

CHAPTER – II

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND MASS MOVEMENT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental education, now-a-days, is a common concern all over the globe. Environment is enabled to keep the 'carrying capacity' of the mother earth. It is necessary that the initiatives of all people protect the environment from the pollution which is caused due to the 'by-product' of the modern life-styles of the society. As such environmental education can prepare the field of mass movement against the pollution menace and for the sustainable development of the society. Mass movement for environmental protection is an alternate way to eradicate all hindrances responsible for the pollution menace all over the world in the twenty –first century techno-savy society.

Education means all round development of human beings. It helps to adapt human beings to the society as well as nature. Environmental education is education about the environment through environment. Human being forms a part and parcel of the nature. He is not independent from the Mother Nature since time immemorial. On the other hand, People's activities decrease the 'carrying capacity' of the nature. As a result, environment gets affected severely. To protect the environment from pollution, different provisions of the law are imposed. However, only law can not solve the problem without public awareness as well as mass movement. For this matter, environmental education should be incorporated as one of the disciplines in the educational curricula. In a case, the Supreme Court of India has issued directives to all the Governments for introduction of environmental education into the curricula. The Supreme Court of India has given this directive after deciding the 'Public Interest Litigation' (PIL) filed by M.C. Mehta in 'M.C. Mehta Vs. Union of India' AIR 1992 SC 382. The apex court has given 'a mandate for creating environmental awareness among all citizens of India'.¹ Environmental education educates the people to know about the environment and its relevance to human society all over the world.

To protect the ecology of the Sub-Himalayan tracts of West Bengal, people should be accessible to information about the environment of the area. It is possible

to disseminate the knowledge about environment among the people. Environmental education moulds the behaviour of the people to preserve the ecology of the region. It makes arrangement of the field of mass movement for the protection of the environment of the region in general and Kumargramduar Block in particular.

2.2. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND MASS MOVEMENT

Mass movement for environmental protection is the outcome of education. Environmental education enhances the interest towards environment. It moulds public behaviour for environmentalism. Environmental education has been incorporated as one of the subjects into the curricula at both school and college levels. The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) and the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHE) are the regulatory authorities in West Bengal to give affiliations to different schools to conduct the secondary and higher secondary courses on environmental education. As far as the study area is concerned, it has been observed that the schools in the area i.e., Kumargramduar Block of Jalpaiguri district also follow the above curricula on environmental education. These bodies have incorporated the subject environment into the school curricula as 'Environmental Studies' and 'Environmental Education' respectively. The Government of West Bengal has set up Vocational Training Centre in the different Higher Secondary Schools to impart the vocational education all over the block. These centres have been gotten the affiliation from the West Bengal Council of Vocational Education and Training (WBCVET). 'Environmental Studies' is one of the compulsory subjects in the H.S. level (Vocational) as per curriculum of the WBCVET. In addition, the University of North Bengal has named this discipline as Environmental Studies in the three years degree courses [i.e., Under Graduate Level Courses]. Shaheed Kshudiram Mahavidyalaya, Kamakhyaguri is the only affiliated college under the University of North Bengal where environmental education is imparted. This college leads in spreading the idea of environmental education among the local people in this block through seminar, symposia, debate, and community awareness. It is to be mentioned here that the above college had organized the UGC-sponsored National Seminar on the topic

‘Environmental Problems and Our Future : Issues and Challenges’² on 28th March, 2008.

The different educational institutions such as schools, colleges should therefore take initiative to enhance the awareness programme in different areas of Kumargramduar Block. As such, the different schools in the area campaign for the environmental protection in their respective areas through the Eco-Clubs organizing in their organized in their schools.

The Department of Environment (DoE), Government of West Bengal has initiated a scheme for establishment of Eco-Clubs at different schools to campaign for environmental protection in the localities. The different local Eco-Clubs campaign among the common-masses to make them aware about the environment. The Department of Environment (DoE) should involve the local colleges as the nodal authorities to monitor the activities of the Eco-Clubs. In this block, the local college at Kamakhyaguri can monitor the different Eco-Clubs of the block after getting the directives of the DoE, Government of West Bengal. The formal sector of education i.e., schools and colleges are supposed to enhance the information about environment through different informal or non-formal means of education such as workshop, symposia, seminar puppet show, folk-song etc. The different schools in the area can spread the awareness about environment though these means. So, at present, people can raise their voice against the different pollution menace and ecological catastrophes at this block. Environmental education therefore, create the venture of mass movement against the environmental pollution in the study area i.e. Kumargramduar Block like the other parts of the Sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

2.3. ROLE OF SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING OF ENVIRONMENT

Schools have the dominant position to mould the behaviour of the community through imparting instructions to the students. In the environmental awareness programmes, both primary and high schools can highlight the ecological and social problems in front of the community. As such, it is the most effective way for different schools to impart environmental teaching with greater emphasis on the local issues of environment.

Schools may be effectively provided with sophisticated infrastructure to improve the Eco-Clubs being established in the different schools to impart the knowledge of environment to the common masses in the neighbouring community. In the Sub-Himalayan tract of West Bengal, different schools took part in the environmental campaigns without proper infrastructure. As such, recruitment of teachers in Environmental Studies in both secondary and higher secondary level is one of the essential criteria for the improvement of infrastructure of the school level Eco-Clubs. It is because, teacher in Environmental Studies is supposed to be the principal technical expert. Teachers should therefore, be involved in the Eco-Clubs. Teachers should be appointed from amongst the candidates having environmental studies background. At present, the West Bengal Council of Vocational Education and Training (WBCVE&T) runs Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and has appointed teachers in Environmental Studies on part time basis to teach Environmental Studies. On the other hand, WBBSE and WBCHSE run General Education Sections and have not appointed teachers in Environmental Studies. In the general sections subject teachers in other subjects have been given the additional responsibilities of teaching Environmental Studies. So, most of the teachers are unable to show their expertise to impart teaching in Environmental Studies.

Table-6 shows the position of teachers in different schools in Kumargramduar Block who teach environmental studies :

Name of the Institutions	Teachers Trained in Environmental Studies	Teachers not trained in Environmental Studies
High School / General Section of H.S. School (TA)	15%	90%
Vocational Training Centre of H.S. School (TV)	85%	10%

Table-6 (Prepared by the author) : Percentage of teachers of different schools (Environment trained and non-trained)

The teachers' strength in different schools are presented in diagram as follows :

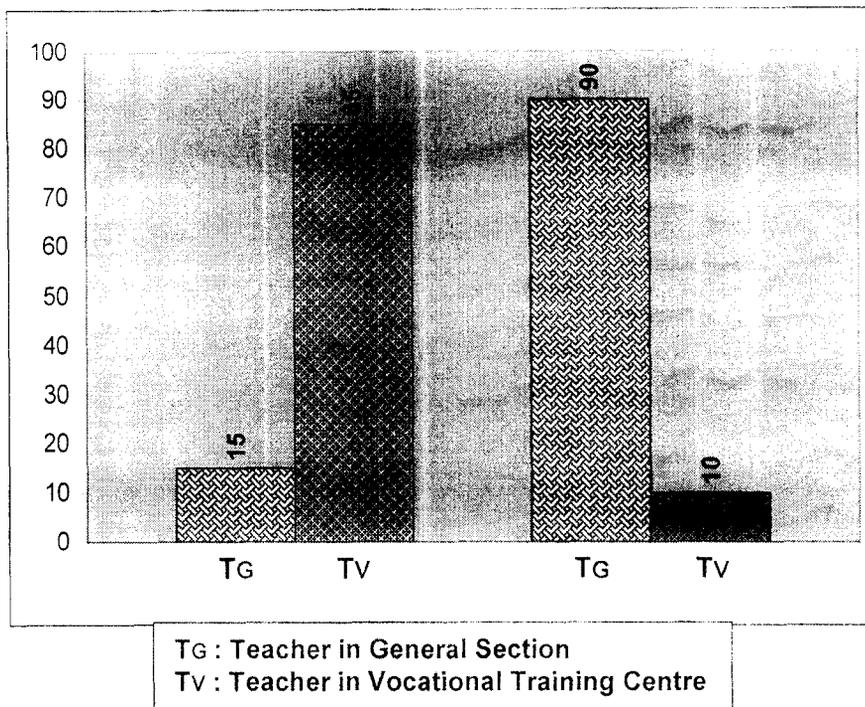


Diagram-1 (prepared by the author) : Percentage of environment-trained and environment non-trained teachers in different institutions of Kumargramduar Block

In the above diagram it is observed that, teachers trained in environment education are 15% in General Section of the High and Higher Secondary Schools. In these schools, teachers not trained in Environment education are 90%. On the other hand, Vocational Training Centres have 85% teachers from the Environment education background and 10% teachers from non-environment education background. In this area it is found that, most of the schools provide only the general level education but not in vocational education. In these schools it is further seen that, the subject teachers have not been appointed from the environment discipline. To improve the environmental education, it is therefore, essential to reform the examination system in Environmental Studies and Environmental Education at the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels.

Schools should improve the teaching of environment. Environmental awareness is the pre-requisite criterion to mitigate the pollution by means of enforcement of laws. Schools can highlight the environmental problems in front of

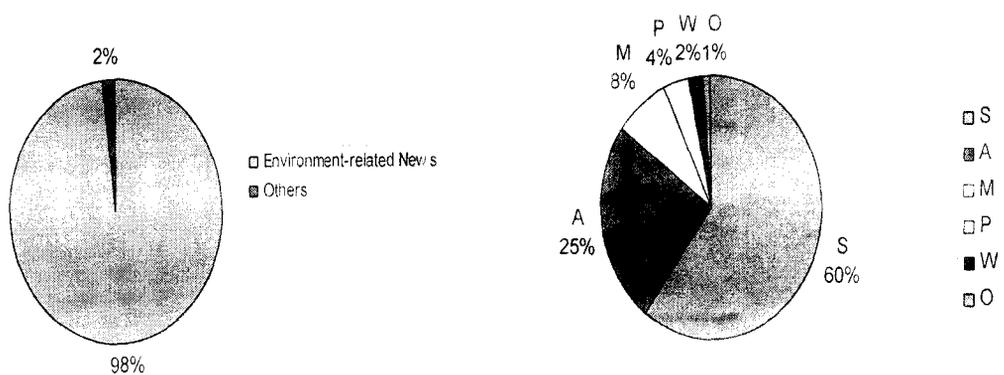
the community through formal and informal ways. In Kumargramduar Block it is seen that, different schools have initiated the campaign involving the local people to raise the environmental consciousness among them. The Eco-Clubs of different schools participate in these campaigns even though they lack in expertise and proper skills.

2.4. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND ROLE OF MEDIA

Environmental protection is now-a-days, a world-wide mass movement. Environmental pollution clogs the wheel of all round development in the twenty-first century techno-savvy world. To control the environmental pollution, public awareness is the pre-condition for the enforcement of law all over the globe. Environmental awareness only can enhance the information network about environment.

Role of Media is very important to spread the knowledge about environment and related issues. The important dailies like The Statesman, The Telegraphs, Ananda Bazar Patrika, Uttar Banga Sambad, Dainik Jagaran, Janapath Samachar, Sanmarg along with numerous magazines can play leading roles for environmental awareness among the common folks Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR) also can telecast and broadcast programmes on environmental issues and can take some steps to highlight the local problems related to environment in Kumargramduar Block. i.e., the area under study.

It has been observed that most of the newspapers cover about 2% news related to environment and ecology out of the total news coverage. Out of total news coverage related to environment and ecology, about 60% items relate to soil erosion and land degradation (S), 25% news coverage about afforestation (A), 8% news coverage about man-wildlife conflict (M), 4% news coverage about pollution (P), 2% news coverage relate to water issues (W) and 1% news coverage about other issues (O). The different pie-diagram as follows :



2.A : News Items in a Newspaper

2.B : Environment-related news in a Newspaper

Role of media and judiciary are interlinked for the environmental protection. In this regard, Pravin Sheth (1997) has narrated for the judicial activism for the sake of environmental movements, environmentalists, NGOs and lawyers have immense and vital. They 'has strengthened the cause of environment.'³

Now-a-days, environmental issues are the most burning issues in the social life, so the newspapers must increase their focus on the environment related issues. Media can mould the behaviour of the people. They can raise the local environmental issues in their newspapers. To control the pollution, more information on the subjects is most vital. The enforcement authorities could smoothly enforce the law related to environment if the public access to the information of environment and ecology becomes easy. Media can ignite the lamp of the mind of the people and transform them as the 'enlightened community' in the society.

2.5. ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN AT LOCAL LEVEL

2.5(a) ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Environmental awareness programme has been initiated in Kumargramduar Block through the efforts of local Eco-Clubs, Nature Clubs, NGOs. The Department of Environment, Government of West Bengal observes 5th June as the World Environment Day every year through the local Eco-Clubs. In this block, Madan Singh High School (H.S.), Daldali High School, Barobisha High School, Kamakhyaguri High School, Kumargramduar Girls' High School lead the

environmental campaign every year. The Eco-Clubs of these schools initiate the environmental campaign along with other Eco-Clubs of this block. These Eco-Clubs collaborate with the other eco-clubs to spread the awareness about environment among the common people in Kumargramduar Block.

Eco-Clubs are representatives of the Department of Environment (DoE) at micro-levels. So the Eco-Clubs should be accountable to the authorities to discharge their functioning in the locality. They should take co-operation from the local PRIs. Kumargramduar Panchayat Samity should co-operate with the Eco-Clubs through the local Gram Panchayats in the block.

Alipurduar Nature Club also campaigns the public awareness about the environment in this block. The Nature Club surveys the environmental condition and wildlife protection strategies in the different villages of Kumargramduar Block. The Nature Club exchanges the views related to environment issues with the common people.

Environmental awareness campaign should be taken to village-levels through the Eco-Clubs along with the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), NGOs and Government Organizations in Kumargramduar Block as well as other parts of the Sub-Himalayan West Bengal. People should be involved in the environmental campaign in the study area i.e., Kumargramduar Block. Through discussion, debate, procession, poster-making, quiz-competitions, this campaign only can be transformed into a mass-movement in the entire block.

2.5(b) SANITATION CAMPAIGN

Sanitation is related to health and hygiene. Healthy life is the product of proper sanitation. It is apt to cite the proverb i.e., "Prevention is better than cure". Sanitation keeps the disease away from the society. Polluted atmosphere begets different diseases. So sanitation frees all from diseases.

Jalpaiguri Zilla Parishad through Kumargramduar Panchayat Samity has initiated the sanitation campaign in the different villages of the entire block. The 'Total Sanitation Campaign' (TSC) has ushered a new hope among all walks of people. The nodal agency of 'TSC' surveys the sanitary condition of every household

in different villages. The prime theme of the 'TSC' is toiletry in every house. The main motto of the 'TSC' is not to defecate openly in the surroundings.

'TSC;' has a draw back. 'TSC' thrusts only about sanitation. Pollution and related issues are neglected in 'TSC'. 'TSC' should incorporate the above issues for the betterment of the society. As such sanitation protects human beings from impending death.

2.5(c) FOREST PROTECTION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Forest is the lungs of society. So forest should be protected for the existence of human society and civilization. The Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal formulates and implements the plans for forest protection all over the state of West Bengal. The National Forest Policy (1988) has initiated one third of the total geographical area to restore the forest. For the restoration of the 'carrying capacity' of the mother earth, forest should be protected. Even the non-forest areas can be covered with trees. Thereafter afforestation schemes can be adopted on priority basis. So social forestry campaign can be initiated. The Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal has constituted a separate social forestry wing in the Department to look after the social forestry in the non-forest areas.

The Government of West Bengal has made the new enactments for protection of trees in the non-forest areas. The enactments mentioned here are follows :

1. West Bengal Trees (Protection and Conservation in Non-Forest Areas) Act, 2006; and
2. West Bengal Trees (Protection and Conservation in Non-Forest Areas) Rules, 2007.

These enactments may be fruitful if the common-people become conscious about the importance of trees in their day-to-day lives and society.

The Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal observes the Forest Week on 14th July, to 20th July every year. During this period the Department of Forest distributes the tree-saplings among the local people. The Department campaigns for the forest protection to save the wildlife in the locality.

Kumargramduar Block is a part of Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR). It is a unique habitat of wildlife including the Royal Bengal Tiger. The BTR authority highlights the issues of wildlife conservation among the common-masses in Kumargramduar along with other parts of the reserve forest.

Social forestry is the most essential concept to set up the relationship between the public and trees as well as other natural resources. Social forestry movement is being campaigned in Kumargramduar Block involving the common-folk. As is observed the roots of the social forestry movement have spread into all strata of the society for a sustainable livelihood in the area.

2.6. CONCLUSION

Environmental education moulds the human beings to be environment friendly. Protected environment keeps the entire human society free from disasters. So protection of ecology and environment should be paid greater attention. It is possible to involve the local people in environmental protection. Public awareness is the pre-requisite condition to campaign for the environment and related-issues in Kumargramduar Block along with the remaining parts of the Sub-Himalayan belts of West Bengal.

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- ¹ Kaushik, Anubha & Kaushik, C.P. Perspectives in Environmental Studies, New Age International (P) Limited Publishers, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 4
- ² Information : Office of the Principal, Shaheed Kshudiram Mahavidyalaya, Kamakhyaguri, Jalpaiguri (W.B.)
- ³ Pravin Sheth "Environmentalism : Policies, Ecology and Development", Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1997, pp. 313