CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The most important landmark for environmental awareness at an international level was without a doubt that International Conference on Environmental Education organized by UNESCO and UNEP at Tbilisi in former USSR in 1977. The goals of environmental awareness were defined by Hannah Hoerisch, April 2002 for CMS ENVIS Centre as creating environmental awareness:

a) impart general knowledge for a basic understanding of environment,

b) acquiring environmental friendly attitudes and

c) values and to generate new patterns of behavior towards environment.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, popularly known as the Earth Summit, adopted an action plan for Sustainable Development, Agenda 21. Chapter 36 which is devoted to education states that “Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment and development issues” for promoting awareness.

The reasons that promote environmental awareness, will focus on the resulting different levels of awareness itself:

Whether level of awareness of environmental problems is higher in more developed countries than in less developed ones?

The individual’s actual behavior towards environment have had make a difference between the way in which people actually behave and their awareness of environmental problems is not sufficient to develop an environmental friendly behavior which ultimately requires Environmental
awareness for self and sustainable development of the Universe too in spite of the question raised above.

1.1.1 Environmental Awareness from Philosophical Perspectives

The Epistemological Framework of Environmental Awareness popularly termed as Environmentalism is a broad philosophy, ideology and social movement regarding concerns for environmental conservation and improvement of the health of the environment, particularly as the measure for this health seeks to incorporate the concerns of non-human elements. Environmentalism advocates the preservation, restoration and or improvement of the natural environment, and may be referred to as a movement to control pollution by awareness as referred from Wikipedia.

Environmentalism is a Conceptual Framework to balance relations between humans being and the various natural systems of Environment on which they depend in such a way that all the components are accorded a proper degree of respect on the basis of Environmental awareness.

1.1.2 Environmentalism as a Social Movement

Environmentalism requires a social movement that seeks to influence the political process, issues, policies and education in order to protect natural resources and ecosystems.

This may include supporting practices in social condition such as informed consumption, conservation initiatives, investment in renewable energy, improved efficiencies in the materials economy, transitioning to new accounting paradigms such as Ecological economics and renewing and revitalizing our connections with non-human life in various ways from the related studies:

1) subjects in the educated group had better perception, more detailed
knowledge, were more aware, and had better attitudes in regard to regional
and global environmental problems than those in the community group;
2) more education is needed to develop environmental actions and ethics in
developing countries;
3) non-formal environmental education through popular mass media should be
used more widely and frequently, and more detailed information on the
environment should be provided to literate people by newspapers and other
means.

Environmental Awareness can be materialized through a process of
recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added
tools necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship among
human being. It creates an overall perspective, which acknowledges the fact that
natural environment and man-made environment are interdependent.

It should consider the environment in its totality and should be a
continuous lifelong process beginning at the pre-school level and continuing
through all stages. It should be inter-disciplinary and examine major
environmental issues from local, national and international points of view. It
should utilize various educational approaches to teach and learn about and from
the environment with stress on practical activities and first-hand experience. It
is through this process of education that people can be sensitized about the
environmental issues.

Some of the major schemes implemented for imparting environmental
education and for creation of environmental awareness among the general
public are as follows:

1.1.3 Implementation for Imparting Environmental Awareness
i) To promote environmental awareness among different social groups.
ii) To spread environment education, especially in the non-formal system among different sections of the society;

iii) To facilitate development of education/training materials and aids in the formal education sector;

iv) To promote environment education through awareness;

v) To ensure training and manpower development for environment education, awareness and training;

vi) To use different media including films, audio, visual and print, theatre, drama, advertisements, hoarding, posters, seminars, workshops, competitions, meetings etc. for spreading messages concerning environment and awareness; and

vii) To mobilize people's participation for preservation and conservation of environment.

1.2 Environmental Awareness : Background Study

1.2.1 Some Formal and Informal Approach

• To encourage non-governmental organizations, mass media and other concerned organizations for promoting awareness among the people at all levels;

• To promote environment education through existing educational / scientific / research institutions;

• To ensure training and manpower development in environment education; and

• To mobilize people's awareness for the preservation and conservation of environment.
The programmes conducted / initiatives launched as part of this scheme are categorized under formal and non-formal sectors.

- Awareness through Formal Environmental Education.
- Environment Education in School System.
- Awareness through Non-Formal Environmental Education.
- National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC).
- Mass Awareness.

### 1.2.2 Formal Environmental Education for Awareness

The Ministry of Environment & Forests has been interacting with the MHRD, NCERT, State Departments of Education etc. to ensure that environmental components are adequately covered at the school levels by infusion into the school curricula at various levels. The major initiatives taken by the ministry in this direction recently are mentioned below:

### 1.2.3 Environment Awareness in School System

In 1999, an exercise to strengthen environment education in the formal school curriculum has been undertaken. During the first phase of this project, a comprehensive study was conducted to assess the status of infusion of environment content in the school curriculum in the country and to assess the effectiveness of classroom teaching. The study was conducted in all the States of the country and textbooks of all the classes from standards I to XII were analyzed. Based on the findings of the study, the textbooks in Science, Social Science and Languages of middle school level in eight States (100 schools in each State) are being modified to strengthen the infusion of environmental concepts. The modified textbooks would be used for one academic session (2002–2003) in the selected schools of the selected States on pilot basis. The
concerned teachers of the selected schools would also be trained through formal education which is the mandate of the Ministry of Human Resource effectively teach the modified textbooks. The States participating in this project are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab and Uttaranchal. Depending upon the success of the pilot implementation, the revised curriculum may be taken up in the remaining schools. The findings of the Phase I study are also being shared with the States / UTs which are not participating in this project so that they can also environmentalise their textbook through Environmental Awareness.

1.2.4 Non-Formal Approach for Environmental Awareness

Non-formal Environment Education and Awareness Environmental Education, Awareness and Training plays a significant role in encouraging and enhancing people's participation in activities aimed at conservation, protection and management of the environment, essential for achieving sustainable development. The Ministry, therefore, accords priority for the promotion of non-formal environment education and creation of awareness among all sections of the society through diverse activities using traditional and modern media of communication.

Despite great efforts to spread environmental awareness by the Ministry through several schemes, it is felt that a large population especially in rural areas is still left out. The best way to reach out to them and make them aware of the environmental problems is through media, particularly the electronic media. “Mass Awareness” has therefore been identified as one of the thrust areas of the Ministry, not only to intensify the efforts already being made in this direction but also to launch new initiatives. The Doordarshan and few other television channels are proposed to be extensively used for telecasting environment based
programmes and infomercials. Professional Media agencies which are hired to assist the Ministry in carrying out the campaign also play a major role.

Emergence of environmental education as a compulsory subject at school level is a welcome development. India can protect and restore environmental and natural resources by spreading awareness on such issues among its citizens. Teaching of environmental education can be an important vehicle.

We have to create awareness about the environment and an attitude of caring and sharing of natural resources in the minds of those children who are the future citizen of our nation. The importance of sensitising students on environmental issues has led the Supreme Court to deliver a judgment on 18th December 2003 and direct NCERT to prepare a model syllabus for environmental education for different classes, which has been prepared under the title 'Environmental Education in Schools, June 2004'. From the academic session 2004–2005, environment education has been introduced as a compulsory subject at all levels in the school curriculum.

1.2.5 Models of Teaching

All these models are specific objective oriented. The work of Bruce Joyce & Marsha Weil (1972) has transformed different theories into different models of teaching, which can be easily used by teachers for classroom teaching in schools. These models are based on dependable theories of teaching established only during last decade.

Generally, a model of teaching consists of six elements termed as fundamental elements, namely focus, syntax principle of reaction, social system, support system and evaluation system. At present there exists a variety of models of teaching, which are based on theories of learning and teaching developed in various fields as referred by Sunila Bhalla Mehan.
1.3 Other Awareness Programs

- An international written Environment Quiz Program known as Green Olympiad conducted by TERI. It is conducted in more than 200 centers across the country. Last year the quiz was conducted in both Hindi and English and more than 70,000 school students from India, Russia and U. A. E. participated in this competition.

- Awareness activities / events by NGOs, academic institutions etc. on the occasion of special Environment days like Earth Day etc.

- Written environmental quiz programs in different regional languages are being started. The winners of written quiz would participate in a televised quiz program.

- Organization of an Annual Vacation Program on Environmental Resources for high school level students namely Vacation program on Natural resources-building a broader constituency of support for conservation by ATREE.

Today environmental degradation and preservation have emerged as major issues in globalization studies. Our environment is being deteriorated every now and then due to various factors like population explosion, uncontrolled and lavish consumption of precious environmental resources, industrialization, urbanization and exploitation of abiotic and biotic components of environment. These have resulted in the present day environment crisis condition. In the past because of lack of awareness about the environment, nations developed in science and technology, but at the expense of degradation of environment. From here it is not surprising that half of the environmental degradations are due to human activities. With the progress in science and technology man has made a lot of revolution in various fields. Man has made a lot of progress through science and technology but at the same time overuse and
misuse of environmental resources is destroying the equilibrium of environment. Man in an effort to fulfill his demands has exploited the environment. The environment has its own system of recovery but depletion of large amount of resources due to the activities of man has failed the self-recovery system of environment in many areas. So it has led to many adverse impacts on the environment.

Therefore, the forms of environmental awareness & the conceptions of nature in different social and cultural context, and the implications of social and cultural differences need to have environmental education. Environmental awareness is conceived as the totality of cognitions, attitudes and action. It is our goal, through empirical analysis and theoretical works, to depend on the theoretical understanding of the forms and dimensions of environmental awareness, particularly to outline the way, structural, cultural & social context and the everyday living environments influences the environmental thinking & the practices of people and social groups.

At the Belgrade International Workshop (1975), it was revealed that environmental awareness is indispensible as the state of the art of environmental education in all parts of the world and provision to extend and explore environmental awareness. It also states Environmental Awareness may provide power and understanding –

- To recognize the interdependence among human being and physical environment. To take decisions individually and collectively an initiative action for social and cultural and economic survival growth and development and for conservation of native natural resources.
- To identity human, material, space and time resources in the environment.
- To recognize ways of making effective use of environmental resources for social, economic and cultural survival growth and development.
• To take decisions for the effective use of resources, to recognize the special significance of conservation of natural resources and initiative for support community efforts for the purpose.

As per directives of the Hon’ble Supreme Court, the N. C. E. R. T. has developed a model syllabus on environmental education for all stages of school education and the name has been published under the title ‘Environmental Education in School’ (June, 2004).

Rajput, J. S (1988) conducted “A research study for identification of teaching skills and training strategies for implementing the environmental approach at primary level” although the study does not reveal the actual sources of environmental awareness.

Objectives of the Study: (i) to produce integrated material for environmental studies (social studies) and environmental studies (science) for class III to IV. (ii) to develop a strategy for teaching environmental studies I and II in class III and IV through the environmental approach and test the relative efficacy of the developed strategies in relation to the methods being used for realization of the objectives of primary education and (iii) to identify teaching skills for the teaching through the environmental approach.

Findings of the Study: (i) the mean scores of environmental awareness for the experimental and the control group at pre-test level indicated that out of the comparison groups in seven schools, nine groups had no significant difference as a result of the treatment, (ii) the result of comparison between the groups and within the groups indicated that out of 14 groups, five groups had no significant differences in both cases, (iii) The significant differences obtained in some groups did not follow any uniform pattern.

Sahanawaj (1990) conducted a study on environmental awareness and environmental attitude of secondary and higher secondary teachers and students
and the study reveals that both the students and teachers section have had their positive attitude towards environment but reality and practices towards environment almost no similarity when the awareness in practice.

**Objectives**: (i) To determine the extent of awareness about the environment among students and teachers. (ii) To find out the attitude of teachers and students towards the environment. (iii) To find out the differences between teachers and students and male and female groups concerning the environment

**Findings of the studies**: (i) It was found that 95% of teachers and 94% of students possessed positive environmental attitudes. (ii) The environmental trained teachers and untrained teachers did not differ in their attitudes. (iii) Teachers had more awareness of the environment than students. (iv) Trained and untrained teachers did not differ on environmental awareness. (v) Girls possessed significantly more awareness of the environment than boys.

**Praharaj, B (1991)** conducted a study on environmental knowledge, environmental attitude & perception regarding environmental education among pre-service and in-service secondary school teachers.

**Objectives**: (i) To find out the level of environmental knowledge & attitude of pre-service and in-service secondary school teachers. (ii) To study their perception regarding environmental education in the secondary school.

**Findings of the Study**: (i) The level of environmental knowledge was found low among per-service teachers, although conceptual knowledge was moderate. (ii) Among the in-service teachers, environmental knowledge was moderate and factual knowledge about the environment was low. (iii) Both the groups differ significantly in their level of environmental knowledge. They had a favourable attitude towards environmental education though the in-service groups had a higher level of attitude than that of the pre-service groups. (iv) There was moderate co-relation between environmental knowledge and environmental
attitude. (v) Teachers perceived that environmental education could be a core part of social science, general science and science subjects also in secondary school as well as man media have a potential role to play in imparting environmental education.


Objectives: (i) to study the concept and constituents of the environment (ii) to study the environment man relationship, (iii) to study the dynamics of the environment and (iv) to renovate the concept of environmental education.

Findings of the study: (i) the concept of the environment is broadly divided as natural and man made types, (ii) flora and fauna constitute the biotic environment, (iii) the atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere constitute the abiotic environment, (iv) man made environments are different types, such as social, economic, political, cultural, aesthetic, historical, geographical, psychological, religious and academic, (v) the fusion of different types of environment from the holistic concept of environment. The relationship between man and environment is symbiotic in nature, (vi) the different stages of evolution — the hunting-gathering stage, the agricultural stage and industrial stage reflect such relationships, (vii) gradually man domination over the environment has created complexities in the man-environment relationship, (viii) efforts are continuing with regard to environment management with focus on unity of life. Sustainable development, human welfare, futuristic and cultural programme, (ix) self management is perceived as the best formula for good environmental management, (x) general workshop, at national and international levels have thrown light on the conceptual analysis of environmental education. Environmental education is a broad concept aid in perceived as lifelong experience for all.
P. N. Mishra and G. Airen (1994) studied on environmental education and revealed that there are many campaigns for environmental awareness and for banning activities that endanger environment. However these are only external and superficial measures that do not get to the root of the problem. Solving environmental problems requires greater co-operation and co-ordination between nations both at the regional level and also worldwide level leading to attitudinal shift among the masses.

V. Sandhu and T. S. Dhillon (2004) made a study of environmental education awareness among elementary school teachers in Punjab. This study was conducted on 1800 elementary school teachers to study their environmental education awareness with respect to their residential backgrounds and subject specialization.

Findings of the Study: Results revealed significant variation in the environmental education awareness with regard to their residential background and subject specialization but no significant variation was observed in relation to the sex of elementary school teachers.

R. C. Sharma (2004) prepared a paper on “Implications of environmental education in teacher education” in New Delhi. Revealed that education, particularly school education could play a greater role by making an impact on the thinking of young minds to protect the universe from deterioration. This paper suggests ways to attract teacher education for bringing out effective changes in school evaluation. Adopting to an inter disciplinary nature. The author suggests, the environmental education should go beyond school boundaries for reacting to all sections of the society.

M. Abraham and N. K. Arjuna (2005) conducted a study on “Environmental interest of secondary school students in relation to their environmental attitude” in Kerala. The environmental interest inventory and the environmental attitude scale constructed and standardized for the purpose of the
present investigation were used for collecting data from a sample of 624 secondary students. The results showed that the secondary school students did not have a high level of environmental interest. A differential effect of gender and locality were observed in their environmental interest, the boys and urban subjects were found to have more interest in environmental matters compared to their rural counterparts. A high positive and significant co-relation was found to exist between environmental interest and environmental attitudes in all the sample groups studied.

The study shows that environmental attitude can create interest and which must have some positive effect.

Kamla Raj (2010) conducted a study on Assessment of Environmental Awareness among Higher Primary School Teachers and the study expressed that teacher should have some more awareness regarding environment.

Objectives: To study the environmental awareness of higher primary school teachers of Mysore City in India

Main Findings: Majority of the teachers had moderate levels of environmental awareness. Female teachers found to have higher levels of environmental awareness compared to male teachers. Teachers in the age groups of 31 to 50 years had higher levels of awareness as compared to other age groups. Teachers working in private schools had higher levels of environmental awareness as compared to teachers working in government schools. The overall analysis revealed though majority of the teachers had moderate awareness, only few of them had high levels of Awareness.

Rajinder Kaur & Manpreet Kaur (2010) conducted a study on environmental awareness level of students of secondary and senior secondary schools.

Objectives: To study the environmental awareness level of students.
Findings: Level of environmental awareness among secondary and senior secondary students

There were 117 items in the EAS and each item was given a credit of '1' point and a 'zero' for wrong answer. The observed means score of the entire sample of secondary and senior secondary students was 88.16 which is quite high. The secondary (M = 88.62) and senior secondary (M = 87.5) students of Patiala district have more awareness regarding the environment. The reason behind it is that Patiala is considered to be the educational hub having all kinds of educational institutions like a university, engineering colleges, medical and dental colleges, various arts and science colleges and numerous schools.

Environmental Awareness may be defined as co-existence of various forms of life on earth both in plant and animal kingdom. Environmental Awareness is the result all the living organisms including man are inter-related and interdependent. They have each evolved out of another in certain conditions with certain structures. Each has a definite number of varieties and geographical spread. One species depends on another for its survival. In fact all the living beings including plants have acquired an ecological balance amongst themselves and based on its survival depends on Environmental Awareness and its right application.

But unfortunately, except scientists and naturalists most of the people of our country are somewhat casual about the problem of Environmental Awareness. Only a few people, though gradually increasing in number are pressing for recognition of the problem and urgent steps for its solution.

To convince the people that it is in their own interest that Environmental Awareness and other natural resources should be maintained, education about ecology among common people is needed. An attitude of consciousness and sympathy from the point of human consideration should be inculcated in their minds from their childhood. Therefore, ecological education should be included
in the primary level as well as in higher level of formal education. Also through informal and mass education, awareness of the people about the situation should be built up and will have to be continued for sustainable development.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

“A STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT ON SOME SELECTED SOCIAL GROUPS IN WEST BENGAL”

1.5 Definition of the Important Terms

1.5.1 Environmental Awareness:

- Knowledge or perception of a situation or fact about Environment: We need to raise public awareness of the issue there is a lack of awareness of the risks regarding Environmental Awareness.

- Concern about and well-informed interest in a particular situation or development: a growing environmental awareness is social awareness developed. 

  Ref: Awareness in Oxford Dictionaries.

  “Awareness describes a human and animal perception and cognitive reaction to a condition or event. Awareness does not necessarily imply understanding, just as ability to be conscious or feel or perceive”.

Wikipedia (The Free Encyclopedia):

“Awareness focuses on an internal state, such as a visual feeling, or on external event by way of sensory perception. Awareness provides the raw material from which animals develop idea about their experience”.

— Wikipedia (The Free Encyclopedia)
"Environmental awareness means to help social groups and individuals to acquire an awareness of and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems".  

**Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha (1998)**

"Environmental awareness may be defined to help the social groups and individuals to gain a variety of experiences in and acquire a basic understanding of environment and its associated problems".  

**R.A. Sharma**

Environmental education has been an integral part of our school education and also problems related to the environment are either integrated with different disciplines or introduced as a subject.

The terms environmental education and environmental awareness used interchange for the same meaning but there is significant difference in these two terms, environmental awareness may be defined as to help the social groups and individual to gain a variety of experiences in and acquire a basic understanding of environment and its associated problems.

**1.5.2 Social Groups :**

Four social groups have been selected for conducting the study 1) S. C. 2) S. T. 3) O. B .C. 4) General.

A social group is a collection of people who interact with each other and share similar characteristics and a sense of unity. A social category is a collection of people who do not interact but who share similar characteristics. For example, women, men, the elderly, and high school students all constitute social categories. A social category can become a social group when the members in the category interact with each other and identify themselves as members of the group. In contrast, a social aggregate is a collection of people who are in the same place, but who do not interact or share characteristics.
Psychologists Muzafar and Carolyn Sherif, in a classic experiment in the 1950s, divided a group of 12-year-old white, middle-class boys at a summer camp into the “Eagles” and the “Rattlers.” At first, when the boys did not know one another, they formed a common social category as summer campers. But as time passed and they began to consider themselves to be either Eagles or Rattlers, these 12-year-old boys formed two distinct social groups.

Informative Pictures from Internet

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) are two groups of historically disadvantaged people that are given express recognition in the Constitution of India. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent they were known as the Depressed Classes (Source: Wikipedia).

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes make up around 15% and 7.5% respectively of the population of India, or around 24% altogether, according to the 2001 Census. The proportion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country's population has steadily risen since independence in 1947.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 25 states in its First Schedule, while the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule.

Since independence, the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (all three categories combined together constitute about 85 percent of India's population) were given provision of “Reservation” policy. The reservation policy became an integral part of the Constitution through the efforts of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, father of Modern India and architect of the Indian Constitution; he participated in Round Table Conferences and fought for the rights of the Oppressed and Depressed Classes. The Constitution lays down general principles for the policy of affirmative action for the SCs and STs.
History

From the 1850s these communities were loosely referred to as the "Depressed Classes", and they are also referred to as Adivasis (original inhabitants). The early part of the 20th century saw a flurry of activity in the British Raj to assess the feasibility of responsible self-government for India. The Morley-Minto Reforms Report, Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Report, and the Simon Commission were some of the initiatives that happened in this context. One of the hotly contested issues in the proposed reforms was the reservation of seats for the "depressed" classes in provincial and central legislatures.

In 1935, the British passed the Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. Reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act, which came into force in 1937. The Act brought the term "Scheduled Castes" into use, and defined the group as including "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes', as His Majesty in Council may prefer". This discretionary definition was clarified in The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936, which contained a list, or Schedule, of castes throughout the British administered provinces.

After independence, the Constituent Assembly continued the prevailing definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and gave (via articles 341, 342) the President of India and Governors of states responsibility to compile a full listing of castes and tribes, and also the power to edit it later as required. The actual complete listing of castes and tribes was made via two orders The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, and The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1958 respectively.
Constitutional Framework for Safeguarding of Interests

The Constitution provides a framework with a three pronged strategy to improve the situation of SCs and STs.

1. Protective Arrangements: Such measures as are required to enforce equality, to provide punitive measures for transgressions, to eliminate established practices that perpetuate inequities, etc. A number of laws were enacted to operationalize the provisions in the Constitution. Examples of such laws include The Untouchability Practices Act, 1955, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, The Employment of Manual scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, etc.

2. Affirmative action: provide positive preferential treatment in allotment of jobs and access to higher education, as a means to accelerate the integration of the SCs and STs with mainstream society. Affirmative action is also popularly referred to as Reservation.

3. Development: Provide for resources and benefits to bridge the wide gap in social and economic condition between the SCs/STs and other communities.

National Commissions

To effectively implement the various safeguards built into the Constitution and other legislations, the Constitution, under Articles 338 and 338A, provides for two statutory commissions – the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

History

In the original Constitution, Article 338 provided for a Special Officer, called the Commissioner for SCs and STs, to have the responsibility of monitoring the effective implementation of various safeguards for SCs / STs in
the Constitution as well as other related legislations and to report to the President. To enable efficient discharge of duties, 17 regional offices of the Commissioner were set up all over the country.

In the meanwhile there was persistent representation for a replacement of the Commissioner with a multi-member committee. It was proposed that the 48th Amendment to the Constitution be made to alter Article 338 to enable said proposal. While the amendment was being debated, the Ministry of Welfare issued an administrative decision to establish the Commission for SCs / STs as a multi-member committee to discharge the same functions as that of the Commissioner of SCs / STs. The first commission came into being in August 1978. The functions of the commission were modified in September 1987 to advise Government on broad policy issues and levels of development of SCs / STs.

In 1990 that the Article 338 was amended to give birth to the statutory National Commission for SCs and STs via the Constitution (Sixty fifth Amendment) Bill, 1990. The first Commission under the 65th Amendment was constituted in March 1992 replacing the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the Commission set up under the Ministry of Welfare's Resolution of 1989.

In 2003, the Constitution was again amended to split the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two separate commissions – the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

**Distribution**

According to the 61st Round Survey of the NSSO, almost nine-tenths of Buddhists in India belonged to scheduled castes of the Constitution while one-third of Christians belonged to scheduled tribes. Major part of scheduled castes
were Hindus by religion but belonged to castes and tribes having low population. The Sachar Committee report of 2006 also confirmed that members of scheduled castes and tribes of India are not exclusively adherents of Hinduism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>89.50%</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>9.00%</td>
<td>32.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>22.20%</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gond</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jainism</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan**

The strategy of Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) of 1979 is an important intervention that mandates a planning process for social, economic, and educational development of Scheduled Castes and for improvement in their working and living conditions. It is an umbrella strategy that ensures flow of targeted financial and physical benefits from general sectors of development for the benefit of Scheduled Castes. Under this strategy, population. It entails targeted flow of funds and associated benefits from the annual plan of States / Union Territories (UTs) at least in proportion to the SC population i.e. 16% in the total population of the country / the particular state. Presently, 27 States / UTs having sizeable SC populations are implementing Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan. Although the Scheduled Castes population, according to 2001 Census, was 16.66 crores constituting 16.23% of the total population of India, the allocations made through SCSP in recent years have been much lower than the population proportion.
From Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (November 2011)

The Mandal Commission was established in India in 1979 by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward". It was headed by Indian parliamentarian Bindheshwari Prasad Mandal to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness. In 1980, the commission's report affirmed the affirmative action practice under Indian law whereby members of lower castes (known as Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes and Tribes) were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and slots in public universities, and recommended changes to these quotas, increasing them by 27% to 49.5

Setting up of Mandal Commission

The plan to set up another Commission was taken by the Morarji Desai government in 1978 as per the mandate of the Constitution of India under article 340 for the purpose of Articles like 15 and 16. The decision was made official by the President on 1st January 1979. The Commission is popularly known as the Mandal Commission with its chairman being B. P. Mandal.

Criteria to identify OBC

The Mandal Commission adopted various methods and techniques to collect the necessary data and evidence. The commission adopted 11 criteria which could be grouped under three major headings: social, educational and economic in order to identify OBCs.
Social

1. Classes considered as socially backward by others.
2. Classes which mainly depend on manual labour for their livelihood.
3. Classes where at least 25 percent females and 10 percent males above the state average get married at an age below 17 years in rural areas and at least 10 percent females and 5 percent males do so in urban areas.
4. Classes where participation of females in work is at least 25 percent above the state average.

Educational

1. Classes where the number of children in the age group of 5–15 years who never attended school is at least 25 percent above the state average.
2. Classes where the rate of student drop-out in the age group of 5–15 years is at least 25 percent above the state average.
3. Classes amongst whom the proportion of matriculates is at least 25 percent below the state average.

Economic

1. Classes where the average value of family assets is at least 25 percent below the state average.
2. Classes where the number of families living in kuccha houses is at least 25 percent above the state average.
3. Classes where the source of drinking water is beyond half kilometer for more than 50 percent of the households.
4. Classes where the number of households having taken consumption loans is at least 25 percent above the state average.
Also known as "Creamy layer," this criteria of separation is ignored by the government which is known as the most controversial issue of reservation.

Weighting Indicators

As the above three groups are not of equal importance for the purpose, separate weightage was given to indicators in each group. All the social indicators were given a weightage of 3 points each, educational indicators were given a weightage of 2 points each and economic indicators were given a weightage of 1 point each. Economic, in addition to social and educational indicators, were considered important as they directly flowed from social and educational backwardness. This also helped to highlight the fact that socially and educationally backward classes are economically backward also.

It will be seen from the values given to each indicator, the total score adds up to 22. All these 11 indicators were applied to all the castes covered by the survey for a particular state. As a result of this application, all castes which had a score of 50% (i.e. 11 points) were listed as socially and educationally backward and the rest were treated as 'advanced'.

Observations:

The commission estimated that 54% of the total population (excluding SCs and STs), belonging to 3,743 different castes and communities were 'backward'. Figures of caste-wise population are not available beyond. So the commission used 1931 census data to calculate the number of OBCs. The population of Hindu OBCs was derived by subtracting from the total population of Hindus, the population of SC and ST and that of forward Hindu castes and communities, and it worked out to be 52 percent. Assuming that roughly the proportion of OBCs amongst non-Hindus was of the same order as amongst the Hindus, population of non-Hindu OBCs was also considered as 52 percent.
• Assuming that a child from an advanced class family and that of a backward class family had the same intelligence at the time of their birth, it is obvious that owing to vast differences in social, cultural and environmental factors, the former will beat the latter by lengths in any competitive field. Even if a backward class child’s intelligence quotient was much higher as compared to the child of advanced class, chances are that the former will lag far behind the latter in any competition where selection is made on the basis of ‘merit’.

• In fact, what we call ‘merit’ in an elitist society is an amalgam of native endowments and environmental privileges. A child from an advanced class family and that of a backward class family are not ‘equals’ in any fair sense of the term and it will be unfair to judge them by the same yard-stick. The conscience of a civilized society and the dictates of social justice demand that ‘merit’ and ‘equality’ are not turned into a fetish and the element of privilege is duly recognized and discounted for when ‘unequal’ are made to run the same race.

• To place the amalgams of open caste conflicts in proper historical context, the study done by Tata institute of Social Sciences Bombay observes. “The British rulers produced many structural disturbances in the Hindu caste structure, and these were contradictory in nature and impact .... Thus, the various impacts of the British rule on the Hindu caste system, viz., near monopolization of jobs, education and professions by the literati castes, the Western concepts of equality and justice undermining the Hindu hierarchical dispensation, the phenomenon of Sanskritization, genteel reform movement from above and militant reform movements from below, emergence of the caste associations with a new role set the stage for the caste conflicts in modern India. Two more ingredients which were very weak in the British period, viz., politicization of the masses and universal adult franchise, became powerful moving forces after the Independence.
**Recommendations**

The report of the commission was submitted in December 1980. The following are the recommendations as stated in the report:

It may appear the upliftment of Other Backward Classes is part of the larger national problem of the removal of mass poverty. This is only partially correct. The deprivation of OBCs is a very special case of the larger national issue: here the basic question is that of social and educational backwardness and poverty is only a direct consequence of these two crippling caste-based handicaps. As these handicaps are embedded in our social structure, their removal will require far-reaching structural changes. No less important will be changes in the perception of the problems of OBCs by the ruling classes of the country.

**Implementation**

All the recommendations of the report are not yet implemented. The recommendation of reservations for OBCs in government services was implemented in 1993. As on 27 June, 2008 there is still a backlog of 28,670 OBC vacancies in government jobs. The recommendation of reservations in Higher educational institutes was implemented in 2008.

---

**Fig. 1 : Population Estimation and Reservation % of Various Communities**
NFHS Survey estimated only Hindu OBC population. Total OBC population derived by assuming Muslim OBC population in same proportion as Hindu OBC population.

The National Sample Survey puts the figure at 32%. There is substantial debate over the exact number of OBC's in India, with census data compromised by partisan politics. It is generally estimated to be sizable, but lower than the figures quoted by either the Mandal Commission or National Sample Survey.

There is also an ongoing controversy about the estimation logic used by Mandal Commission for calculating OBC population. Famous Indian Statistician, Mr. Yogendra Yadav who supports Reservations agrees that there is no empirical basis to the Mandal figure. According to him “It is a mythical construct based on reducing the number of SC / ST, Muslims and others and then arriving at a number”.

National Sample Survey's 1999–2000 round estimated around 36 percent of the country's population is defined as belonging to the Other Backward Classes (OBC). The proportion falls to 32 percent on excluding Muslim OBCs. A survey conducted in 1998 by National Family Health Statistics (NFHS) puts the proportion of non-Muslim OBCs as 29.8 percent.

L. R. Naik, the only Dalit member in the Mandal Commission refused to sign the Mandal recommendations. He said that there are two social blocks among the OBCs: upper caste (Jat and Gujjar) and upper OBCs (Yadavs, Kurmis, etc.) and Most Backward Classes (MBCs). He feared that upper OBCs would corner all the benefits of reservation.

A decade after the commission gave its report, V.P. Singh, the Prime Minister at the time, tried to implement its recommendations in 1989. The criticism was sharp and colleges across the country held massive protests.
against it. Soon after, Rajiv Goswami, student of Delhi University, committed self-immolation in protest of the government's actions. His act further sparked a series of self-immolations by other college students and led to a formidable movement against job reservations for Backward Castes in India. First student to die due to self-immolation was Surinder Singh Chauhan on Sep 24, 1990.

**Arguments of the Opponents against the Issue:**

- Allocating quotas on the basis of caste is a form of racial discrimination, and contrary to the right to equality. Although the exact relation between caste and race is far from well established

- As a consequence of legislating to provide reservations for Christians and Muslim, religious minorities in all government education institutions will be introduced which is contrary to the ideas of secularism, and is a form of anti-discrimination on the basis of religion.

- Most often, only economically sound people (and rather rich) from the so-called lower castes will make use of most of the reserved seats, thus counteracting the spirit of reservations. Political parties know reservations are no way to improve the lot of the poor and the backward. They support them because of self-interest of the “creamy layer”, who use the reservations to further their own family interests, and as a political flag of ‘achievement’ during election campaigns. Several studies show that the OBC class is comparable with the general caste in terms of annual per capita consumption expenditure, and the top strata of OBC is ahead in a host of consumption areas.

- The quality of these elite institutes may go down, because merit is severely being compromised by reserving seats for certain caste-based communities.

- There are no efforts made to give proper primary education to truly deprived classes, so there is no need to reserve seats for higher studies. The
government schools in India have absolutely no comparison to the public schools in the developed countries, and only about 65% of the Indian population is literate. The critics argue that "reservation" only in higher institutions and jobs, without improving primary and secondary education, cannot solve this problem.

- The government is dividing people on the basis of castes for political advantages.

- The caste system is kept alive through these measures. Instead of coming up with alternative innovative ideas which make sure equal representation at the same time making the caste system irrelevant, the decision is only fortifying the caste system.

- The autonomy of the educational institutes are lost.

- Not everyone from the so-called upper classes are rich, and not all from so called lower classes are poor.

- The reservation policy will create a huge unrest in the Indian society. Providing quotas on the basis of caste and not on the basis of merit will deter the determination of many educated and deserving students of India.

- Multi-national companies will be deterred by this action of the government, and foreign investment in India may dry down, hurting the growth of the Indian economy. Doubtless, urgent actions to improve the lot of the majority, which has not benefited from development—not achieved after 55 years of reservations for scheduled castes are essential. But this must not hazard improving the economy’s competitiveness in a very competitive world.

- There are already talks of reservations in the private sector. If even after providing so many facilities to reserved categories during education, if there is no adequate representation of those people in the work force, there must be some problems with the education system.
Critics of the Mandal Commission argue that it is unfair to accord people special privileges on the basis of caste, even in order to redress traditional caste discrimination. They argue that those that deserve the seat through merit will be at a disadvantage. They reflect on the repercussions of unqualified candidates assuming critical positions in society (doctors, engineers, etc.). As the debate on OBC reservations spreads, a few interesting facts which raise pertinent question are already apparent. To begin with, is there any clear idea what proportion of our population is OBC? According to the Mandal Commission (1980) it is 52 percent. According to 2001 Indian Census, out of India's population of 1,028,737,436 the Scheduled Castes comprise 166,635,700 and Scheduled Tribes 84,326,240, that is 16.2% and 8.2% respectively. There is no data on OBCs in the census. However, according to National Sample Survey's 1999-2000 round around 36 percent of the country's population is defined as belonging to the Other Backward Classes (OBC). The proportion falls to 32 percent on excluding Muslim OBCs. A survey conducted in 1998 by National Family Health Statistics (NFHS) puts the proportion of non-Muslim OBCs as 29.8 percent. The NSSO data also shows that already 23.5 percent of college seats are occupied by OBCs. That's just 8.6 percent short of their share of population according to the same survey. Other arguments include that entrenching the separate legal status of OBCs and SC / STs will perpetuate caste differentiation and encourage competition among communities at the expense of national unity. They believe that only a small new elite of educated Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs benefit from reservations, and that such measures don't do enough to lift the mass of people out of poverty.

**Academic Achievement:**

Academic Achievement has been measured of the subjects at their last final examination. Namely marks of tenth grade secondary level examination
has been considered as index of their Academic Achievement.

Academic achievement or (academic) performance is the outcome of education — the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals.

Academic achievement is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important — procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts and others as revealed from Wikipedia.

1.6 Objectives :

The study was conducted with the following objectives :

1. To study the Environmental Awareness and its influences on different social groups.
2. To study the different aspects of Environmental Awareness.
3. To determine the attitude of different social groups towards Environmental Awareness.
4. To understand Environmental Awareness towards conservation of biodiversity.
5. To prepare and standardize a suitable tool for assessment of Environmental Awareness.
6. To study the impact of Environmental Awareness on different social groups in relation to their Academic Achievement.

1.7 Significance of the Study

1. The study throws light on a very recent and most important dimensions regarding Environmental Awareness among different social groups.
2. Through the study, different aspects of Environmental Awareness are discussed for ensuring the relationship among them.

3. The awareness about Environmental Awareness is being accelerated on its proper application and attitude.

4. In this study, regarding Environmental Awareness with different types of people and groups in our society are also revealed.

1.8 Dimensions of the Study

1) Knowledge.

2) Attitude.

3) Involvement.

4) Values.

1.9. Tool

The questionnaire constructed by the researcher was used as a tool in the study.

1.10 Sample and Population

The researcher has collected the samples for his research work from rural and urban high secondary schools. Out of 800 samples from 11th grade students of 16 schools selected purposively from four districts namely Nadia, North 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Murshidabad in West Bengal. From the total sample 200 were S. C. of whom 100 subjects were taken from urban area and 100 subjects from rural area. 200 subjects were S.T. having 11th grade education of whom 100 were from urban area and 100 from rural area. 200 subjects were from O. B. C. of whom 100 were from urban area and 100 from rural area and
finally 200 subjects were from General category and similarly 200 samples are selected randomly out of 800 each of 100 boys and girls for testing Hypotheses.

1.11 Delimitation of the Study :

The study was delimited in terms of samples, content and tools. The delimitations are as follows :

- The study was conducted on selected social groups only.
- Four groups were selected randomly.
- These four social groups have been selected for conducting the study which are 1) S. C. 2) S. T. 3) O. B. C. 4) General.
- The study was delimited to four districts namely Nadia, North 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Murshidabad in West Bengal.
- Only 11th grade students from 16 higher secondary schools of West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education were taken.