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CHRONICLING A 60-YEAR JOURNEY - PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF VIKRAM SARABHAI  
SPACE CENTRE - THE MOTHER CENTRE OF INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION

**Abstract**

On November 21, 1963, India launched its first rocket, marking its entry into the world of space exploration. This historic event took place in Thumba, a small fishing hamlet near Thiruvananthapuram, which would eventually become known as the cradle of the Indian space program. The campus of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) was established here and is named after Dr. Vikram A Sarabhai, the Father of the Indian Space program, whose vision on “application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society,” is still a guiding principle for the Indian space community.

Starting with the development of sounding rockets for upper atmosphere research at the magnetic equator near Thumba, VSSC has evolved into a Centre of Excellence for space transportation systems. Today, it is capable of designing launch vehicles that can orbit satellites around Earth, as well as towards the celestial bodies of the Moon, Mars, and the Sun. VSSC is the largest research center in the country and a major establishment of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). It is renowned for its end-to-end capabilities in rocket-related disciplines. It has a remarkable track record in demonstrating successes in space endeavors, a team of exceptional human resources, and a unique work culture.

Documenting this remarkable journey is important, both for future generations and as a tribute to the dedicated scientists and technicians who have contributed to the success of India in space. On the occasion of its 60th anniversary, the organizational memoir, “VSSC Past Present and Future,” captures the evolution of the continuous growth in technical, managerial, and administrative domains at VSSC that have strengthened its foundation.

This paper chronicles the unparalleled space technology ventures at VSSC, tracing the history of the Indian space program from the late 1960s to its current operational phase. It acknowledges the efforts of the editors and contributors involved in consolidating the content of this extensive book, highlighting how VSSC’s pursuit of technical excellence serves as a valuable lesson for any organization aspiring to have a lasting impact on nation-building.