pathways for women and girls in STEM fields, and tirelessly fostered inclusive scientific communities. Her work has inspired generations of women scientists to dream big and pursue their aspirations in the face of challenges. Lilavatis Daughters, a collection of biographies of nearly 100 women scientists from India that she co-edited with Prof Ramakrishna Ramaswamy of IIT, India in 2008 will remain an inspiring legacy for generations of young women

Prof Godbole will be remembered not only for her intellectual contributions but also for her kindness, humility, warmth and joy for life and always doing the right thing. Her legacy lives on in the students she mentored, the collaborations she established, and the scientific community she so deeply enriched. Her presence will be sorely missed, but she will remain a guiding light for generations to come.

Our deepest condolences to her Family, Friends and Colleagues.