S1 - 15. INDIA, DESTINY OF THE STARS

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For the last 5 billion years, the sun has been rising on our planet and supplying it with its energy - and this extraordinary performance is set to continue for another 5 billion years. On the scale of the universe, though, our planet is just a newborn star. Over the last 13 billion years, successive generations of stars have been born. Watching them glitter in the skies, we have the impression they are all alike and yet, between white dwarfs and super giants, the universe offers a large variety.
In the Thar Desert, in the northwest of India, Serge Brunier photographs the night sky: Vega, the Pleiades or Deneb, a white super giant star, twenty times more massive than the sun and sixty thousand times brighter. But how were the first stars born? How did the first galaxies form?
To tell us about the fate of these stars, Serge Brunier sets off to Narayangaon, where the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope deploys its thirty branches over 500 square kilometres, in the countryside of the state of Maharashtra. At the GMRT, the astronomers involved in the search for the origins of the universe are cosmic archaeologists. They try to solve another mystery, the secret of the white dwarfs. These are stars similar to our sun, which take billions of years to cool after their death. Then, they shrink and become black diamonds the size of the Earth - and are called black dwarfs. The problem is, no one has ever seen them because the universe, with its 13 billion and 800 million years, is too young to have seen them taking shape...
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