

Mriganka Sur



Mriganka Sur was born in Fatehgarh, India on September 1, 1953. After finishing his schooling, Sur graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur in 1974 with a Bachelor of Technology degree. He received his M.S. (1975) and Ph.D. (1978) from Vanderbilt University. After doing postdoctoral research at SUNY Stony Brook, he joined Yale University School of Medicine as an assistant professor. Sur joined the faculty of the Department of Brain & Cognitive Sciences at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1986. He was the Sherman Fairchild Professor of Neuroscience in 1998 onwards and currently holds the position of the Newton Professor of Neuroscience and Head of the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at MIT, USA.

Professor Sur studies the development, organization and plasticity of the brain using experimental and computational approaches. His research group at MIT has pioneered a model system for studying developmental plasticity and its mechanisms. This involves rewiring the brain by inducing projections from the eye to innervate the auditory thalamus. Through this innovative study they demonstrated how this rewiring profoundly alters neuronal networks and connectivity in the auditory cortex. Sur has discovered fundamental principles by which neurons of the cerebral cortex are wired during development and change dynamically in adulthood. His laboratory has developed novel technologies for visualizing the activity of brain cells and synapses.

With several papers in 'Nature' and 'Science' in the field of neuroscience, Professor Sur serves on the board of several major international journals. Sur has been the chairperson of numerous organizations and served on the advisory board of various international organizations.

Professor Sur has received many prestigious awards and honors including the Meghnad Saha Award of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, India (1974), the Charles Judson Herrick Award from the American Association of Anatomists (1983), Distinguished Neuroscientist Award, ASIOA (1987), the McKnight Neuroscience Development Award (1988), Hans-Lukas Teuber Scholar Award in the Brain Sciences (1997), the Sherman Fairchild Chair of Neuroscience, MIT (1998), the School of Science Prize for Excellence of Graduate Teaching, MIT (2000), and the distinguished Alumnus Award of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (2002). Besides being the recipient of various awards, he has been elected member of the Indian National Science Academy (1998), the Rodin Remediation Academy, Sweden (2002). He is also an elected fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2003), the Royal Society of the UK (2006) and the Third World Academy of Sciences (2007).

Professor Sur, while working in leading research labs in the US, kept himself abreast with research and development activities in India at the frontiers of Computers and Communication Sciences. He serves on the scientific committee of the Department of Biotechnology, India. He visited Indian Statistical Institute upon invitation, in 2008 & delivered seminar lectures at the Soft Computing Center at the Institute.

Professor Sur delivered the 43rd Convocation Address of Indian Statistical Institute on March 24, 2009. The title of his speech was 'The Brain and Mind'.

Article by: Dwijesh Kumar Dutta Majumder. Emeritus Professor. Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata, India.