

Motivational Talk on “Katta Model: Doing Research Differently”

Resource Person:

Prof. Milind Watve

Professor of Biology

IISER, Pune.

The motivation talk with discussion was organised by Bajaj College of Science, Wardha on ‘Katta Model: Doing Research Differently’ on 23rd November 2021 by Prof. Milind Watve, independent researcher and science populariser and former Professor of Biology, IISER, Pune. This session was first offline invited talk for undergraduate and postgraduate students of Bajaj College during this pandemic time. Recently, Bajaj College of Science have started its offline weekly academic and administrative activities in order to streamline academics and college work. In order to motivate critical thinking and enhancing learning process instead of rote learning, Bajaj College of Science under guidance and encouragement of Principal Dr. Om Mahodaya, this initiative was taken place to organise this offline event.

During this talk, the initial proceedings of the event was handled by Dr. D.D. Naik, Assistant Professor, Botany Department. The resource person Prof. Milind Watve was welcomed by Mr. Sanjay Bhargava, Chairman, Shiksha Mandal, Wardha. The gathering was briefed with the welcome address by Mr. Sanjay Bhargava where he pointed out the importance of curiosity driven research by addressing local problems and role of undergraduate and faculty in doing research. Dr. Naik introduced Professor Milind Watve and presented the outline of the programme.

Prof. Milind Watve initiated his speech with his childhood memories and his broad scientific and exhilarating experiences of his early academic tenure and the true motivation behind katta model of research. He talked many aspects of research and process of scientific thinking and how a simple research problem or query can be addressed with just informal chat and counter questioning with undergraduate students during weekly meetings. Prof. Watve explained how this katta model came into existence and persisted over his entire tenure with silly but rationalised questions or statements/hypothesis. Later, he ended up taking these topics of various discipline seriously and meticulously forming a scientific interdisciplinary project for undergraduates. Prof. Watve elaborated a simple research problem whether or not animals particularly birds understand or recognise geometry or not. No one in academic community had ever thought about this question before, but

this specific questions appeared later to be a good research problem. His group started thinking, many ideas came forward and the methodology of research was decided based on various possibilities of experimental designs in order to address the question rationally. That work was completed with the inference that the birds do understand geometry. The research work is submitted to prestigious journal and renowned scientist and reviewers appreciated this simple but thoughtful results. Another research problem which Prof. Watve shared is human wildlife conflict. He addressed this problem by first observing the recurrent economic loss due to heavy browsing of herbivores in agricultural lands around Tadoba forests. He used statistical and mathematical model to address economic loss and came up with an alternative approach to control economic loss and increased the profit. This model worked successfully by helping the farmers who are really in need of help and making the farmers to speak truth so that they get what they deserve. Their statistical approach solved the mystery.

Prof. Watve encouraged all faculty of Bajaj College and students by suggesting them to utilise minimum resources along with out-of-box thinking. Prof. Watve concluded with the view that research can be started at any age or in any class, simple research can solve many big problems of the society and eventually benefit the society. The gathering was ended up question-answer session along with the formal vote of thanks by Dr. Saikat Biswas, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, BCS, Wardha. More than 150 students and faculties were participated and interacted with Prof. Watve with a lot of excitement.



