

## PREFACE :

Ecological stress and the consequent deepening crisis of sheer existence, of late, alerted many of us in this country with a serious concern for finding the right way in dealing with the environment. Whether through ignorance or not, the 'fragile' environment has often been isolated outrageously, impairing its delicate systems which have long-term effect, jeopardizing the life-sustaining processes. The growing consciousness about the worsening situation compels the society today to make a rethinking, for halting the practices of grossly injurious to the environment. While it is admitted that the environment can not be put back to its original form, nor is it intended either, it may not be beyond our conscious efforts to check or control such practices for arresting further deterioration, followed by protective measures for speeding up the restorative processes of the environment.

The Mahananda Basin in the Darjeeling Himalayas is a region of a wide variety of renewable and non-renewable resources. Of late, this repository of natural wealth has been subjected to a virtual plunder. In consequence, the local ecosystems are fast losing their resilience and regenerative capacity, undermining the economic and cultural development of this extremely sensitive area.

At this moment, therefore, suggestion of remedial measures and their active implementation is of vital concern, for, on it depends the ecological balance and geo-environmental stability of this strategically important part of the country.

A number of case studies on soil-erosion, landslides and flood problems of the Mahananda Basin have been attempted in post-independent India, both at personal and government levels. Sad to say, most of them are found wanting in a systematic and comprehensive approach to the problem.

As such, the present researcher has been investigating into these vast and inter-woven geo-environmental problems of the Mahananda Basin since 1983 and the present dissertation is the outcome of this long pursuit.

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