

Prof. Sugata Mitra
Prof of Educational Technology
Newcastle University
UK



Background

Dr. Mitra has taught and researched computer applications for over 25 years. He was until recently Chief Scientist with NIIT Limited in New Delhi. His contributions include a number of inventions and first-time applications. The database publishing industry in India and Bangladesh, as well as the first applications of digital multimedia and Internet based education in India, are attributed to him. His experiments with unsupervised access to public computers by children in remote areas, often called the "hole in the wall" experiments are known throughout the world. His current interests include Children's Education, Remote Presence, Self-organising systems, Cognitive Systems, Physics and Consciousness.

Qualifications

- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the Theoretical Solid State Physics of Organic Semiconductors, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, 1978.
- Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Physics with specialisation in Solid State Electronics, Acoustic Holography and Quantum Biology from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, 1975. First Class.
- Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) with honours in Physics from Jadavpur University, Calcutta, 1973. First Class with second position in the University.
- Indian School Certificate (I.S.C.) awarded by the University of Cambridge, UK from St. Xavier's High School, Delhi, 1969. First Division.

Prof. Sugata Mitra

Prof. Mitra works in the areas of Cognitive Science, Information Science and Educational Technology. He has been working on these areas as well as on Physics and Energy for more than 30 years.

His contributions include a number of inventions and first-time applications. Among other applications, he is credited with having started the database publishing industry (particularly the Yellow Page industry) in India and Bangladesh, as well as having implemented the first applications of digital multimedia and Internet based education in India in the late 1980s. His experiments (often referred to as "The Hole In The Wall" experiments) with children and the Internet have been reported worldwide since 1999.

One of the best known of his work is Mitra's discovery that the Internet, computers and children are literally "made for each other," with cognitive processes so similar that children need little or no instruction to master computing at the basic level. Mitra is building on this discovery through the design of hardware and software that enable children to reach the intermediate to expert level entirely on their own. His current research is leading towards an alternative primary education using self organized learning, mediation and assessment environments.

The global consequences of Mitra's discovery for closing the digital divide have resulted in many international awards and other honors, among them:

- The Raizada award for the best paper of 1999 from the Computer Society of India, 1999.
- The "Best ICT story" award from the IICD at the World Bank's Global Knowledge II conference in Kuala Lumpur, March 2000.
- The "Best Social Innovation of the year 2000" award from the Institute for social inventions, UK, 2000.
- The "Man for Peace" award for 2002 from the Together For Peace Foundation, Italy, 2002
- Finalist, World Technology Awards, education category, World Technology Network, San Francisco, June, 2003
- The Dewang Mehta award for innovation in IT, Ministry of Information Technology, Government of India, 2005
- Best Education Research Article in an Open Access Journal for 2005, The Communication of Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, 2006
- Alumni Award for Outstanding Contribution to National Development, from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, 2006
- Best Book award from the Indian Society for Training and Development, 2007

His work inspired the book 'Slumdog Millionaire' that went on to become the Oscar winning film of 2009.

He holds a Ph.D. in theoretical Solid State Physics and is currently Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University, UK.