



STUDY MATERIAL

VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE THAKURPUKUR

NAAC ACCREDITED GRADE—'A'

Subject: Environmental Science

Topic: Environmentalism

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Environmentalism

Part I unit I

What is environmentalism?

- **Environmentalism or environmental rights is a broad philosophy, ideology, and social movement regarding concerns for environmental protection and improvement of the health of the environment.**
- **Environmentalism advocates the lawful preservation, restoration and/or improvement of the natural environment, and may be referred to as a movement to control pollution or protect plant and animal diversity.**
- **The word was first coined in 1922.**

- **Environmentalism is a concept which comprise of several similar concepts. Concepts such as a land ethic, environmental ethics, biodiversity, ecology, and the biophilia hypothesis (the urge to affiliate with other forms of life) figure predominantly.**
- **environmentalism is an attempt to balance relations between humans and the various natural systems on which they depend in such a way that all the components are accorded a proper degree of sustainability.**
- **Environmentalism and environmental concerns are often represented by the colour green, but this association has been appropriated by the marketing industries for the tactic known as greenwashing.**

History :

- A concern for environmental protection has recurred in diverse forms, in different parts of the world, throughout history. For example, in Europe, King Edward I of England banned the burning of sea-coal by proclamation in London in 1272, after its smoke had become a problem.
- The origins of the environmental movement lay in the response to increasing levels of smoke pollution in the atmosphere during the Industrial Revolution. The emergence of great factories and immense growth in coal consumption gave rise to an unprecedented level of air pollution in industrial areas in 1900s.
- The first large-scale, modern environmental laws came in the form of **British Alkali Act, passed in 1863**, to regulate the deleterious air pollution (gaseous hydrochloric acid) from soda ash factories.

- The after effect of Industrial revolution came in the form of the Great Smog of 1952 in London, which almost brought the city to a standstill and may have caused upward of 6,000 deaths that the **Clean Air Act 1956** was passed and pollution in the city was finally brought to an end.
- Systematic efforts on behalf of the environment only began in the late 19th century; it grew out of the amenity movement in Britain in the 1870s, which was a reaction to industrialization, the growth of cities, and worsening air and water pollution. Starting with the formation of the Commons Preservation Society in 1865, the movement was successful in rural preservation against the encroachments of industrialisation.
- The movement in the United States began in the late 19th century, out of concerns for protecting the natural resources of the West, with individuals such as John Muir and Henry David Thoreau making key philosophical contributions.
- In the 20th century, environmental ideas continued to grow in popularity and recognition. Efforts were starting to be made to save some wildlife, particularly the American bison. The death of the last passenger pigeon as well as the endangerment of the American bison helped to focus the minds of conservationists and popularize their concerns. In **1916 the National Park Service was founded** by US President Woodrow Wilson.

- In 1962, **Silent Spring** by American biologist **Rachel Carson** was published. The book catalogued the environmental impacts of the indiscriminate spraying of DDT in the US and questioned the logic of releasing large amounts of chemicals into the environment without fully understanding their effects on ecology or human health. The book suggested that DDT and other pesticides may cause cancer and that their agricultural use is a threat to wildlife, particularly birds. The resulting public concern led to the creation of the **United States Environmental Protection Agency** in 1970 which subsequently banned the agricultural use of DDT in the US in 1972.
- The book's legacy was to produce a far greater awareness of environmental issues and interest into how people affect the environment. With this new interest in environment people become interested about the problems such as air pollution and petroleum spills etc. New pressure groups formed, notably **Greenpeace** and **Friends of the Earth** (US), as well as notable local organizations.

Silent spring by Rachel Carson



- The world's first political parties to campaign on a predominantly environmental platform were the United Tasmania Group of Tasmania, Australia and the Values Party of New Zealand.
- The first national green party in Europe was PEOPLE, founded in Britain in February 1973, which eventually turned into the Ecology Party, and then the Green Party.
- Another milestone in the movement was the creation of an Earth Day. Earth Day was first observed in San Francisco and other cities on March 21, 1970, the first day of spring. It was created to give awareness to environmental issues.
- The UN's first major conference on international environmental issues, the **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment** (also known as the Stockholm Conference), was held on June, 1972. It marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics.
- In 1979, James Lovelock, a British scientist, published Gaia: A new look at life on Earth, which put forth the **Gaia hypothesis**; it proposes that life on earth can be understood as a single organism. This became an important part of the Deep Green ideology. Throughout the rest of the history of environmentalism there has been debate and argument between more radical followers of this Deep Green ideology and more mainstream environmentalists.