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Malay Kumar Chanda**

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Ecopedagogy as a Path to Sustainable Development

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Abstract :

A sustainable world always gives its citizens a better quality of life and protects the environment. As a holistic approach sustainability meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. In the 21st century sustainable development is very important because, it encourages us to preserve our natural resources, respect the environment and also conserve the biodiversity but currently our earth is facing a lot of environmental concerns. Along with the rapid growth of science and technologies, environmental crises are also increasing. It is high time to realize that in the 21st century, it is not possible to achieve sustainable development without global environmental protection and secondary students can play a most significant role to achieve sustainable development by protecting and preserving our nature, because this stage is the most important stage of our life. Environmental

sustainability is considered as the key strategy to ensure sustainable development and secondary students can play a pivotal role to achieve sustainable development if appropriate educational approach is adopted. Ecopedagogy is critical, transformative education which aims to end the socio-environmental injustices and human dominance on nature. It is an approach to education of earth and its citizens to make the earth crises-free. It develops the ecoliteracy of the students. Therefore, the present deliberation aims to study the provisions for developing eco-literacy among the students of secondary stage of education in Assam and to study the relevance of ecopedagogy for developing ecoliteracy among the students of secondary stage of education. In order to conduct this study, the investigator has adopted qualitative approach and, use secondary sources to collect data.

Keywords : Ecopedagogy, Sustainability, Sustainable Development.

Introduction :

Sustainable development is the key strategy to facilitate growth that fulfills the current needs without compromising with the availability of resources for future generation. It improves the quality of our life, minimizes the depletion of natural resources, teaches us to respect and care for our earth, checks the pollution level and also makes arrangements so that the future generations are able to meet their own needs. Therefore, to achieve a better and more sustainable future 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) were adopted by all UN member states in 2015 with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These 17 goals are a universal call to action and end poverty, hunger, protect the planet, bring equality in education etc. Environmental protection is an inevitable part of sustainable development.

Assam is a naturally bountiful place. But it is also not free from the environmental crises. Some of the ever-remaining problems are perennial floods, landslide, river bank erosion, deforestation and other environmental catastrophes. To protect our planet, education can be a key agent. Education develops eco-literacy among the individuals and it is possible by implementing appropriate pedagogical approach in education.

Eco-literacy is the ability to understand the organization of natural systems and the processes that maintain the healthy functioning of living systems and sustain life on earth. As an pedagogical approach towards achieving the aim of developing eco-literacy among the people, that is Ecopedagogy. The pedagogy which teaches the students to develop their awareness, positive attitude towards the environment, enables them to critically think about the environmental injustice and also ends the environmental crises is called as Ecopedagogy. This pedagogy is a critical approach to the teaching and learning of connection between environmental and social problem which develops the eco-literacy of the students. Ecopedagogy emerged as an education which includes ecological ethics also.

Objective :

The present study strives to achieve the following objectives—

- To analyze the provisions for developing Eco-literacy among the students of secondary stage of education in Assam.
- To study the relevance of Ecopedagogy for developing Eco-literacy among the students of secondary stage of education.

Literature Review :

Kumara (2012) revealed significant difference between male and female students and rural and urban students in their ecoliteracy where the urban students are inferior to rural students regarding their ecoliteracy. Surata, Jayantini and Langsing (2015) explored a positive influence of ecopedagogy on students' learning which in turn contributes to positive behavior in student. Berberoglu-Okur Emel (2015) revealed that the ecopedagogy-based environmental education caused to change environmental attitude of in-service teachers favorably and this change was observed mostly on male in-service teachers. Omiyefa Olugbenga Muraina explored ecopedagogy as approach to education of the earth and its citizens in achieving teachers towards cultural conversation. Chaudhari N.P. & Ojah (2018) recommended that ecopedagogy should find a place in the school curriculum, textbooks and syllabus so that it helps students to connect with the environment. Jaseena (2019) found that gender did not influence awareness of ecopedagogy of the students but the students of science showed more awareness of ecopedagogy as compared to the arts students. Pratiwi (2019) also recommended that to develop students' ecological intelligence there is a need of model that is based on ecopedagogy. Rymbai wankyrshan (2021) also conducted study on "Effect of Ecopedagogy on Pro Environmental Behavior among Students Teachers of Elementary Teacher Education". Sherpa Karma (2022) conducted a contextual study on various challenges of Environmental education. Nugraha, Jalal and Boeriswati (2022) found that the ability of eco-literacy is one of the important aspects that must be mastered by the elementary schools' students, this is because it affects the process of protecting and preserving the environment itself and to provide deeper understanding of the concept of eco-literacy learning, teachers must be able to develop teaching materials based on the environment and eco-literacy module can be used by them. Fauzi, Susan and Dwi (2022) revealed that the application of ecopedagogy could develop students' ecological intelligence; students showed improvement their understanding of the environmental problems.

Significance of the Study :

Assam is extremely rich in its natural resources which make it more necessary to educate its citizens for its conservation, particularly the young children, adolescents and the youths. But at present, it is facing major environmental crises like flood, earthquake, landslide, pollution, deforestation etc. Therefore, it is high time to promote and develop awareness among the people, particularly, among the students about the importance and inevitability of environmental

conservation. It can only be achieved with the help of appropriate education. Though as subject environmental education has been included in the curriculum in the secondary stage of education in Assam, but the students are limited to acquiring only the theoretical knowledge. They are not able to apply them in their practical life. Undoubtedly, the present education system is able to make the students more active, passionate, and knowledgeable but knowingly or unknowingly it failed to develop their eco-literacy which is very essential to achieve sustainable development. So, in this present situation we need a pedagogy which can help in tackling this critical situation. Ecopedagogy is an important approach that creates a planetary consciousness through teaching and learning by developing eco-literacy among students. It also aims to create educational programs that enquire the interaction of social, political, economic and environmental systems. Ecopedagogy empowers the students to end socio-environmental injustices. So, ecopedagogy is an important perspective to develop eco-literacy which must be created in coming generations for life as well as earth. Therefore, this study has been conducted to analyze the provisions for developing Eco-literacy among higher secondary students and to study the relevance of ecopedagogy for sustainable development, also to study the prospects of implementing ecopedagogy in Assam.

Methodology :

To conduct this study the researcher has adopted qualitative approach and analytical research method has been used. The data has been collected from the secondary sources and the data used in this paper are qualitative in nature. For the first objective, the data is collected from the textbooks of secondary stage of education (SEBA), the official websites of Secondary Education, Govt. of Assam (GoA); ASTEC, GoA; Samagra Shiksha, Department of School Education and Literacy, Govt. of India; etc. For the second objective, data is collected from thesis, journals, books, etc.

Provisions for Developing Eco-Literacy of Secondary Students :

The Indian education system has always been sensitive to the global environment since ancient times. Upanishad declares about global citizenship in the phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' meaning that all living forms on the earth are from one family. The ancient Indian education systems are also based on nature. The British education system imposed upon us may have neglected the education of environment as it was of least importance for them to conserve the vast biodiversity and environmental heritage of India. However, the independent India evolved its education system gradually and shaped it according to its actual needs, including the need to conserve the environment.

At present, the education system has some provisions for environmental education. But how much are these successful in producing eco-literacy is a question to ponder over. Eco-literacy refers to environmental education with action (Singh, 2021). If the environmental education received through formal education system is not applied in the life of the learners, it cannot be said to develop eco-literacy. Looking at the present status of increasing environmental crises and the contribution of human beings towards environmental degradation, it is apparent that the

environmental education has remained in the theoretical state only. It is not able to convert them into actions. The present study will endeavor to analyze the provisions for developing eco-literacy, i.e., environmental education which involves practical experiences for the secondary level students.

National policies on education: The NEP, 1986 stated that the protection of the environment is a value. It opined that it must form an integral part of the curriculum at all stages of education. The policy stated "There is a paramount need to create a consciousness of the environment. It must permeate all ages and all sections of society, beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should inform teaching in schools and colleges." According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, skills and capacities like environmental awareness of natural resource and its protection and conservation, sanitation and hygiene; and current local as well as global environmental issues and knowledge should be learned by all the students to become responsible, good, innovative and productive human beings in today's rapidly changing modern world. In its section 'Curricular Integration of Essential Subjects, Skills and Capacities' the NEP-2020 also emphasizes on undertaking concerted curricular and pedagogical initiatives and including subjects like 'Organic Living', 'Environmental Education' and 'Global Citizenship' Education at all stages to develop various important capacities and skills in students. It also highlights the significance of appropriately integrating environmental awareness and sensitivity towards environment its conservation and also sustainable development in B.Ed. programs.

Syllabus & Textbooks: In Assam, the students get Environmental Studies as a separate subject from class I to class V. In class VI, VII, VIII IX and X there is no separate subject on Environmental Studies, but there are some lessons implying the importance of conservation and protection of environment, sustainability, etc. in different subjects. Moreover, in HS 2nd year also there is no separate subject on Environmental studies but in HS 1st year there is a compulsory subject on Environmental studies for Arts, Science and Commerce. Mostly some subjects like Education, Political Science, Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, Chemistry, Biology, Economics of HS 1st year and 2nd year are including different environment related topics.

Eco Clubs: In the year 2019-20 under Samagra Shiksha, for the first-time grant has been provided from primary to senior secondary for Eco Club (and Youth Club). This provision has been made in Samagra Shiksha for government school students to explore their concepts of environment beyond the curriculum, promote awareness, behaviour and responsibilities among them towards environment, motivate to participate different environmental activities etc. The financial support for conducting these youth club and eco club activities is Rs. 25000 per annum/school at secondary level. More than 8000 schools in Assam have eco clubs.

Co-curricular Activities: One of the effective ways of developing eco-literacy among secondary students is through co-curricular activities. Celebration of World Environment Day, organization of plantation drives; field visits to places of natural importance, organizing special talks on environmental issues etc. are organized by the schools occasionally. A recent initiative by the Department of Science, Technology and Climate Change, Govt. of Assam is the

'Shyamalee Chouhad'. It is a practical, sustaining and long-lasting institutional plantation programme covering all the departments. It was implemented from 17th July to 15th August 2022. It is plantation drive and adoption of plants in all govt. office premises including all educational institutions.

Teachers' Orientation: With the commencement of Environmental Education, it has become utmost necessary to train up teachers and faculties for the same for achieving its aim. In Assam, the initiative has been started with the help of State Education Boards to orient and train the secondary school teachers in a period of five years. The teachers are selected in cooperation with the Directorate of Secondary Education and Secondary Education Board of Assam. The basic objective is to inculcate the required knowledge of environmental education to secondary school teachers in a systematic manner and orient the teachers in recent local and global issues related to environmental conservation and management. This project is also supported by the Department of Environment & Forests, Govt. of Assam.

However, these provisions are not adequate to develop eco-literacy. There is lack of provision for developing empathy for all living forms, integrating sustainability as a community practice, making the invisible visible, anticipating unintended consequences and understanding how nature sustain itself. The lackings are in two fronts—philosophical and practical. The provisions which are available are not able to develop among the students the philosophy of ecological oneness and interdependence. Also, their learning about the environment is confined only to educational purpose and not integrated in their lifestyle practically. This indicates towards the necessity of more concerted efforts towards developing eco-literacy, particularly among the secondary level students.

Relevance of Eco-pedagogy in Developing Eco-literacy :

As a naturally rich place, Assam has a great scope for sustaining its natural environmental conditions. But due to fast developmental activities, people are becoming more and more separated from the nature. So, the education system of Assam needs to emphasize more on environmental conservation and protection. It is evident from the analysis of the data for first objective that there is scope for reshaping or redesigning the education system, particularly the secondary stage, by integrating ecopedagogy in it. Ecopedagogy can fill the gap that exists in the present educational system of Assam as it deals in details with urgent environmental problems that human has created. Ecopedagogy is a new kind of scientific enquiry which would help in producing more a ecological and sustainable society by training the behavior of the young learners of secondary stage.

The concept of Ecopedagogy was developed by Paulo Freire, Moacir Gadotti and Francisco Gutierrez. Ecopedagogy is a critical approach to the teaching and learning of connections between environmental and social problems which develops the eco-literacy of the students. It is a democratic, transformative pedagogy which increases justice by critically teaching the causes of environmental issues. Ecopedagogy is the action and the victory of a

new civilization, the victory of new generations to preserve natural life on the earth. Ecopedagogy is based on sustainability, holism and proactivity. It proposes that the organization of school and curriculum to meet the needs of a sustainable environment and world (Godatti, 2008; Kahn, 2010). It is critical environmental teaching to achieve planetary justice and sustainable world. Ecopedagogy aims to end socio-environmental injustices and human dominance on nature. Ecopedagogy is essentially literacy education which aims to read and re-read humans' acts of environmental violence. It reinvents environmental education and sustainable development to be more effective in achieving global social justice and planetary justice. Ecopedagogy enables students to critically and logically think and examine the environmental issues and discover solutions also (Napitupulu & Munandar, 2017).

It aims to promote knowledge to the all peoples for coping with the most serious contemporary and future environmental problems. This pedagogy also aims to create new ecological relationships in the life of people and to prepare children, parents and educators as conscious creator for making more beautiful possible world. This pedagogy works to develop eco-literacy of the students. A healthy environment promotes resources for economic and social growth and means to fight natural hazards that the sign of sustainable development. Therefore, as a new eco-social perspective ecopedagogy aims to develop peoples' collective potentials and strengthen social justice, taking into account the environmental perspective. It helps the students to understand how their decisions and actions affect the environment, also builds knowledge and skills which are necessary to address complex environmental issues and it will help us to keep our environment healthy and sustainable for future. Ecopedagogy encourages citizens to make knowledgeable and informed decisions about their environmental behavior based on the awareness, knowledge, skill and attitudes instilled in them. Ecopedagogy will develop eco-literacy of the secondary students by including appropriate environmental course content, practical experiences, methodology, strategy etc. in the secondary level of education (Rymbai, 2021).

Findings :

It is found that at present, there is no direct provision for developing eco-literacy of the secondary level students. However, environmental education has been stressed in the national policies, even in the recent one. Though the textbooks and syllabi of secondary stage of education do include contents on environmental education it is not a separate subject. It can be implied from the contents on environmental education. But these contents involve least practical or hand-on experiences. The provision for eco clubs in schools provides some learning experiences to the students leading to their eco-literacy. There is provision for orientation of teachers of secondary stage through which they are being trained phase-wise.

It is also found that, ecopedagogy is a critical approach it studies the connections between environmental and social problems which develops the eco-literacy of the students. Critical pedagogy is the base of ecopedagogy, so the students are able to analyze the environmental

crises critically and logically. Ecopedagogy emphasizes on the organization of school and curriculum to meet the needs of sustainable development. It aims to end socio-environmental injustices and human dominance on nature. It is the education which aims to read and re-read human beings' acts of environmental violence. It reinvents environmental education and sustainable development to be more effective in achieving global social and planetary justice. Ecopedagogy enables the students to critically examine environmental problems and find out the solutions. This pedagogy focuses to create new ecological relationships in the lives of people and to make children, parents and educators as well as other human being as conscious creator for making more beautiful possible world. This pedagogy works to develop eco-literacy of the students. A healthy environment provides resources for economic and social growth and means to fight natural hazards which is the sign of sustainable development.

Conclusion :

To achieve sustainable development everyone should get opportunities for developing their eco-literacy. The eco-literacy of the students can be further enhanced by the effective pedagogy that is ecopedagogy. Therefore, it is highly needed to integrate this pedagogy in the teaching learning process. A sound environmental attitude and behavior can be instilled in the students through this pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is the base of ecopedagogy therefore; ecopedagogy will help the students to analyze different environmental issues critically and logically. Ecopedagogy includes environmental education and offers proposals, methods, strategies and also the means for concrete actions. Various innovative teaching methods like project method, field work, activity method, problem solving method, computer assisted learning method etc. based on ecopedagogical principle should be used in teaching learning process. Ecopedagogy will help the students to participate more frequently in seminar, workshop, field work, training program, nature visit, and extension lectures on environmental issues. Teachers should engage the students in assignments, based on the ecopedagogical principles. Co-curricular activities play the pivotal role in bringing holistic development; therefore, through the various types of co-curricular activities, teachers should try to develop ecoliteracy of the students. The teaching of critical thinking, reasoning, analytical skills, problem-solving, etc. to the learners through experiential learning may be based on ecopedagogical principles which is also suggested by Rymbai (2021). From the ecopedagogical perspective, the contents presented in the curriculum should be meaningful for the students. These kinds of activities will develop the eco-literacy of the secondary students through which they can protect and preserve our nature for a better world. Moreover, it is necessary to evaluate eco-literacy among the students by using appropriate tools.

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Gender Inequality in North-East India

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Abstract:

The gender inequality is a global issue that is present in all societies. It is a social, economic, and political issue that affects the lives of women in all parts of the world. In India, gender inequality is a major concern, especially in the North-East region. The North-East region is a diverse area with a mix of different ethnic groups and cultures. The gender inequality in this region is a result of various factors, including the traditional gender roles, the lack of education, and the economic disparity. The gender inequality in the North-East region is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach to address it. The government, the private sector, and the civil society all have a role to play in reducing gender inequality in the North-East region. The government should focus on providing education and training to women, especially in the rural areas. The private sector should create more employment opportunities for women. The civil society should work towards changing the traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality. The gender inequality in the North-East region is a challenge that needs to be addressed if we want to achieve sustainable development in the region.

Keywords: Gender inequality, Women Empowerment, North East India.