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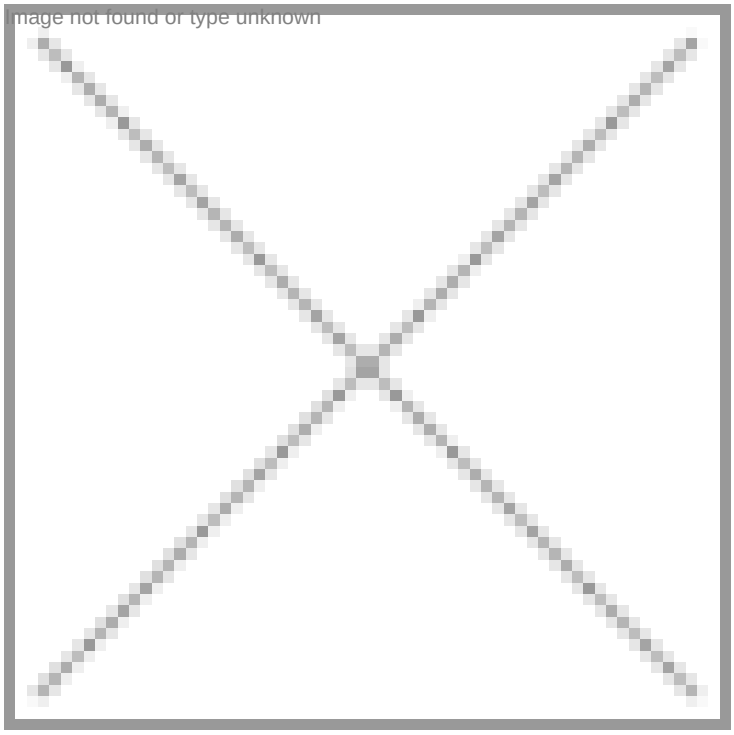
The growing economy and many newly established institutions brought me back to India

28 March 2013 | Features



Born in Bangalore, I did my schooling at University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Campus School, Bangalore. I did my Pre-University and under-graduation in BSc physics, mathematics and electronics at St Josephs College, Bangalore and masters in physics at Christ College with molecular and crystal physics as special subjects. We were the first MSc physics batch from this college. IISc, Bangalore was just 6 km away from my home and it was a dream come true when I got through the entrance exam and joined for my PhD at the Department of Physics, IISc, Bangalore, a department established by Sir CV Raman in 1933.

My shift from physics to biology came through in this serene environment through my work on crystal structure of xylanase using protein crystallography. After solving the ultra high-resolution 0.89 Ã… structure, one of highest resolution structure from India, my destiny took me to the University of Bath, UK. In my post-doctoral work at the University of Bath, UK, I tackled an ambitious project of solving the ab-initio crystal structure (MAD and MIRAS) of ACE; an important target for CVD, which was published as Natesh et. al., Nature, 2003. I was a faculty at ICGEB, New Delhi for one year till April 2005.

On a HFSP Fellowship in 2006, I carried out cloning, expression and purification of RGS proteins (another key player in CVD's) at Department of Physiology, University of Toronto. In the year 2007, on another prestigious Wellcome Trust Fellowship (as a principal investigator on grant), I carried out challenging work on chaperonin non-native protein complex using Single particle Cryo-EM and image processing, at Birkbeck college, London, UK [Sponsor: Prof. Helen Saibil (FRS, FMedSci)]. I have recently succeeded in tackling this difficult research problem.

In the year 2010, I moved as a Ramalingaswami Fellow and assistant professor to Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Thiruvananthapuram (IISER-TVM). Along with UG teaching, my career goal was to work on cutting-edge research problems of structural biology on vital proteins involved in human health and diseases and to guide UG, PG and doctoral students. Ever since, my lab has grown up with four colleagues who are working for their PhD under my supervision.

I was always keen in returning back to India. There are many reasons, but to mention a few: In particular the growing economy, many newly established institutions like IISERs and IITs with good funding and infrastructure along with re-entry fellowship like DBT's Ramalingaswami fellowship and not the least, the satisfaction of being close to your mother.

In the last decade, we could see many new institutions of higher education like IISER's, IIT's, new TIFR centres and biotech companies booming in India. Many of my academic friends have come back to India to take up leading positions in biotech companies in India. Others have moved back to various academic positions within India. These have happened due to the initiative of funding agencies of Government of India, which is engaged in bringing world-class opportunities of higher education and research to the country, so that Indian students are not finding a problem when facing an international platform. Other agencies such as DBT, DST, and ICMR are providing funding for research projects, start-up companies, and re-entry fellowships. The bottom line is that, many worthwhile changes has been happening in the last decade to improve biotechnology and life sciences in India.