

## An Indian American Woman in Space: Kalpana Chawla

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Kalpana Chawla was born in Karnal, Haryana but became a U.S. citizen after her marriage to an American flight instructor Jean-Pierre Harrison. So she is called an Indian-American. She graduated from Tagore School Karnal. After this she joined an engineering college. Then, she went for a master's degree to the U.S. After getting that degree, she earned her Ph.D. in aerospace engineering.

After qualifying as a pilot, she applied to NASA for a space shuttle program. It was her success as a pilot that gave her the idea that she could be an astronaut. She was first hired as a research scientist. In 1994, she was selected by NASA for training as an astronaut among others. Thus she became the first Indian-American woman astronaut.

Chawla's first space mission in the space was 15 days, 16 hours and 34 minutes long. The crew included a Japanese and a Ukrainian astronaut. They performed different experiments for a price tag of about 56 million dollars.

When the news about the Columbia disaster broke, there was shock and disbelief. But it became clear that Kalpana Chawla had died. All other crewmembers on the space shuttle had also died.

A journalist wrote that Kalpana Chawla was a heroine. According to him astronaut is a very able person. He has to know everything from biology to astrophysics to aeronautical engineering. An astronaut has encyclopaedic knowledge.

Kalpana Chawla said that a dream can be made a reality. For this one must have the courage and work for it.