

A Daughter's Musings On Yuri Gagarin, The First Man In Space

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<http://www.asianscientist.com/features/elena-gagarin-muses-about-father-yuri-gagarin-vostok-spacecraft-2011/>

AsianScientist (Nov. 7, 2011) - During the 50th year of the first human spaceflight, Elena Gagarin's visit to Mumbai on Tuesday and Wednesday last week was a sheer coincidence. Elena is the daughter of none other than Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space.

Gagarin, whose Vostok spacecraft completed an orbit of the Earth on April 12, 1961, visited Mumbai six months later on October 1961 and addressed a huge rally at the Shivaji Park.

But, Elena did not come to Mumbai to meet cosmonauts and scientists, opting to fly in a different trajectory all together. She is passionately devoted to the world of arts as the director general of several Mocow museums.

In an exclusive 15 minute interview with *Asian Scientist Magazine* a few hours after her arrival, Elena explained that her trip to Mumbai, and subsequently to Rajasthan and New Delhi, was regarding an exhibition of Indian jewelery which has been planned at the Kremlin museum in 2014.

On Wednesday, she visited a number of diamond merchants in Mumbai in connection with the the Kremlin exhibition. Elena told this magazine that she had visited the Chattrapathi Shivaji museum that day and found it very impressive. During a brief visit to the mayor of Mumbai, Shraddha Jadhav, on Tuesday evening, the possibility of a collaboration between Mumbai and Moscow museums was also explored.

Asked about her father's historic space mission, she replied:

“I was too young then and honestly do not remember anything about it,” she said.

Elena was just two years old when Gagarin rocketed into international fame by becoming the world's first spaceman during his 108 mission in 1961. She did, however, elaborate on her the 50th anniversary of her father's flight.

“In this 50th year of my father's spaceflight, there have a lot of events all over the world. These programs were very well organized. It is a very important event, because it is also a history of mankind too. A lot of material was published about him and his flight and even those items which had remained secret all these years finally have become public,” she added.

She said that it was a good idea to install a bust of Gagarin at the Nehru Planetarium. In all probability, it will be fixed towards the end of next month and hopefully, Elena will return to Mumbai for the ceremony.

“Though I had no desire to become a cosmonaut, I feel extremely happy and pleased when people talk to me about my father, remember him fondly, and provide their recollections about him. He was a great person and I feel very proud of him. I have met a number of cosmonauts who knew him very well,” she said.

Elena said that if her father had lived today, he would have undoubtedly continued flying.

“He had a passion for space flight and would have definitely flown to the moon and Mars, worked on new aerospace technologies, and got involved in the Buran program which is the Russian space shuttle,” she said.

Ironically, Gagarin died in an air crash on March 27, 1968 and its cause still remains a mystery.

As for the Buran program with which Gagarin wanted to get involved, it was grounded because of financial and technical reasons.

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