

Report

Mahatma Education Society's Pillai College of Education and Research organizes the Environmental Re-engineering Seminar Series each year with a mission to develop an environmental conscientiousness among the community and build an arm of active agents of change for a better environment.

This academic year 2015-16 saw the Series 6 national level seminar themed 'Year of Soils' on the basic element of life on earth. This was in support to observe the declaration of UN for the year 2015 as the 'International Year of Soils.'

The International Year of Soils aims to raise awareness of why soils are important for food security and the ecosystem, which comprises all plants and animals in an area.

So with the right purpose towards environmental care and protection, Pillai College of Education and Research hosted this national seminar on the 21st of November 2015. The day started with prompt registration of the paper presenters and guests at the registration desk and around 25 participants made it for the seminar.

The inaugural session was hosted by Prof. Bindu Tambe and she welcomed the gathering and led the dignitaries towards lighting up of the lamp as the prayers filled the room with positivity and peach.

Prof. Bindu Tambe then presented a brief introduction of the Mahatma Education Society and Pillai College of Education and Research which was followed by opening remarks by Deputy CEO of MES' Khanda campus, Shri. A. L. Tripathi.

Sir Tripathi's remarks touched the hearts of each as he discoursed a beautiful spiritual and emotional connect to soil as mother earth and his words 'revere and worship soil' remained the ethos throughout the seminar.

Prof. Geeta. S. Thakur, organizing secretary of this seminar, unveiled the theme of the seminar and offered a warm welcome to all participants for fruitful sessions in the day ahead. She spelt the important objectives of the seminar as:

- To create awareness about the profound importance of soil for human life.
- To understand the chemical and physical composition of soil.
- To create an awareness of the impact of soil composition on vegetation and vice versa.

- To develop an understanding of the crucial role soil plays in climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- To analyze the relationship between climate change and soil quality.
- To create awareness about the multiple roles of soil.

The inaugural session was followed by Session 1 on Sub-theme III: Multiple role of soil.

Prof. Bhavna Dave introduced the resource person for this session, Mr. Satish Joshi, who is known as the ‘modern potter’ of today. Mr Satish Joshi is an arts graduate in rural development. He has pursued pottery from L. S. Raheja Institute, Mumbai and an Artisan course of pottery from Kora Kendra, Govt of India. He has also learnt pottery from Pondicherry and is now running a pottery studio near Panvel and conducts workshops in schools to teach clay and pottery. He is also running an NGO called Gramini for village youth. He was welcomed by Deputy CEO Shri A. L. Tripathi with a potted plant as a token of appreciation.

Mr Satish Joshi took the gathering on a journey through clay as he not only shared the intricacies and technical knowledge of clay making and different types of clay etc. but also successfully trained them all on the essential skills of clay making and pottering through is hands-on-workshop.

He also infused a lot of appreciation towards soil among the participants by bringing out the innumerable and essential values that pottery could develop ranging from simply being earthy to teaching balancing, body proportions, to values of patience , perseverance and more. All participants zealously participated and enjoyed the hands on workshop. He truly brought out the ‘kumbhar’ in each.

Session 2 saw 2 paper presentations on Sub-theme III: Multiple roles of soils. The presentations focussed on the multiple roles of soils ranging from emotional and mental well-being to therapeutic roles to physical fine motor development, medicinal, creative and also development of pride and accomplishments that the creation of novel clay models developed among its creators.

The paper presentations were chaired by Mr Satish Joshi and he expressed joy in his remarks on the papers presented and felt they brilliantly brought out the important multi-dimensional facets related to soil.

Session 1 concluded with Prof. Geeta. S. Thakur thanking the speaker Mr Joshi for making it a lively session.

Session 3 happened after the lunch break on Sub-theme II: Climate change and its impact on soil quality. Dr. D. G. Hapase was the speaker for this sub-theme. Prof. Geeta. S. Thakur extended a warm welcome and introduced him. Dr. D.G. Hapase is Director, Dr. D.G. Hapase & Associates (DGHA) – Agriculture Consultancy and Founder Director, Dnyansheel Foundation concerned with R&D in Agriculture. Dr. Hapase has a PhD in Plant Physiology from Penn State University, USA and IARI New Delhi under USAID program.

Principal of Pillai College of Education and Research, Dr. Sally Enos, welcomed Dr. Hapase with a potted plant as token of appreciation.

Dr. D. G. Hapase gave a practical based technical know-how of the harmful impact of climate change on the soil. His expertise in the field of efficient agro-practices and the depth of knowledge that he shared, enthused the audience. His talk concluded not just with an eye-opening presentation to the problems but with a plethora of effective solutions to overcome the problems. He advocated sustainable agro-practices by the use of integrating farming systems. He also inspired the teachers to take interest and exchange ideas to work towards teaching the right environmental practices. Session 3 concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Pratima Pradhan to Dr. Hapase for his excellent talk.

Session 4 was on sub-theme I: Soil composition and Vegetation. Prof. Pradnya Jadhav introduced the expert speaker for this theme, Dr. K. D. Patil and Dr. James welcomed him with a potted plant as token of appreciation. Dr. Patil is a scientist at the Khar Land Research Centre, Panvel. Dr. Patil gave an accurate and apt presentation on the Sub-theme I. He showcased the different soil physical, biological and chemical functions, he also shared the details of the composition of soil, explained soil air and atmospheric air, elaborated on the soil composition and chemical properties and also provided many details on varied concepts related to soil salinity, soil pH etc. It was indeed an enriching talk. Session 4 concluded with words of thanks from Dr James to the expert speaker Dr. Patil for his valuable presentation.

Session 5 saw around 5 paper presentations on sub-theme I and II and they incorporated topics ranging from rhizosphere to experiments of effect of organic amendment of soil, to bioremediation of soil to functions of soil and soil erosion. All the papers reflected well on

the theme and were a delight to hear. The session was chaired by Dr. Patil and he commended all the presentations for their efforts.

The valedictory session followed immediately with a report reading by Prof. Namrata Saxena who detailed the happenings of the seminar to the gathering. Participants received their certificates post the report presentation.

The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks from Prof. Geeta. S. Thakur, organizing secretary of the seminar. All stood in attention for the national anthem before dispersal.