Name _____ Date _____

Science Mastery

Scientist in the Spotlight



Divya Persaud

Planetary Scientist

Divya Persaud is a planetary scientist at Mullard Space Science Laboratory, University College London. At school she studied chemistry, maths and languages and the geology and music composition at university. She was fascinated with geology from a very young age. At the age of 12 became interested in studying **planetary** surfaces using space missions after seeing a documentary about spacecraft in our solar system. One high point of her research career so far was studying a huge canyon on Mars in 3D and learning what it can tell us about the history of the area on Mars near where the Curiosity Rover was moving around. This also included information from pH probes to determine properties of the surface of Mars.

Being a non-traditional scientist has influenced her research ethics and helps her remain balanced but critical. A typical day for Divya is spent using computers to assess and present her data. She also spends time reading research papers to help write her **thesis**. On some exciting days at work, Divya travels to Oxford for planetary rover field trials, where she gets to be part of "mission control" and operate the rovers in Spain and Chile remotely.

As a scientist with both physical and mental disabilities, Divya knows the importance of building a community of supportive people so that everyone can achieve their goals. According to Divya, a good scientist should be curious about new things and have a critical eye to problems and solutions. They should also be able to communicate their research to everyone so that it is easily understandable. She believes in the idea of spreading her knowledge because everyone has the right to know about space.

The aspect of her work that she enjoys the most is the opportunity to travel to various places for conferences. She gets to meet people from all over the world and from different walks of life and learn how they think and approach the same problems that she faces. However, it can be quite **daunting** working independently as there are only a small group of people working in this field of space research, so most of the time it ends up being the first time something is done. At these times, it becomes hard to decide the right course of action and also when is the appropriate time to let go of a problem and move on.

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In her work, Divya uses a lot of **aesthetic** judgement. This means thinking about how one looks at images of space and how it can be portrayed to give useful information. All of these decisions are governed by creativity. When not doing research, Divya enjoys making music and writing.

Activity

Use the scientist's profile to answer the following questions:

1. What is the scientist's job?

2. Briefly describe what the scientist does in a typical day.

3. What skills do they need for this job?

4. What do you think is the most interesting part of their job?

5. Describe how this job links with the science you have learned in this unit

6. State the definition of any words in **bold**.