1. **WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY? WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY?**

**OR**

1. **DISCUSS ABOUT THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY.**

**OR**

1. **WHY ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY DEVELOPED SO MUCH IN U.S.A.?**

**ANSWER:**

**WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY?**

Environmental history is a rather new discipline that came into being during the 1960’s and 1970’s. It was a direct consequence of the growing awareness of worldwide environmental problems such as pollution of water and air by pesticides, depletion of the ozone layer and the enhanced greenhouse effect caused by human activity. In this development historians started to look for the origins of the contemporary problems, drawing upon the knowledge of a whole field of scientific disciplines and specialisms which had been developed during the preceding century.

Environmental history is always about human interaction with the natural world or, to put it in another way, it studies the interaction between culture and nature. The principal goal of environmental history is to deepen our understanding of how humans has been affected by the natural environment in the past and also how they have affected that environment and with what results.

**SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY:**

Since the 1980s certain developments have changed the nature of historical enquiry, Among them, were the revolution transformed and democratized scholarship and the further expansion in higher education; shift from sociology to anthropology on the most fruitful subject from which historians were now borrowing; the influence of Michel Foucault, postmodernist& the linguistic turn the rise of women's history, gender history. & cultural history and the reconfiguration of imperial history and a broader shift away from the reach from causation to the reach for meaning.

History has developed through different stages characterized sometimes by contemporary concerns from political to economic to social and environmental. Environmental history can be seen largely as a response to prevent environmental crisis. Environmental history and ecological history is often used synonymously. Ecology implies the science of living organism to the external world, their habitat, customs, energies, parasites, etc. In practice ecology has tended to focus more narrowly upon the ‘study of nature' and it is also study of human engagement over time with the physical environment.

Environmental history extend the margin of historical analysis and bring centre stage a cast of non human character's, normally ignored at least until recently, in historical scholarship. Environmental hist. studies how human activities have been fashioned by environment and also how human activities in turn have changed the environment.

***Environment as context, agent & influence of in human history.***

Environment plays an important role in human history as an influential context and agent. For example, Brahmaputra plays the role of context. It is an agent because we used it for navigation and another user from water, agriculture. Earlier it had used for cultivation, navigation and now been used for supplying water to the different parts of the city of Guwahati.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

Environmental history as a self-conscious undertaking dates only to about 1970 and, like so much in intellectual life, drew its energy from society at large. Around the world, of course, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the blend of popular environmentalism as a cultural and political force. It was stronger in some place than in others, and took different shapes in different contexts. In the United States it helped a few historians, initially almost all of whom were scholars of U.S. history, to come together both intellectually and institutionally to launch environmental history as a self-conscious undertaking. Among them were Roderick Nash, John Opie, Donald Worster, Susa Flader and a historian of the ancient Mediterranean, Donald Hughes. By some accounts Nash, author of *Wilderness and the American Mind*, an intellectual history of an environmental subject, was the first to employ the term “environmental history”.

Between Nash’s book and 1985 a small handful of books acquired status as foundational texts in U.S. environmental history. The first was Alfred Crosby’s *Columbian Exchange*, one of the few books whose title became part of nearly every Anglophone historian’s vocabulary.

Worster’s *Dust Bowl* took an iconic subject in US history and gave it a new twist, mixing careful consideration of climate patterns, soil characteristics and other ecological factors into the story. William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land*, which explored the transformations of the southern New England landscape between 1600 and 1800, enjoyed great success and inspired several imitators. Worster and Cronon soon became the most influential figures in U.S. environmental history, joined by Richard White, who like Cronon featured Amerindians prominently in much of his work, and Carolyn Merchant, who put women front and center. Martin Melosi and Joel Tarr pioneered urban environmental history in the U.S. context.

Primarily through the work of these leading scholars, environmental history won a place on the crowded stage of U.S. history. Of new sub-fields in U.S. history, only women’s history has enjoyed fuller acceptance. Only in India, the author believes, have environmental historians attracted the attention of their fellow historians as successfully as in the U.S.

These U.S. scholars, who continued to produce influential work, attracted international attention too. Historians around the world contemplating taking an environmental turn often read them, especially Worster and Cronon, while formulating their own projects. Worster’s work on droughts and irrigation, for example, seemed relevant in many settings outside the United States. The themes of cultural clash and colonization, developed in Cronon’s, Crosby’s, and White’s work, found interested readers among those writing about colonial encounters in Asia and Africa. White’s concept of a ‘middle ground’ seemed helpful to scholars of medieval Central Europe and to Tokugawa Japan.

Part of the influence of the U.S. authors must be attributed to institutional factors. The first generation formed the American Society for Environmental History in 1976-77 and by the early 1980s held regular conferences. Most importantly, the ASEH began publishing a journal, now called *Environmental History*, in 1976. Moreover, as in all fields of history, the Americans enjoyed advantages in the form of the general vigor and (comparatively) generous funding of US academia, and in the fact that so many historians around the world could read English (this, obviously, boosted the fortunes of all Anglophones, not merely those in the U.S.)

In contrast, the institutionalization of environmental history came later elsewhere. For example, the European Society for Environmental History began regular meetings in

2001. SOLCHA, the Society for Latin American and Caribbean Environmental History, began operations in 2003. A Canadian network of environmental historians (NiCHE) took shape in 2006-7, as did the Association of South Asian Environmental Historians (ASAEH). An umbrella organization for environmental history around the world formed in 2006-2008 and oversaw the first world congress of environmental history, held in Denmark in 2009.

The journal *Environment and History*, which published chiefly British, European, and imperial environmental history, started up in 1995. A Dutch and Flemish journal *Tijdschrift voor Ecologische Geschiedenis* (Journal for Environmental History), became a regular annual in 1999. A Czech internet journal, *Klaudyán*, began publication in 2000. In 2004 the Croatian journal *Ekonomska i ekohistorija* was launched, as was an Italian one, *I Frutti de Demetra*. An Italian-based but internationally focused journal, *Global Environment*, began publication in 2008.

In every respect, the Americans enjoyed a firmer institutional footing sooner than environmental historians elsewhere. Numerically, Americanists still loom large in the early 21st century, and at a guess accounted for roughly half of the environmental historians around the world as of 2010.

But the intellectual prominence of the Americanists’ examples waned after the 1980s.

Scholars elsewhere quickly found their own voices and confronted the limits of the relevance of American precedents. The American environmental historians’ emphasis on wilderness, for example, had minimal resonance in most of the world. Beyond that, while almost everyone in the field could read the work of the Americanists, they could not (or chose not) to read the work of scholars elsewhere.

Over time the proportion of environmental history written in Spanish, German, Italian, among other tongues, grew, and most Americanists could not read it. A few prominent works, such as Joachim Radkau’s *Natur und Macht* were translated for Anglophone audiences, but only a few. Thus as the enterprise of environmental history globalized, the intellectual exchange expanded but not evenly: by and large everyone around the world read the prominent.