

Journey to the End of the Earth

Beginning of Journey- The narrator boarded a Russian research ship-The 'Akademik Shokalskiy'. It was heading towards the coldest, driest and the windiest continent in the world, Antarctica. His journey began 13.09 degrees north of the Equator in Madras (Chennai). He crossed nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water and at least three ecospheres. He travelled over 100 hours in car, aeroplane and ship to reach there.

Southern Supercontinent(Gondwana)- Six hundred and fifty million years ago a giant southern supercontinent Gondwana did indeed exist. It centered roughly around present-day Antarctica. Human beings hadn't arrived on the global scene. The climate at that time was much warmer. It supported a huge variety of flora and fauna. When the dinosaurs became totally extinct and the age of mammals began, the landmass was forced to separate into countries as they exist today.

Study of Antarctica-The purpose of the visit was to know more about Antarctica. It is to understand the significance of Cordilleran folds and pre-Cambrian granite shields; ozone and carbon; evolution and extinction. Ninety per cent of the earth's total ice volumes are stored in Antarctica. Icebergs are as big as countries. Days go on and on in 24-hour austral summer light.

Human Impact- The most hotly contested debate of our time is whether West Antarctica Ice sheet will melt entirely or no. If we want to study the earth's past, present and future, Antarctica is the place (for us) to go. Antarctica has a simple eco-system and lacks of biodiversity. It is the perfect place to study how little changes in the environment can have big repercussions (results). Scientists warn that a further depletion of the ozone layer will affect the lives of the sea-animals and birds of the region. It will also affect the global carbon cycle.

The burning of fossil fuels has polluted the atmosphere. It has created a blanket of carbon dioxide around the world. It is increasing the global temperature which is visible at Antarctica when we see ice bergs melting away. It shows how minor changes in the atmosphere can cause huge effect. If the global temperature keeps on increasing the human race may be in peril.

“Students on ice” is a programme which provides the students an ample opportunity to understand how global temperature can be a big threat to human existence. It inculcates a new understanding in them. Geoff Green thinks that high school students are the future policy makers. They can help in saving the earth from ecological dangers and the effects of global warming.

Effect of Climatic Change- The author gives us an example to show how small changes in the atmosphere can be threatening. The microscopic phytoplanktons are single celled plants. They nourish the entire Southern Ocean's food chain. They use the sun's energy to assimilate carbon and supply oxygen. Any further depletion in the ozone layer may affect this functioning and indirectly affect the lives of all marine animals.

Walk on the Ocean-It was the most thrilling experience of the visit. They climbed down the gangplank and walked on the ocean. They were 52 persons. They were walking on a meter-thick ice-pack. Under the ice pack there was 180 meters of living, breathing, salt water. Seals were enjoying themselves in the sun on ice. The narrator was wondering about the beauty of the place. He wished it would not become a warm place as it used to be millions of years ago. If it happens, the results can be ruinous.