

Report on the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Association of Fungal Biologists (India), December 2025

30 December 2025



The Third Annual Meet of Association of Fungal Biologists ([AFB CON-2025](#)) took place in early December at the Department of Botany of Rajaram college in Maharashtra, India. The three-day event commenced with an inaugural ceremony graced by **Prof. Dr. D. T. Shirke**, Vice-Chancellor of Warana State Public University, Kolhapur, in the presence of several eminent dignitaries.

Prof. Dr. A. J. Bodake, Principal of Rajaram College, formally welcomed the delegates, faculty members, and students. **Prof. Anjali Patil**, Organising Secretary, then outlined the conference objectives, thematic focus, and scientific programme. The inaugural address was delivered by **Prof. Priyani Paranagama**, Senior Professor and Chair, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

During the inaugural session, the **abstract book** was formally released, and **AFB Lifetime Achievement Awards** were conferred upon **Prof. D. Jayarama Bhat**, **Prof. K. R. Sridhar**, **Prof. Priyani Paranagama**, and **Dr. Sheshagiri Raghukumar** in recognition of their outstanding contributions to mycology. In addition, an **AFB Fellowship** was awarded to **Dr. Sanjay K. Singh** for his work in fungal taxonomy, conservation, and bioprospecting. The session concluded with presidential remarks by **Dr. Sunil Deshmukh**, President of AFB.

The conference attracted **over 230 participants** from academia, research institutions, and industry, and featured **25 invited lectures**, **16 technical sessions**, and **95 oral and poster presentations**. Contributions spanned a wide range of themes, collectively highlighting

advances in mycology relevant to **agriculture, human and animal health, biomaterials, and environmental sustainability**.

Distinguished lectures included *Chemical and Biological Diversity of the Xylariales, with Emphasis on Polythetic Phylogenomic Studies of the Hypoxylaceae* by **Prof. Marc Stadler** (President, International Mycological Association, IMA); *Techniques to Study Aquatic Mitosporic Fungi in Streams* by **Dr. Kandikere R. Sridhar** (India); *Is Trichoderma Safe? A Postgenomic Perspective on Ecology and Fitness?* by **Dr. Irina Druzhinina** (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, United Kingdom); and *High-Value Bioproducts from Agricultural Waste and Fungal Biomass to Promote a Circular Economy* by **Prof. Colin Barrow** (Deakin University, Australia).

Further notable presentations included *Functional and Ecological Versatility of Marine Filamentous Fungi in Advancing Sustainable Ecosystems* by **Prof. Surajit Das** (NIT Rourkela, India) and *Computational Identification of Defensin-Like Sequences in Fungi* by **Dr. V. Sabareesh** (VIT Vellore, India).

Prof. D. Jayarama Bhat (India) delivered the inaugural **Professor Kamal Award Lecture** on extremophilic fungi. This was followed by a roundtable discussion on fungal taxonomy and applications, after which the day concluded with the cultural programme *Gandh Maharashtra*. To encourage early-career researchers, memorial awards were instituted for both oral and poster presentations. In total, **35 oral and 60 poster presentations** were organised under the mentorship of **Prof. M. S. Patil, Prof. J. G. Vaidya, Prof. K. R. Sridhar, and Prof. S. A. Parndekar**, showcasing a broad spectrum of fungal research. The **AFB Annual General Meeting**, convened on **5 December 2025**, ratified key recommendations of the Executive Council/Managing Committee.

On **6 December 2025**, **Dr. Sheshagiri Raghukumar** (Avisa Myko, Inc., USA) delivered a lecture titled *Living Dynamics of Fungi in Dead Organic Matter in the Sea: Role in the Detrital Food Web and Carbon Sequestration*. This was followed by **Dr. Ashish A. Prabh** (NIT Warangal, India), who spoke on *Metabolic Engineering of Yarrowia lipolytica for the Efficient Production of D-Lactic Acid Using Food Waste Hydrolysate: A Biorefinery Approach*. **Dr. Ashok Wali** (Ayurved Medical College, Astha, India) presented a lecture on fungal skin infections from an Ayurvedic perspective, while **Dr. Samantha C. Karunarathna** (Qijing Normal University, China) delivered a talk titled *Deadly Mushrooms: No More Mr. Funguy*.

The **valedictory session** featured a welcome address by **Prof. Anjali Patil** and a valedictory address by **Dr. S. M. Reddy**, Emeritus Professor, Kakatiya University (India). A comprehensive conference report was presented by **Dr. S. V. Pathare**, followed by the presentation of awards to **26 winners** across various sessions.

Closing remarks by **Dr. S.K. Deshmukh** highlighted the role of fungi in ecology, innovation, and sustainability before wrapping up with a round of thanks.

Report by Anjali Patil (Org. Secretary) and Sunil Deshmukh (President AFB).