

# Thane astronomer discovers six comets

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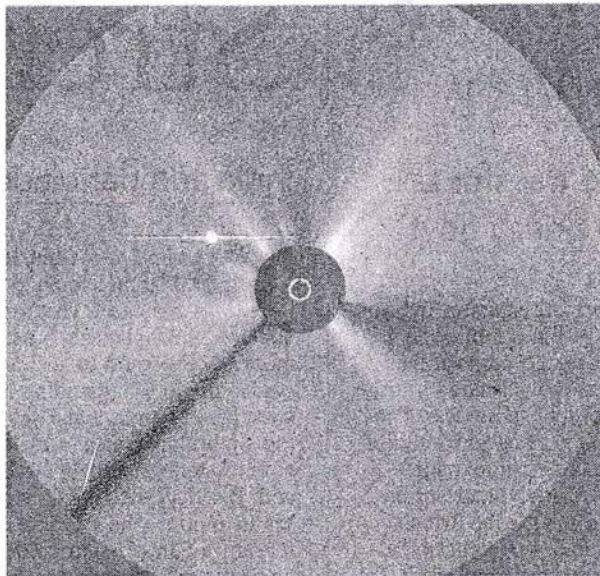
**Thane:** In a major achievement,



a 38-year-old, Thane-based amateur astronomer **Shishir Deshmukh**, an accountant by profession, has discovered as many as six comets. These comets fall in the category of Kreutz Sungrazers. It was not an easy task for Deshmukh but hours and hours of research and commitment led to the discovery.

“It is a small contribution to the vast field of astronomy,” a humble Deshmukh says, who has discovered six comets since December 2010.

These comets are very close to the Sun and of the over 2,100 comets that have been discovered so far, nearly 85 per cent fall in this category. This category has been named after German astronomer Heinrich Carl



**DISCOVERY:** Image of the comet that Deshmukh discovered.

Friedrich Kreutz (September 8, 1854 - July 13, 1907).

Deshmukh's made his discovery by following images available from the Solar & Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO), an international collaboration between the European Space Agency (ESA) and National Aeronautics and Space Ad-

ministration (NASA).

SOHO was launched on December 2, 1995 and has 12 instruments on board. It is nearly 15 lakh kms away from the Earth.

Large radio dishes around the world which form NASA's Deep Space Network are used for data downlink and controlling it.

## SUN-GRAZING COMETS

■ The orbits of these comets revealed that they were all related, produced when a very large comet fragmented hundred years ago. The group is now known as the Kreutz Sungrazers, and has produced some of the brightest comets ever seen.

These images are posted on [sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov](http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov). Researchers and astronomers world over can download and carry out research on it.

Deshmukh is also the secretary of Akash Mitra, a group of amateur astronomers. He said, “There is a lot of competition...amateurs and experts all over the world see these images and work on it,” adding that it is more difficult than finding a needle in a haystack. “You need patience and the research requires hundreds of hours,” he explained.