Galaxies: Structure, formation and evolution

Lecture 11

Yogesh Wadadekar

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A cryptic observation

For galaxies where the galactic rotation has been measured, the spiral arms almost always **trail the rotation of the underlying disc.** Relative to the disk they seem to be rotating in a direction opposite to the disk.

Spiral arms

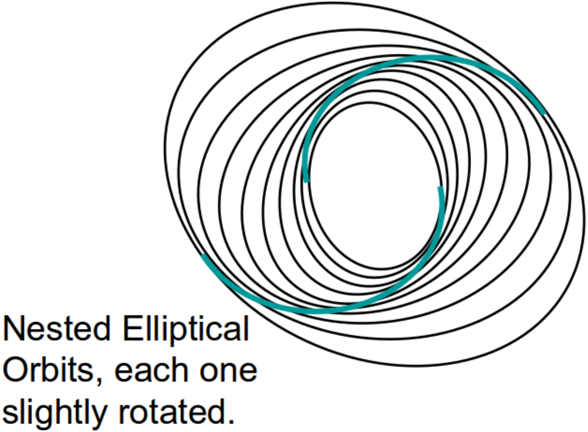
Long lived spiral arms are not material features in the disk, they are a pattern, through which stars and gas move as in the **grand design** spirals

Short lived spiral arms can arise from temporary patches pulled out by differential rotation; the patches might arise from local disk instabilities, leading to star formation as in **flocculent** spirals. Formation in one place may lead to further star-formation in nearby regions - **detonation wave.**

Grand Design Spirals

Flocculent Spiral NGC 2775

Orbit winding



Density wave theory by Lin and Shu

Spiral arm patterns must be persistent. Why? Density wave theory provides an explanation: the arms are density waves propagating in differentially rotating disks. Spiral arm pattern is amplified by resonances between the epicyclic frequencies of the stars (deviations from circular orbits) and the angular frequency of the spiral pattern. More specifically, for an m-armed spiral, a star at radius R will move through the spiral structure with a frequency $m(\Omega_p - \Omega(R))$. Stars have a epicyclic frequency $\kappa(R)$. It can be shown that the spiral pattern is maintained only for those R that lie between $\Omega(R) = \Omega_p + \kappa/m$ and $\Omega_p - \kappa/m$, the inner and outer Lindblad resonance points. Where will the **corotation radius** – where stars take the same time to rotate around the centre as the spiral arms – be?

Density Wave theory

The Sun is approximately at the corotation radius. κ/Ω for the sun is $\sim$ 1.3. So the Sun makes 1.3 radial oscillations in the time it takes to complete an oscillation around the centre.
also explains why the rings of Saturn are long lived. For more details see Hedman et al. (2019)

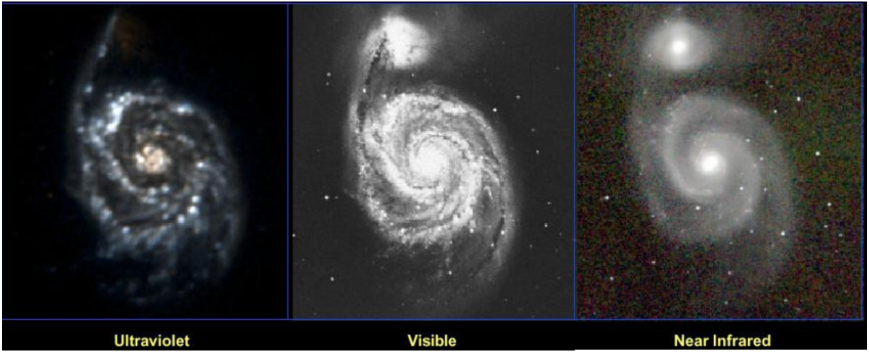
Density wave triggers star formation

In the density wave, there are regions of slightly higher density than their surroundings. The higher density means higher gravity. Objects (such as a gas cloud) will be attracted to these regions and will drift towards them.

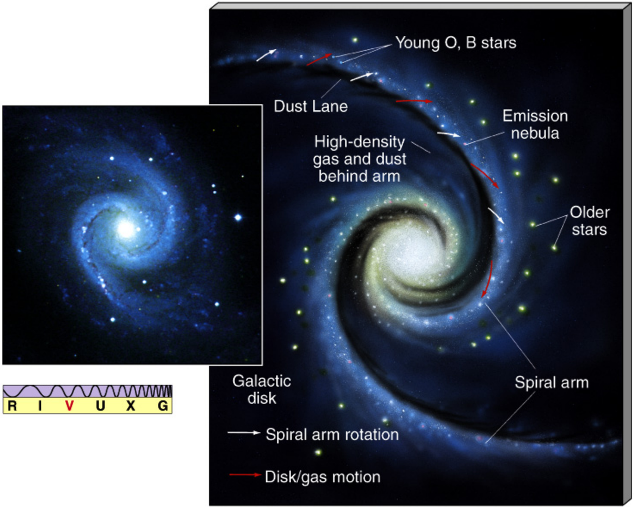
When the gas cloud collides with other gas clouds, stars will be formed. (This is where most of the galaxy's star formation takes place.) Many of the stars will be faint, red main sequence stars, but some will be bright blue OB stars. All stars will continue to drift through the region.

The OB stars don't go far before they explode. The brightest (and bluest) of a galaxy's stars will never be far from the spiral arm where they were born. Show video

M51 in 3 wavebands



Spiral density wave



Motion of the Sun

Can you say if the sun is in a spiral arm?

Motion of the Sun

Can you say if the sun is in a spiral arm?

U = 10 km/s (radially inwards)

V = 5 km/s (in the direction of Galactic rotation)

W = 7 km/s (northwards out of the plane of the Galaxy)

Sun is in the Orion Spur between Perseus and Sagittarius arms. It passes through a spiral arm for about 10 million years every 100 million years.

Density Wave theory - a summary

Spiral arms are waves of compression that move around the galaxy and trigger star formation

- Star formation will occur where the gas clouds are compressed
- Stars pass through the spiral arms unaffected
- theory predicts the geometry of dust lanes and star formation.
- Two outstanding problems with it:
  1. What stimulates the formation of the spiral pattern? Tidal interactions?
  2. What accounts for the branches and spurs in the spiral arms?

Star formation in spiral arms

- Spiral density wave creates spiral arms by the gravitational attraction of the stars and gas flowing through the arms
- Even if there was no star formation, there would be spiral arms - but star formation makes them more prominent
- This can explain the **grand design** spirals
- Star formation can self-propagate in a differentially rotating disk, e.g., as supernova shocks compress neighboring molecular clouds
- Self-propagating star formation may be responsible for the branches and spurs in the spiral arms, or disks without evident spiral density waves (the **flocculent spirals**)

A Flocculent Spiral galaxy

Some definitions

Spectral velocity $u \equiv c \ln \lambda \rightarrow \Delta u = c\Delta\lambda/\lambda = v_{\rm los}$. Hence light received at spectral velocity u was emitted at spectral velocity $u - v_{\rm los}$ Observed galaxy spectrum is the sum of individual spectra of many stars, each with a slightly different $\Delta u = v_{\rm los}$. Hence spectrum is **Doppler broadened.**

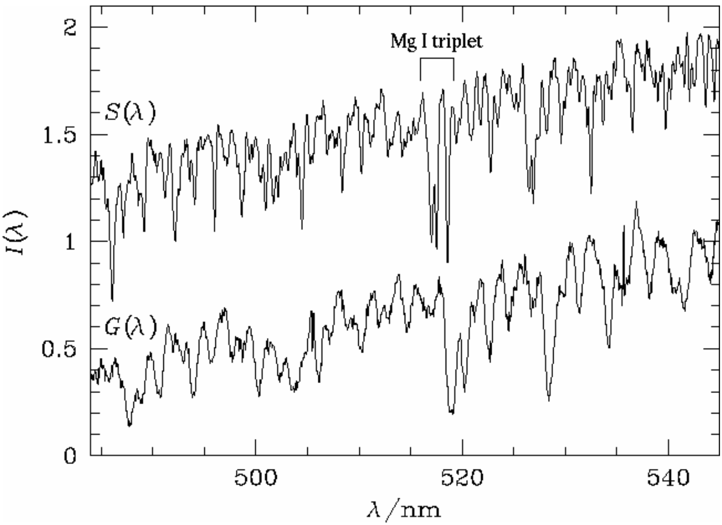
The LOSVD

Define a Line of sight velocity distribution (LOSVD) $F(v_{\rm los})$. If all stars have identical spectra $S(u)$, then the intensity received at spectral velocity u from a star with velocity $v_{\rm los}$ is $S(u - v_{\rm los})$ Summing over all stars we obtain the galaxy spectrum.

$$G(u) = \int dv_{\rm los} F(v_{\rm los}) S(u - v_{\rm los})$$

Can we use Fourier transforms to measure $F(v_{\rm los})$

Star galaxy spectrum



How are the star and galaxy spectra different?

Some properties of the LOSVD

Mean

$$\overline{v}_{\rm los} = \int dv_{\rm los} v_{\rm los} F(v_{\rm los})$$

and standard deviation $\sigma_{\rm los}$

$$\sigma^2_{\rm los} = \int dv_{\rm los} (v_{\rm los} - \overline{v}_{\rm los})^2 F(v_{\rm los})$$

How to calculate $\overline{v}_{\rm los}$ and $\sigma_{\rm los}$

$$\mathrm{CCF}(v_{\rm los}) = \int du G(u) S(u - v_{\rm los})$$

When $v_{\rm los} = \overline{v_{\rm los}}$, then the two functions line up and the cross correllation peaks. So $\overline{v_{\rm los}}$ simply by determining the maximum of the CCF. Similarly one can derive $\sigma_{\rm los}$ by measuring the width of the peak in the CCF.

Simplifying assumptions we made and their impact

- all stars have the same spectrum $S(u)$
- LOSVD is Gaussian; this assumption is OK for ellipticals but not otherwise. Also if the mean velocity and standard deviation are not the same along the LOS, the overall LOSVD will not be Gaussian even if each individual distribution is Gaussian.

Stars in elliptical galaxies

Stars in E galaxies have some ordered motions (e.g., rotation), but most of their kinetic energy is in the form of random orbits. Thus, we say that ellipticals are **pressure-supported** systems To measure the kinematics within galaxies we use absorption lines. Each star emits a spectrum which is Doppler shifted in wavelength according to its motion. Random distribution of velocities then broadens the spectral lines relative to those of an individual star. Systemic motions (rotation) shift the line centroids.

Rotation and dispersion in elliptical galaxies