

In January 1982, when it was decided that an Indian would go into space on a Soviet space ship, Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma volunteered for this very challenging mission. After a very rigorous selection process, which included a most exacting medical test, he was selected as one of the two cosmonaut candidates from among 150 highly qualified and experienced pilots of the Indian Air Force. After his selection, he underwent training as a cosmonaut at YURI GAGARIN CENTRE in the USSR, where he applied himself with total devotion and dedication and won acclaim from Soviet Space experts. Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma completed a most arduous training schedule, with distinction and with exceptional professionalism.

On 3 April 1984, Sqn Ldr Rakesh Sharma became the first Indian to orbit in space. He carried out all the scientific experiments planned for the joint Indo-Soviet Space Mission and other tasks assigned to him with great facility and excellence. Sqn Ldr Sharma has not only carved out a place for himself in the space roll of honour but has brought glory and credit to the nation.

Squadron leader Rakesh Sharma has thus displayed most conspicuous daring and courage to become the first Indian to go into space.