



**‘IMILOA**  
Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i

**For Immediate Release**

May 12, 2011

**Media Contacts:**

Jeff Harman  
808-969-9705  
[jharman@imiloahawaii.org](mailto:jharman@imiloahawaii.org)

Vincent Recinto  
808-969-9714  
[vrecinto@imiloahawaii.org](mailto:vrecinto@imiloahawaii.org)

**Peering Through Nature’s Telescope**  
***Topic for next Maunakea Skies Talk***

**Hilo, Hawai‘i** – Join Dr. Karun Thanjavur at the next “Maunakea Skies” talk entitled *Peering through Nature’s telescope – Gravitational Lensing as a window into the distant universe* on Saturday, May 21, at 7:00pm at Imiloa Astronomy Center

Gravitational “bending” of light is one of the many inspiring phenomena predicted by Einstein’s theory of Relativistic Gravity, and which have since been unambiguously borne out by observations. Since the first confirmation of a gravitational lens in 1979 -nearly 45 years after it was hypothesized- the catalog of confirmed lenses now runs to a few hundred. With advances in the instrumentation available at the modern 8 meter class telescopes, similar to those on Maunakea, the magnification boost provided by gravitational lensing is now being harnessed to probe astrophysical processes in extremely distant, faint objects even in the very early universe with a level of detail that would otherwise be exceedingly challenging.

His presentation will explain the principles of gravitational lensing, “Nature’s telescope,” using basic physics, trace its development as a powerful observational tool, and present two applications and related results drawn from his research.

Dr. Karun Thanjavur develops innovative uses for gravitational lensing as an observational tool in his current position as resident astronomer at the Canada France Hawaii Telescope (CFHT). These explorations of the distant universe come after a full career as a mechanical engineer, specializing in control systems and robotics. Born and raised in a small town in South India, Dr. Thanjavur completed his bachelors degree in engineering, then moved to Canada to pursue graduate studies in robotics, and later in astrophysics. His

current position at CFHT provides an enriching experience in working with cutting-edge telescope technology while pondering on Nature's many wonders in our Universe.

Before Dr. Thanjavur presentation, Maunakea Skies host Shawn Laatsch, 'Imiloa planetarium manager, will provide observational highlights of the Summer night-time skies over Hawai'i, pointing out prominent constellations and stars one can see during this time of year.

The monthly Maunakea Skies planetarium presentations are held on the third Saturday of each month. Presented in 'Imiloa Astronomy Center's 120-seat planetarium, admission is \$5 for 'Imiloa members and \$8 for non-members. Pre-purchase tickets at the 'Imiloa front desk or by phone at (808) 969-9704; Visa and MasterCard accepted.

'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i is located at 600 'Imiloa Place in Hilo, off Komohana and Nowelo Streets at the UH-Hilo Science and Technology Park. For more information, go to [www.imiloahawaii.org](http://www.imiloahawaii.org), or call (808) 969-9703.



**Figure 1 Dr Karun Thanjavur**

###