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Reflections on Choices and Risks for Impact in Academic Life: A Personal Perspective

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Meeting link: <https://bit.ly/3sT7nuz> (MS Teams)

ABSTRACT

Academic life at the university level, with its intrinsic freedom in most settings, is full of choices. These choices include high risk research, turning teaching on its head, taking extreme positions on ideology, becoming a perpetual cynic, making life run on an autopilot, or becoming a silent rebel by doing almost nothing. This list is obviously not exhaustive; just a selection that I have seen from close quarters. I started my academic career in IISc in 1996. It has been a fascinating 25 years — a good milestone to take a breather and reflect on how quarter of a century passed by. The pace of work and change that I have experienced over this period does require a breather, almost literally, to stop and see what all happened and why. At almost regular intervals, I found myself confronted with choices I must make that had significant risks for my academic career in India. Each time, the choice I made was to “use my skills, stick to the basics, and back myself,” to put it in the IPL lingo. Well, it was a bit more complicated than that and this is what I would discuss rather openly in this talk. What were the choices, why did I choose what I did, how did that choice pan out, would I make a different choice if I could travel back in time? From establishing the first MEMS lab in India in ME, to establishing CeNSE, to now taking up Plaksha University, there are common threads that have dictated my choices, and this opportunity to share it with you is indeed a privilege and an honor. It may have some value for younger folks, may amuse some of you, or may be just a story worth listening to for 45 minutes.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Prof. Rudra Pratap has been associated with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore for almost 25 years (1996- 2021) and is credited for establishing the globally recognized Centre for Nano Science and Engineering at IISc. Prior to joining IISc in 1996, he taught at the Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Cornell University, for 2.5 years. Prof. Pratap's research areas include microelectromechanical systems (MEMS), sensor technology, computational mechanics, and mechanobiology. He headed India's first research lab in the field of microelectromechanical systems, the CranesSci MEMS Lab, at the IISc, Bangalore. He is an elected Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering and National Academy of Science.



An avid writer, Prof. Pratap's book on MATLAB 'Getting Started with MATLAB: A Quick Introduction for Scientists and Engineers' is popular among engineering students around the globe. He is also an Associate Editor of the IEEE Journal of Microelectromechanical Systems and a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Micromechanics and Microengineering. He has published approximately 250 papers in peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings. He is also an author on 17 patents. Prof. Pratap holds a BTech (Hons) degree from IIT Kharagpur, M.S from University of Arizona, and PhD from Cornell University. [from <https://www.prnewswire.com/in/news-releases>].

Session chair: Prof. G. K. Ananthasuresh, mecheng @ IISc