
SUROJIT SURAL

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Surojit was born in the coal mining town of Dhanbad in the state of Jharkhand in India. At the age of ten, he moved with his family to Kuchana, a small settlement of coal miners in Chandrapur district in the state of Maharashtra. After two years of living in Kuchana, his parents decided to send him to a boarding school in the city of Nagpur for better educational opportunities. After spending four years in Nagpur, Surojit figured out that all his friends wanted to be either a doctor or an engineer, while none of his peers could guide him towards his dream to become a scientist. He convinced his parents to send him to New Delhi, the national capital, for a better exposure to academic opportunities. After completing the final two years of his high school in New Delhi, he appeared in several entrance examinations for college admissions in India. His performance in the national level examinations was good enough to get him admitted in almost all the top-ranked medical schools in the country, but instead, he joined the newly formed Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) in Pune.



At IISER Pune, he enrolled in the BS MS Dual Degree program with a major in biology. During his years as an undergraduate student, he did several summer internships in different countries. These research internships were in the labs of: (i) Professor Paul Townsend in University of Southampton, UK; (ii) Professor Ingrid Grummt in German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany; (iii) Professor Takehiko Kobayashi in National Institute of Genetics, Japan and (iv) Professor Maneesha Inamdar in Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bangalore, India. For his MS thesis, he worked in the lab of Dr. Mayurika Lahiri in IISER Pune to study why at low doses, some chemicals induce cancer, while at higher doses, the same chemicals can be used to kill cancer cells. He graduated as the gold medalist of his BS MS batch in IISER Pune.

After completing his master's degree, Surojit moved to US to enroll in the Molecular and Integrative Physiology (MIP) PhD program at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He joined Professor Ao-Lin Hsu's research group and was co-mentored by Professor Scott Pletcher. His research involved studying how improving the ability of animals to defend against environmental stresses slows down their rate of aging. In the second year of his PhD, he went to Ethiopia as an education team member of the Ethiopia–Michigan Platform for Advancing Collaborative Engagement (EM-PACE) and taught biochemistry to a class of first year medical students at the Yirgalem Medical College.

Surojit has received numerous awards and fellowships including the John Bean Fellowship for Academic Excellence at the University of Michigan, Working Internships in Science and Engineering (WISE) Fellowship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Shyama Prasad Mukherjee

(SPM) Fellowship in Life Sciences from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Govt. of India, Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) Fellowship from the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, and the CNR Rao Education Foundation Prize at IISER Pune. In 2006, he secured the all India first rank in the first Nationwide Biotechnology Olympiad.

His work experience in several countries has enabled him to appreciate how the social and economic structures of different societies lead to evolution of a specific type of work culture that suits the needs of that country. He has tried to incorporate a lot of positives from these experiences in his approach towards science. Outside scientific research, his interests include cricket, movies, wildlife conservation and social outreach.

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